

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS: STORIES OF PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE

29 September 2023, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m., Azur Room



Leslie Cloud, Brijlal Chaudhari, Gert-Peter Bruch and Natalya Saprunova

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Indigenous peoples, resisting to exist

'There are more than 476 million Indigenous people, spread across 90 countries or 6% of the world's population, belonging to more than 5,000 different peoples and speaking nearly 4,000 languages,' announces Leslie Cloud in her introduction to

the debate. While indigenous peoples have struggled for centuries to survive, they have been excluded by the international community during the development of international legal norms, and have suffered violent policies of assimilation and the dispossession aimed at their disappearance. The publication of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 was the first major victory for indigenous peoples in gaining recognition. However, despite this, these peoples, whose territories account for 85% of biodiversity, are still not included in decision-making processes at all levels.

Sara Olsvig, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and former elected official in Greenland, explained that she is

MODERATOR:

Leslie Cloud, legal researcher, member of the Justice and Indigenous People's Rights (JUSTIP) network

SPEAKERS:

Gert Peter Bruch, President of Planète Amazone

Brijlal Chaudhari, Indigenous rights activist

Sara Olsvig, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council

Natalya Saprunova, photographer

working for the recognition of Inuit rights. The Inuit, who live in Canada, Alaska, Greenland and the Russian Far East, have struggled for centuries against the Westphalian borders, for recognition of their highly resource-dependent way of life, and for their voices to be heard on issues such as biodiversity and global warming. Founded in 1983, the ICC aims to bring these

Taking care of Indigenous peoples means taking care of your own future

Gert-Peter Bruch



Gert-Peter Bruch

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Amazon remains seriously threatened and action must be taken. *'Taking care of Indigenous peoples means taking care of your own future,'* he declared.

voices to international summits, particularly the Arctic Council, which brings together 8 countries and 6 indigenous organisations, and to defend their right to self-determination.

Brijlal Chaudhari, an indigenous rights activist from the Tharu nation in the Himalayas, shared his experiences as a member of an ethnic minority in Nepal. Forcibly assimilated and continually criminalised by the monarchy and then the young Nepalese democracy, the Tharus have had to fight for their autonomy and territory in order to secure the creation of a Tharu state within Nepal's federal system.

Gert Peter Bruch founded the NGO Planète Amazone in 2012, after more than 20 years of work with Brazilian indigenous peoples. The French journalist and director works to rally global citizens to the indigenous cause by demonstrating the need for collective mobilisation. Although Brazil's Constitution, dating from 1988, theoretically protects indigenous lands, the

Natalya Saprunova, a Russian photographer from Kola Bay on the Finnish-Norwegian border, works on the issue of the Saami people. Through her reports, she tries to give a voice to these people who are victims of settlement and are losing their culture every day. Today, there are only 1,500 Sami left in Russia, of whom only 200 still speak the language, she explains. The photographer has also worked with the indigenous people of Siberia, in particular the Yevens of eastern Yakutia, who are suffering from mining, global warming, deforestation and soil pollution.

The question of territory is fundamental for all these indigenous peoples, the moderator stressed. Brijlal Chaudhari explained that the Tharus' connection to their land is more than spiritual: *'It's our school, our pharmacy, our grocery store, and it's being stolen from us even though our way of life depends on it.'* The activist argued that the world needs to accept that humans belong to the Earth, not the



Natalya Saprunova

other way around. Understanding this interconnectedness is crucial to understanding the sound management of resources by indigenous peoples.

Gert Peter Bruch then addressed the crucial issue of border demarcation, which is urgently needed to protect indigenous peoples and their territories. Despite legal progress in Brazil, the turbulent presidency of Jair Bolsonaro has shown the limits of legal protection and the major threats posed by agribusiness, which is seeking to take over more and more Amazonian land. The recent re-election of President Lula, despite his promises, is not enough to protect the Amazon, although it is unanimously considered vital for humanity. The director asserted that giving a voice to indigenous peoples also means thinking differently about borders and the use of natural resources.



Watch
the full
debate on
YouTube

The Evenes and other peoples Natalya Saprunova met are also deeply attached to their ecosystem. But, while they have a deep respect for nature, they are the first to suffer

from global warming in Russia. The Inuit are also suffering from the rise in average temperatures, added Sara Olsvig. While the Inuit word for Arctic literally means 'frozen place', the melting ice is radically changing the way of life of the Greenland's indigenous people, whether it is traditional fishing or travelling on the ice in winter.

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Beyond the representation of indigenous peoples, Brijlal Chaudhari advocated taking an example from their resource management. Their knowledge of biodiversity conservation is invaluable and the world needs indigenous climate leaders. Gert Peter Bruch analysed the importance of the legal concept of ecocide, which is key to holding those in power accountable for their actions and defending places.

Leslie Cloud summed up the arguments by inviting the audience to think for themselves about the issue and the law as it relates to indigenous peoples, who are pioneers in the fight against global warming through their holistic analysis of the past. In turn, the speakers detailed the emergence of a real awareness and desire for commitment among indigenous youth who are determined to fight against the humiliation of central governments and their continued invisibility.

Brijlal Chaudhari also noted that the concept of illegality, as defined by those in power, is inevitably biased and fluctuating. *'If we don't fight, is the only options are assimilation or exile,'* he asserted in conclusion.

FOR THE PLANET AND PEOPLES, A COMMITTED YOUTH

29 September, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. – Nacre Room



Tara Goodwin, Laëtitia Helouët, Thomas Friang and Juliette Hurier

Thomas Friang presented the main themes of the debate: is peace possible without a protected planet? How can we manage geopolitical and ecological chaos at the same time? He conceded that giving in to anxiety is easier than making a com-

MODERATOR:

Thomas Friang, Director General and founder of the Open Diplomacy Institute.

SPEAKERS:

Tara Goodwin, head of the French Open Diplomacy delegation at Y20 2023 in India (G20 for Youth)

Laëtitia Helouët, President of the Observatoire national de la politique de la Ville

Juliette Hurier, student on the Master's programme in International Business and Diplomacy at ESCP Paris, part of the French Open Diplomacy delegation at Y7 2023 (G7 for Youth) in Japan

mitment. On the subject of commitment, Juliette Hurier urged us to remain hopeful, assuring us that being informed is already being committed. She referred to the local level (municipal youth councils), where solutions are already being devised. Laëtitia Helouët reviewed the history of youth involvement. She particularly emphasised the democratisation of access to education, which has broadened the social diversity of young people who can get involved. She expressed her disappointment at the fact that only 52% of 18/24 year-olds took part in both rounds of the last presidential election.

Tara Goodwin, who was appointed head of the French delegation in India at the Y20, recalled a very enriching experience in terms of this commitment, which took shape following an Instagram post. She carried out consultations in France before