

Investor Brief: Key Findings from the 2025 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

This summary highlights key discussions during the 24th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, informing priority issues impacting Indigenous Peoples.

Introduction

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is the UN's high-level advisory body on Indigenous Peoples' rights. Convened annually, it provides essential guidance to governments, Indigenous Peoples, UN agencies, and civil society. The 24th session, held from April 21 to May 2, 2025, focused on the theme: *"Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the UN system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges."* See the [session agenda](#) and the UNPFII's [report on the session](#) for the full set of documents reviewed in this brief. This year's discussions raised significant implications for the financial sector, particularly in relation to extractive industries, just transition policies, and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Summary of Key Findings

The Forum reinforced that free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a binding obligation under international law and a non-negotiable requirement for all development, extractive, and investment projects on Indigenous Peoples' lands. It clarified that FPIC includes the right to reject a project outright and warned that failure to respect FPIC continues to drive conflict, displacement, and reputational risk for investors. This principle is especially relevant in the context of the global shift toward renewable energy, as the demand for transition minerals continues to increase. The Forum cautioned that mineral extraction should not reproduce colonial patterns of resource exploitation. It stated that voluntary industry standards are insufficient and called on States and financial actors to enforce legal compliance throughout the mining lifecycle, including full site restoration and Indigenous-led governance.

The Forum also stressed the urgent need for robust due diligence frameworks. It recommended that States promote internal legislation aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to hold trans-national companies accountable for human rights violations committed in their jurisdiction and that States and mining companies establish independent, culturally appropriate grievance mechanisms that are accessible to Indigenous Peoples throughout the duration of any project. For investors, this means ensuring metrics that include meaningful accountability, community engagement, and risk transparency. The Forum

specifically urged companies to track environmental and human rights impacts across global supply chains.

In response to ongoing financial exclusion, the Forum highlighted the need for Indigenous-led financial mechanisms and direct access to climate and biodiversity funds. It called on multilateral development banks to create policies that recognize Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and ensure their leadership in financing decisions. The Forum endorsed the vision for a permanent global Indigenous Peoples fund to support Indigenous-led environmental stewardship and climate action. This shift toward direct finance models presents a critical opportunity for impact-forward investors to align with international obligations and improve the efficacy of impact investments.

The Forum also elevated concerns about gendered harms resulting from extractive industries. It documented serious health impacts, including mercury poisoning and reproductive damage among Indigenous women and children, and called for immediate action to regulate toxic contaminants and restore ecosystems damaged by extraction. Investors must integrate gender-sensitive assessments and adopt safeguards that address disproportionate harm to Indigenous women and children.

Finally, the Forum encouraged States to ensure that Indigenous Peoples—particularly Indigenous women—are nominated to the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights and called for the establishment of an ad hoc committee for Indigenous Peoples within the Forum on Business and Human Rights. Inclusion in both formal appointments and dedicated mechanisms is essential to ensuring that Indigenous Peoples’ rights are meaningfully upheld in international trade, global supply chains, and investor governance structures.

Conclusion

The 2025 session of the UNPFII made clear that consideration of Indigenous Peoples’ rights is central to sustainable development and responsible investment. FPIC, direct finance, and legal accountability for companies are no longer optional—they are essential. The private sector should respond to these findings with concrete action, realigning investment practices with international norms and Indigenous Peoples’ self-determination. Respecting Indigenous Peoples’ rights is not only a moral and legal obligation—it is a strategic imperative.