

Blue Bells International Model United Nations (BBIMUN)

2025

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) – III
SOCHUM

BBIMUN'25

Procedural Guidelines
&
Agenda Background Guide



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

To
The Delegates
United Nations General Assembly – III SOCHUM Greetings!

With immense pleasure to serve as your Executive Board, we welcome you to the simulation of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) – III SOCHUM, to be held at Blue Bells International Model United Nations Conference 2025. Our committee shall discuss a dynamic agenda:

“Addressing the Erosion of Aboriginal Identities and Traditions due to Cultural Homogenisation and Globalisation.”

This guide consists of two parts, of which procedural guide appears initially highlighting the general rules of procedure and specific rules meant specially for this committee in the conference. Following that is the agenda background guide that entails a last chapter specifically mentioning questions aimed to make the discussion rich with thought-engaging aspects.

An amalgamation of research along with known case studies can result in a finite combination of arguments but that is only true to the extent that all of the delegates reach a similar conclusion out of the research available on the internet. It is requested that once you start researching, which I assume you have already begun, try re-interpreting all the content you come across.

This shall give you a definite chance of formulating a new argument. The major aim of this document is to serve as a course of your understanding and further research, but it is not restricting creation of new horizons and expanding the scope of the discussion.

This agenda looks for theoretical as well as logical attention and we request you to sincerely read the document so that all delegates at least have a common ground of understanding. Further we request you all not to treat this guide as a source of citations in the committee as the guide is a mixture of arguments and facts at times constructed to ease up the understanding.

For the purpose of you all too be aided with better research opportunity, we have tried to mention all the links in the form of footnotes so that you can check back and understand the context of the relevant material.

We duly understand the agenda might seem a bit tricky and for this purpose, feel free to contact us via WhatsApp Committee Groups with respect to your doubts. Just remember one thing, searching only over Google will not fetch you any good material, you must put in your reasoning efforts.

Happy researching!
Executive Board
(United Nations General Assembly – III SOCHUM)



PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

GENERAL RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES

Dear Delegates,

For the purpose of assisting the delegates participating in MUNs for the first-time, we, as the Executive Board of UNGA-III SOCHUM, have prepared a concise and crisp, all-inclusive section specifically describing all important aspects of the general rules of procedure. The most difficult aspect of being well-versed with rules of procedure is to gain the ability to understand and retain complex terms used throughout the committee. It is requested that you familiarise yourselves with the terms and their respective meanings.

LOBBYING TIME

Once the delegates arrive at the designated venue of the committee, there is some time before the Executive Board arrives, and the formal session begins. This time is known as lobbying time. Delegates are advised to utilise this time to familiarise themselves with the thoughts of their co-delegates regarding the various aspects of the agenda and how they plan to carry the discussion ahead.

ROLL CALL

Synonymous to attendance, roll call is meant to keep a track of all participating countries of whose delegates are there in the committee. Yet again, unlike normal attendance, roll call offers the delegates to answer as either 'present' or 'present and voting', which primarily makes a difference in substantive voting.

- If a delegate answers their roll call as 'present', then they can vote as yes, no or abstain from voting.
- But, if a delegate answers their roll call as 'present and voting', then they can only vote as either yes or no.

Such a differentiation is specifically for substantive voting and not important for normal procedural voting.

GENERAL SPEAKER'S LIST (GSL)

All formal discussion during the course of the committee is carried out through the GSL, and this list is open throughout the duration of the committee, until the motion for closure of discussion is not passed. By default, each speaker is allocated 90 seconds which can be increased or decreased to 60 or 120 seconds respectively. GSL speeches can include variety of things related to the agenda and are NOT limited to just explaining your country's actions related to the agenda at hand.

YIELD

After any speech of the GSL, if delegate has some time remaining, they have the option to 'yield' such time. A delegate has three ways to yield their time:

- (a) Yield to Another Delegate – meaning that their remaining time shall be given to the delegate of their choice to speak in the committee;
- (b) Yield to Points of Information – meaning that you would like to take questions from your fellow delegates; or
- (c) Yield to the Executive Board – meaning that the Executive Board shall absorb your remaining



time and move ahead.

POINTS

Synonymous to privileges, points are basically formal means, meant to cater to the need of the delegates in such a way so as to assure smooth functioning of the discussion and the committee. There are primarily four points:

- (a) Point of Personal Privilege – used to address any sort of personal discomfort or issues personal to you that restricting you to operate in the committee in the best of possibilities;
- (b) Point of Order – used to bring to attention procedural and/or substantive fallacies with the motive to correct them;
- (c) Point of Information: used to ask questions to others delegates but is only granted either in accordance to procedure or upon the discretion of the Executive Board; and
- (d) Point of Parliamentary Enquiry: used to ask doubts and concerns associated to the operations of the committee.

MODERATED CAUCUS

These are the means of discussing the agenda in detail, wherein the moderated caucus are always on a sub-topic of the agenda, thus, promoting more detail-oriented discussion, unlike GSL, wherein there is no cap to discussion and areas of discussion. Further, unlike GSL, moderated caucus always have a total time, maximum of which is 20 minutes. The individual speaker's time is capped with 90 seconds and the most preferred time for individual speeches is 60 seconds.

UNMODERATED CAUCUS

These are the means of establishing an in-between committee proceeding, a lobbying time, wherein the delegates can freely move around in the committee. Such a session is not moderated by the Executive Board and doesn't require the delegates to provide a reason for establishing an unmoderated caucus. Further, unlike starting lobbying time, unmoderated caucus always have a total time, maximum of which is 20 minutes.

MOTIONS

Synonymous to proposals, motions are a formal manner of referring to such proposals that will assist in the operation of the committee. In all situations, it is the Executive Board that opens the floor for delegates to raise their placards for raising their motions. The committees in MUNs primarily operate on delegates raising motions and getting them passed through the procedural voting.

SUBSTANTIVE CHITS

“Substantive” is basically meant to refer to substance or content related to agenda. Such a substance consists of facts and arguments that are beneficial for the construct of discussion in the committee. Primary reason of sending substantive chits to the Executive Board is to gain the edge by showcasing your research to the Executive Board.

FROM: COUNTRY
TO: COUNTRY
Substantive Chit #1

Content

VIA-EB CHITS

These chits are meant for the delegates to get their conversations, primarily questions and replies, evaluated by the Executive Board. Before sending these chits, the delegates should determine whether the content written by them is worth the evaluation of the Executive Board and only then they should send the chits via-EB.

FROM: COUNTRY
TO: COUNTRY
Via-EB Chit #1

Content

SPECIFIC RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR UNGA-III SOCHUM AT BBIMUN'25

Dear Delegates,

In order for the smooth operation of the Committee, there are certain specific rules that us, as the Executive Board for this simulation, are drafting and shall be implemented through the duration of the conference. Please keep in mind that these rules are non-negotiable and are being put forth for the proper conduct of discussion.

RECOGNITION

Since the committee shall be having a heavy strength of delegates, and to ensure equal participation of all delegates as well as a detailed discussion, in all moderated caucus sessions:

1. We shall be only taking 1/4th of the committee strength;

2. The rest of the delegates who wish to speak shall be asked to send their speeches in writing;
3. The written speeches, when asked to submit, shall be marked equally and on the same level, as to that of the verbally spoken speeches.
4. Such form of written speeches are to be mandatorily written on the notepads provided by BBIMUN'25;
5. The permitted length of the written speech shall be 1 sheet of the notepad, i.e., both sides of 1 sheet of paper of the notepad.

CAPPING OF THE CHITS

Since the committee shall be having a heavy strength of delegates, and to avoid cases of frivolous and irrelevant material coming through chits, there shall be a capping on the chits of both kinds, substantive and via-EB, in the manner as follows:

1. Substantive Chits

- a. Day – 1: 5 Chits
- b. Day – 2: 5 Chits

2. Via-EB Chits

- a. Day – 1: 5 Chits
- b. Day – 2: 5 Chits

DOCUMENTATION

For the purposes of properly providing conclusive remarks, this committee shall be having two forms of documents, evaluation of both shall be out of 5 Marks. The details pertaining to them are as follows:

1. **Individual Statement** (5 Marks): Each delegate shall be permitted to send 1 individual statement. Such a statement may contain conclusive remarks, that can be either solution-oriented or can discuss their own view-point parallel to that of their portfolio assigned. Such an individual statement shall be sent to the Executive Board in a written form, on the notepad provided by BBIMUN'25, on 1 sheet of the notepad, wherein both sides of the sheet shall be permitted to be used. This document shall be expected by the end of the 1st session of Day – 2.

INDIVIDUAL STATEMENT
FROM: COUNTRY

Content

2. **Communique** (5 Marks): As a conclusive document for the entire committee, a communique

offers less technicalities and gives an opportunity of including view- points of as many people as possible. Again, a communique is basically understood as a common document that should be adopted by the entire committee, unanimously. Even one single negative vote can lead to the failure of this document. This type of document not only incorporates a solution-based approach, but can also includes common realisations of the committee through the discussion. After each point mentioned in the final document, maximum of 2 delegates can take the credit of authoring that particular point. This document shall be submitted to the Executive Board in a soft copy, Word format. The font size of the text of the document shall be 12, font type be Times New Roman, line spacing 1. It is specifically mentioned that the limit to the size of document, while adhering to the text requirements mentioned above shall be 3 pages of the Word Document. Anything beyond that shall not be evaluated by the Executive Board.

COMMUNIQUE

1. CONTENT (Name of Author(s) Max. 2)
2. CONTENT (Name of Author(s) Max. 2)
3. CONTENT (Name of Author(s) Max. 2)
- 4.

MARKING AND EVALUATION

As a matter of transparency, we shall be enumerating the different criteria under and upon which each delegate shall be evaluated in this committee. Such criteria are mentioned as follows along with the weightage given to them:

1. **Speeches:** Each speech, written or verbal, shall be marked absolutely and evaluated out of 10 marks and there shall be three primary sub-division criteria for evaluation of any speech, i.e.,
 - a. Research: 4 Marks;
 - b. Analysis: 3 Marks; and
 - c. Relevance: 3 Marks.
2. **Chits:** Each chit, irrespective of it type, either substantive or via-EB, shall be marked absolutely and evaluated out of 5 marks. Keeping the chits under a certain cap shall allow the Executive Board to observe the consistency of the delegates in terms of fruitful participation in the committee.
3. **Contribution to Debate Flow:** Specifically meant to evaluate extraordinary contributions by delegates in the flow of the committee, 5 Marks are dedicated to this criteria. As a matter of gentle reminder, marking under section shall not occur in normal course of evaluation. This criteria is meant to bring to highlight certain extraordinary points put forth by delegates.
4. **Knowledge of Portfolio:** Specifically meant to evaluate extraordinary knowledge possessed by the delegates pertaining to the portfolios assigned respectively, 5 Marks are dedicated to this criteria. As a matter of gentle reminder, marking under section shall not occur in normal course of evaluation. This criteria is meant to bring to highlight certain extraordinary instances where delegates reflect knowledge of their portfolios.

AGENDA BACKGROUND GUIDE

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (GA3 or SOCHUM) deals with matters relating to human rights, humanitarian issues, and questions affecting peoples' rights to self-determination.¹ It is one of the six main committees of the General Assembly and provides a platform where all 193 Member States of the UN are represented equally, following the principle of one state, one vote.²

SOCHUM's work primarily involves the consideration of reports from the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Special Committee on Decolonisation (C-24), as well as matters related to the promotion of fundamental freedoms and the examination of human rights violations.³ While it cannot adopt legally binding instruments, its resolutions carry substantial moral and political weight, often shaping the direction of the General Assembly and influencing Security Council deliberations.⁴

The Committee's decisions are usually reached by consensus, reflecting the UN's emphasis on inclusivity and cooperation. However, when necessary, matters are decided by a simple majority vote.⁵ Unlike the Security Council, no Member State holds veto power, ensuring that all voices carry equal weight.⁶



¹ United Nations General Assembly, “Main Committees of the General Assembly,” UN Documentation, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/maincommittees/index.shtml>.

² United Nations, “Functions and Powers of the General Assembly,” UN.org, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>.

³ UNGA Third Committee, “Work of the Third Committee,” UN Documentation, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>

⁴ Edward C. Luck, UN General Assembly: Practice and Procedure (Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵ UNGA Rules of Procedure, A/520/Rev.19, Rule 83.

⁶ Ibid., Rule 86.

INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPTS

The agenda concerns the erosion of aboriginal identities and traditions as a result of cultural homogenisation and globalisation. To begin, it is essential to clarify these terms. Aboriginal or indigenous peoples are communities that trace their ancestry to populations inhabiting a territory prior to colonisation or the formation of modern states, and who maintain distinct cultural, linguistic, or spiritual practices.⁷ Their identities are deeply intertwined with land, language, and customs passed down through generations.

Cultural homogenisation refers to the process by which dominant cultural patterns, often linked with global consumerism, language, and media, overshadow or assimilate diverse local cultures.⁸ It differs from cultural exchange, as it tends to replace diversity with uniformity. In turn, globalisation is the broader phenomenon of interconnectedness through economics, politics, and technology, which often accelerates homogenisation.⁹ When these forces interact, aboriginal traditions, many of which rely on oral transmission and communal practices, are at risk of decline, undermining both identity and continuity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISSUE

The erosion of aboriginal identities is not only a cultural loss but also a human rights concern. International law recognises the right of peoples to self-determination and to preserve their culture, language, and traditions. Documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)¹⁰ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966)¹¹ protect cultural participation as a fundamental right. Indigenous traditions form part of the world’s cultural heritage.

Practices ranging from oral storytelling to ecological knowledge systems enrich global diversity and offer sustainable alternatives for addressing modern crises, including climate change. The disappearance of these traditions means the loss of worldviews, histories, and practices that cannot be replicated once gone.¹² This issue is urgent for SOCHUM because it lies at the intersection of human rights, humanitarian concerns, and self-determination. While SOCHUM cannot enact binding decisions, its resolutions carry moral authority, shaping international opinion and influencing other UN organs. Thus, tackling cultural homogenisation’s impact on aboriginal peoples fits squarely within its mandate.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Today, more than 476 million indigenous peoples live across 90 countries, constituting about 6.2% of the global population.¹³ Despite this presence, they remain disproportionately affected



⁷ United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, “Who Are Indigenous Peoples?” UN.org, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>.

⁸ Robertson, Roland. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. SAGE, 1992.

⁹ Tomlinson, John. *Globalization and Culture*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), Article 27.

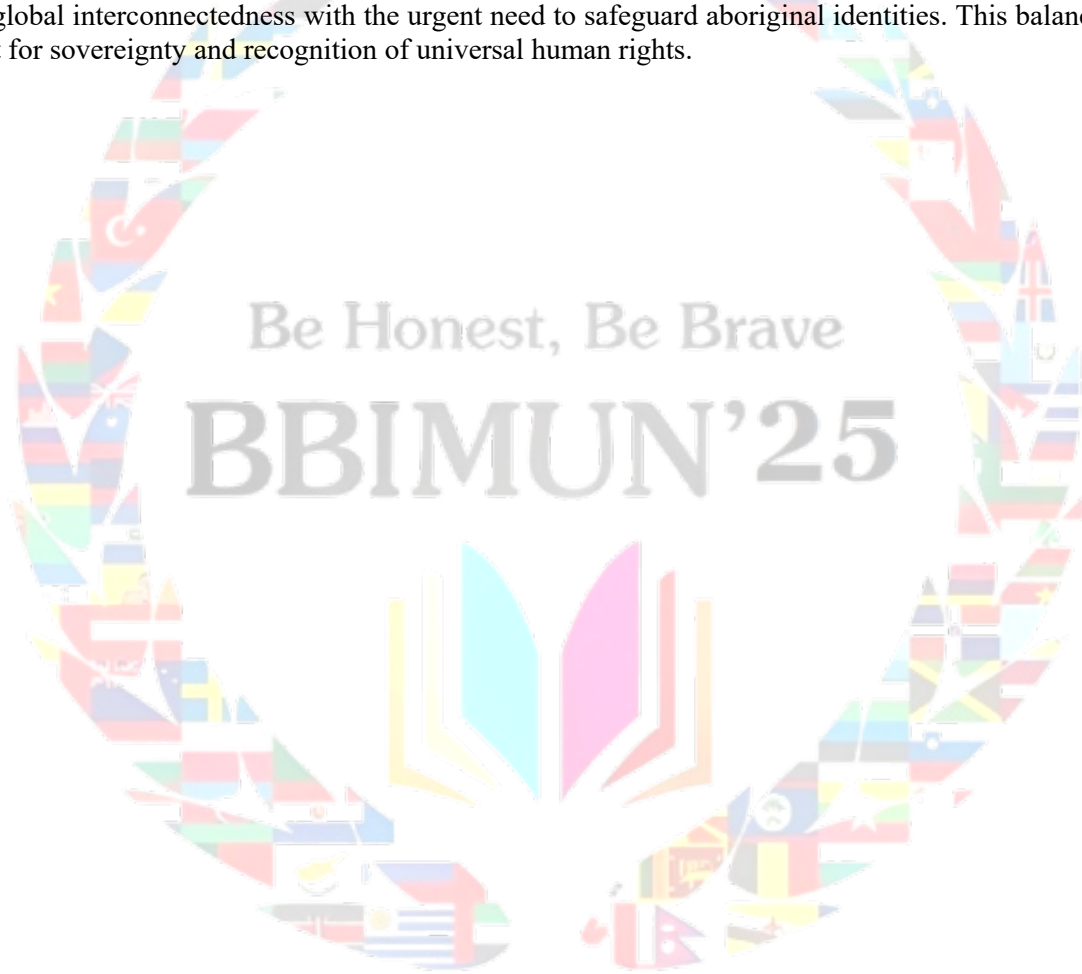
¹¹ United Nations, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), Article 27.

¹² UNESCO, “Why is intangible cultural heritage important?” <https://ich.unesco.org>.

¹³ World Bank, *Indigenous Peoples Overview*, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>.

by poverty, discrimination, and cultural marginalisation. One of the most striking indicators of erosion is language: UNESCO warns that over 40% of the world’s 6,700 languages are endangered, most of them indigenous.¹⁴

The scope extends beyond language to include erosion of rituals, spirituality, and land-based practices. Globalisation brings opportunities—such as digital platforms for cultural preservation—but also significant risks, as dominant cultures overshadow minority practices. Therefore, the challenge for the international community is to balance the benefits of global interconnectedness with the urgent need to safeguard aboriginal identities. This balance requires both respect for sovereignty and recognition of universal human rights.



¹⁴ UNESCO, “Endangered Languages,” <https://www.unesco.org/en/endangeredlanguages>.

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT CONTEXT

COLONIAL LEGACY

The erosion of aboriginal identities has deep roots in the colonial period, when many indigenous communities faced deliberate suppression of their cultures. Colonial administrations often imposed assimilationist policies aimed at integrating or erasing indigenous peoples. Examples include the establishment of residential schools in Canada and missionary institutions in Latin America and Africa, where indigenous children were prohibited from speaking their native languages or practicing their cultural traditions.¹⁵

In Australia, the so-called “Stolen Generations” saw aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families between the late 19th and 20th centuries to be raised in state or church institutions.¹⁶ Such policies caused long-term cultural disruption. Oral traditions were broken, languages lost, and indigenous belief systems suppressed. These historical injustices not only weakened communities but also left a legacy of mistrust toward state institutions, shaping the challenges still faced today.

GLOBALISATION ERA

In the second half of the 20th century, globalisation emerged as a new force of homogenisation. While colonialism was marked by political domination, globalisation often functions through economic, cultural, and technological pressures. The spread of mass media and consumer culture created global trends—music, films, fashion—that displaced local expressions. Indigenous youth, especially in urbanising societies, were encouraged to abandon traditional practices in favor of “modern” lifestyles.¹⁷

Economic globalisation also led to large-scale development projects—mining, logging, and agribusiness—that displaced indigenous communities from their ancestral lands, severing the cultural bonds between people and territory.¹⁸ At the same time, migration toward cities further eroded traditional lifestyles. Younger generations often found themselves caught between two worlds: their inherited traditions and the dominant mainstream culture. The result was cultural dilution, weakening the intergenerational transmission of identity.

PRESENT-DAY CHALLENGES

Today, the cultural pressures faced by aboriginal peoples have intensified. One of the most critical challenges is language loss. Linguists estimate that a language dies every two weeks, and many of these are indigenous.¹⁹ Without language, oral histories, spiritual practices, and knowledge systems disappear irreversibly. Another challenge is the commercialisation of indigenous culture. Tourism often markets indigenous traditions as spectacles for profit, stripping them of their sacred meaning. Practices such as traditional dances or clothing can become commodified, raising questions of cultural appropriation.

¹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Final Report, Volume 1: Summary (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997).

¹⁷ Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

¹⁸ Anaya, James S. Indigenous Peoples in International Law. Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁹ Crystal, David. Language Death. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Finally, aboriginal peoples are disproportionately affected by economic development pressures. Infrastructure projects and extractive industries frequently encroach on indigenous lands, leading to displacement and further weakening of cultural ties. At the same time, modern education systems tend to prioritise national or global languages, sidelining indigenous knowledge and practices. In summary, while colonial legacies created the initial rupture, globalisation



continues to reinforce cultural homogenisation. Indigenous peoples now face a dual challenge: recovering from historical suppression while adapting to modern pressures that threaten to erase what remains.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

KEY UN INSTRUMENTS

The most significant international standard for protecting indigenous identities is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007). Adopted by the General Assembly after decades of negotiation, UNDRIP affirms the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, to maintain and strengthen their cultural institutions, and to practice and revitalize their languages and traditions.²⁰ Although non-binding, it represents a strong political commitment by the international community. Earlier, the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 169 (1989) marked the first legally binding treaty dedicated specifically to indigenous peoples.

It obliges ratifying states to safeguard cultural rights, land tenure, and traditional institutions.²¹ However, ratification has been limited, with fewer than 30 countries committing to it. Additionally, general human rights treaties provide protections: Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966) guarantees minorities the right to enjoy their own culture and language.²² Similarly, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) affirms the right to take part in cultural life. Together, these instruments form the backbone of the legal framework.

UN AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES

Several UN organs and agencies are central to advancing indigenous rights. Within the General Assembly, SOCHUM regularly addresses reports on self-determination and human rights questions. The Human Rights Council (HRC) also plays a vital role, particularly through its Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, who monitors and reports on violations worldwide.²³ The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), established in 2000, functions as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It provides recommendations on indigenous concerns ranging from education to development.

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) further supports states and communities by offering technical advice on implementing UNDRIP. Cultural preservation is also addressed by UNESCO, particularly through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), which promotes the protection of practices, languages, and rituals.²⁴ UNESCO also leads the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), recognising language as a cornerstone of identity.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL APPROACHES

Beyond the UN, regional human rights systems have advanced indigenous rights. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has ruled repeatedly in favor of indigenous land and cultural

²⁰ United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/61/295), 2007.

²¹ International Labour Organization, C169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989.

²² United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 27.

²³ Human Rights Council, “Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples,” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-indigenous-peoples>.

²⁴ UNESCO, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).

protections, setting important precedents in Latin America.²⁵ The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) also recognises collective rights, though implementation remains uneven. Nationally, some countries have developed frameworks to safeguard indigenous heritage.

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008–2015) acknowledged cultural erasure caused by residential schools and recommended language revitalisation programs. In Australia, constitutional debates continue over recognising Aboriginal peoples as the “First Peoples.” Latin American states such as Bolivia and Ecuador have even enshrined indigenous rights in their constitutions. Yet, many states remain reluctant to grant strong autonomy or



legal protections, citing concerns over sovereignty or national unity. This tension highlights the gap between international commitments and local realities.

²⁵ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Case of the Mayagna (Sumo) Awas Tingni Community v. Nicaragua, Judgment of 31 August 2001.

CASE STUDIES

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS

The Aboriginal peoples of Australia, among the world's oldest continuous cultures, have faced systematic suppression since European colonisation in the late 18th century. Policies such as the Stolen Generations, where children were forcibly removed from their families, disrupted cultural continuity and weakened indigenous identities.²⁶ Today, many Aboriginal languages are critically endangered: of the 250 languages once spoken, fewer than 20 remain in daily use.²⁷

Cultural traditions such as Dreamtime stories—oral narratives explaining cosmology and law—have also suffered due to urbanisation and the dominance of English-language media. While land rights movements, such as the Mabo v. Queensland (1992) decision recognising native title, have been landmark victories, challenges persist in securing meaningful recognition of Aboriginal self-determination.²⁸ Recent initiatives, including bilingual education programs and calls for a constitutional “Voice to Parliament,” reflect ongoing efforts to preserve and revitalise Aboriginal traditions, though political debates reveal the difficulty of achieving consensus.

FIRST NATIONS IN CANADA

Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples illustrate both the harms of cultural homogenisation and the possibilities of cultural revival. From the 19th to late 20th century, indigenous children were forced into residential schools, where they were punished for speaking native languages or practicing cultural traditions. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 2008, documented these abuses and recognised them as “cultural genocide.”²⁹

While many traditions were lost, recent decades have seen renewed investment in indigenous languages and cultural education. Provinces such as British Columbia have introduced indigenous language curricula, and community-driven projects are working to revitalise traditional ceremonies and governance practices. Nevertheless, economic pressures from extractive industries—such as oil pipelines crossing indigenous territories—continue to challenge cultural survival. The tension between indigenous self-determination and national economic interests reflects broader global dilemmas.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin America is home to some of the largest and most diverse indigenous populations, from Amazonian tribes to Andean highland communities. Despite constitutional advances—such as Bolivia declaring itself a “plurinational state” in 2009—indigenous peoples still face threats from globalisation. Large-scale deforestation in the Amazon not only damages ecosystems but also undermines indigenous traditions tied to forests.³⁰

²⁶ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997).

²⁷ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), “Australian Indigenous Languages,” 2020, <https://aiatsis.gov.au>.

²⁸ Mabo v Queensland (No 2), High Court of Australia, 1992.

²⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Final Report, Volume 1: Summary (2015).

³⁰ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “Deforestation in the Amazon,” 2021, <https://www.unep.org>.

In Peru and Ecuador, mining and oil extraction projects have sparked protests from communities whose land and sacred sites are at risk. In many cases, traditional knowledge about sustainable land management has been sidelined in favor of economic development.³¹ At the same time, indigenous movements across the region have gained strength, advocating for Buen Vivir (“living well”), a philosophy rooted in community, harmony, and respect for nature. This illustrates how indigenous traditions can offer alternatives to dominant models of growth, contributing to global debates on sustainability.



CHALLENGES AND KEY ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

BALANCING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

One of the central dilemmas in protecting aboriginal traditions is balancing cultural preservation with economic development. Many states argue that infrastructure, mining, or agricultural expansion is necessary for national growth, yet these projects often displace indigenous peoples and undermine cultural practices tied to land.³² Governments frequently justify such projects under the principle of sovereignty, but indigenous communities stress their right to self-determination, as affirmed in UNDRIP.

This conflict is especially visible in regions like the Amazon or Arctic, where extractive industries compete with indigenous claims. Delegates must grapple with how to respect indigenous autonomy while recognising state priorities. The issue raises broader questions: should cultural preservation take precedence over economic gain, and if not, how can compromises be designed to protect both?

PROTECTING KNOWLEDGE AND TRADITIONS

Another challenge concerns the intellectual property (IP) rights of indigenous peoples. Traditional knowledge—such as medicinal practices, agricultural methods, or artistic expressions—is often exploited without consent. Examples include pharmaceutical companies commercialising plant-based remedies known to indigenous groups, or fashion brands appropriating indigenous designs without acknowledgment.³³

International frameworks like the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) recognise the importance of protecting traditional knowledge, but enforcement remains weak. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has ongoing negotiations on creating legal safeguards, yet consensus has been slow.³⁴ The key debate here is how to create mechanisms that ensure indigenous peoples benefit from their knowledge while preventing exploitation. Should there be a global treaty, or should protections remain at the national level?

TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Technology plays a paradoxical role in cultural preservation. On one hand, global media and digital platforms often spread homogenised content, marginalising indigenous narratives. On the other hand, technology can serve as a tool for preservation—language apps, digital archives, and online cultural initiatives help younger generations reconnect with traditions.³⁵ Similarly, education can either suppress or revive aboriginal identities. Mainstream systems often prioritise national or global languages, leaving indigenous ones behind.

However, bilingual or culturally grounded education has shown promise in countries like New Zealand (Māori immersion schools) and Canada (indigenous language programs). Delegates must consider how international cooperation can promote inclusive education and digital strategies that empower indigenous communities rather than assimilate them. This raises a

³² Anaya, James S. *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

³³ Dutfield, Graham. *Protecting Traditional Knowledge: Pathways to the Future*. International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, 2006.

³⁴ World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), “Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC),” <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/>.

³⁵ UNESCO, “Harnessing Technology for the Preservation of Indigenous Languages,” 2022, <https://www.unesco.org>.

critical question: how can SOCHUM encourage the use of modern tools to safeguard ancient traditions?

QUESTIONS TO BE PONDERED UPON

1. How can states balance the need for economic development projects with the obligation to safeguard



- indigenous cultural rights?
2. Should aboriginal communities have veto power over development projects that affect their lands and traditions, or should states retain final authority?
 3. What mechanisms can be introduced at the UN or regional level to ensure fair protection of traditional knowledge and prevent cultural appropriation?
 4. Is there a need for a binding international treaty on indigenous intellectual property rights, or should existing frameworks (like WIPO negotiations) be strengthened instead?
 5. How can technology—such as digital archives, apps, or social media—be better used to preserve indigenous languages and traditions, without accelerating homogenisation?
 6. What role should education systems play in preserving aboriginal identities? Should bilingual or culturally grounded curricula be mandatory in countries with indigenous populations?
 7. How can SOCHUM encourage states to integrate indigenous perspectives into policymaking, especially in areas of land management, development, and culture?
 8. What role should civil society, NGOs, and indigenous youth networks play in ensuring that cultural preservation efforts are community-led rather than imposed from outside?

THE WAY FORWARD...

While the challenges facing aboriginal identities and traditions are significant, the international community has both the responsibility and the tools to address them. SOCHUM, though not empowered to pass binding resolutions, plays a critical role in setting global norms and shaping political consensus. Delegates must explore how existing frameworks can be strengthened, how states can be encouraged to act, and how indigenous communities can be placed at the center of decision-making. The path forward requires balancing respect for sovereignty with the universality of human rights, as well as ensuring that solutions are inclusive, practical, and culturally sensitive. The following questions are intended to guide delegates in thinking about actionable solutions.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can SOCHUM encourage states to implement UNDRIP and align national laws with its principles?
2. Should there be an international monitoring mechanism to track cultural erosion and preservation efforts, or should this remain within national jurisdiction?
3. How can states be incentivised to ratify ILO Convention No. 169, given its low rate of adoption?
4. What role can UNESCO programs (such as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages) play in strengthening preservation efforts, and how can SOCHUM support them?
5. Should there be a dedicated UN fund for indigenous cultural preservation projects, particularly in education and technology?
6. How can indigenous youth and women be better integrated into decision-making about cultural preservation?
7. What measures can prevent the commodification of indigenous culture, while still allowing indigenous peoples to benefit economically from cultural tourism or creative industries?
8. How can digital platforms be harnessed to preserve languages and traditions, while minimising risks of cultural dilution?
9. Should SOCHUM encourage states to make culturally grounded education mandatory in regions with aboriginal populations?
10. What partnerships between states, NGOs, and indigenous communities can ensure that preservation efforts are community-driven rather than top-down?

