

Hello. I am with First Peoples Worldwide and will be speaking on the topic of Indigenous rights and the environment.

In October, in partnership with the Gwich'in Steering Committee and allied organizations, we submitted a report to the UPR Working Group that details how the United States is fast-tracking oil and gas development in violation of the human rights of the Gwich'in. This action is aligned with an ongoing and disturbing pattern of human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples.

In January and February, I participated in four consultations with Embassy and U.N. Permanent Mission representatives and I attended a national consultation with the U.S. State Department.

Today, I will focus on three issues.

The first is the failure of the United States to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples.

In 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline garnered international attention and led to a mission visit from the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In her final report, the Rapporteur noted that Indigenous Peoples "wrestle with the realities of living in ground zero of energy impact" and that the U.S. framework for consultation "while well intentioned has developed into a confusing and disjointed framework that suffers from loopholes, ambiguity, and a general lack of accountability."

From DAPL to Keystone XL to numerous other examples across the country, this confusing and disjointed framework continues to result in human rights violations of Indigenous Peoples.

The second and related issue is the alarming rate of violence against Indigenous women.

In the previous cycle, the United States received multiple recommendations on this issue. While the U.S. should be applauded for taking steps to address this issue, such as creating a Task Force, their actions are not nearly sufficient to address the severity of the epidemic nor are they properly addressing the root causes of violence, including the role of the extractive industry.

The final issue is the lack of access to clean water, a clean environment, basic sanitation and other conditions that have made Indigenous communities more susceptible to the worst impacts of the pandemic. These conditions are the result of centuries of discrimination by the United States government.

Rather than support tribal leaders that are facing a public health crisis, the United States is using the pandemic as an opportunity to further loosen environmental regulations and green light unnecessary fossil fuel development.

To address these ongoing human rights violations, we recommend that the United States:

- Adhere to the minimum human rights standards as articulated in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Provide Indigenous communities with more control over their energy resources. This means, at a minimum, ensuring meaningful engagement with Indigenous leaders and this includes the right to withhold consent; and finally,
- We recommend that the United States extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples to conduct an in-country visit addressing these issues.

Thank you.