

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
13th session, 12-23 May 2014
“World Conference on Indigenous Peoples”

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Jarmo Viinanen
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Finland
to the United Nations

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(check against delivery)

Madame/Mr. Chair,
Distinguished members of the Permanent Forum
Honorable delegates and participants of the Permanent Forum,

A successful outcome of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in New York in September, is crucial for Finland. A positive outcome can be achieved only through respectful partnership between States and Indigenous Peoples.

The World Conference is not just an event but a process which Finland strongly believes should be inclusive. Effective and full participation of Indigenous Peoples in the preparations of the outcome document of this Conference is vital for its success.

Finland therefore fully supports the proposal of the President of the General Assembly to appoint two state representatives and two representatives of indigenous peoples as his advisors for the negotiation process of the Conference outcome, which is consistent with the decisions taken by the General Assembly regarding WCIP. Finland is profoundly concerned regarding the delay in the preparations for the GA high-level meeting and urges the PGA to take prompt decisions and action in this regard, including by organizing an informal interactive hearing with representatives of indigenous peoples and other stakeholders, as reaffirmed by the President of the GA in the Forum discussions last week. We will consider carefully and urgently the proposal on the way forward presented by Ambassador Gregoire this morning. We expect to see this proposal in writing.

Should there be no full and effective participation for Indigenous Peoples, the legitimacy of the World Conference and its outcome document are put at risk. Undoubtedly, it would also undermine the credibility and work of the UN in the field of indigenous issues.

In accordance with the decision of the General Assembly, the Conference provides an opportunity to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including pursuing the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Finland welcomes the Indigenous Peoples' active contribution to the preparation process of the World Conference, including the meetings in Alta and Chiang Mai. The Alta outcome document is an important input into this process. For this reason we supported giving the Alta outcome document a formal UN status. The Alta outcome document is also an important document when considering the specific themes for the round tables and interactive panel for the World Conference. Generally, we are supportive that the Alta outcome document be taken into account in the preparation of the outcome document of the World Conference. We continue to study carefully the recommendations put forward in the Alta Outcome Document.

We share the understanding expressed in the Alta Outcome Document that nothing in the World Conference process or its outcomes may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights set forth in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or other international standards. The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 was an important milestone in recognizing the status and rights of Indigenous Peoples. Fulfilling the objectives of the Declaration requires continuous and consistent work. The World Conference is part of this process. The outcome document of the World Conference must reaffirm the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We expect a concise action-oriented outcome document of the World Conference

that sets out the new commitment to the enhancement of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and thus shapes the UN agenda for years to come.

As regards the development theme in the Alta outcome, States must implement the post 2015-goals in full and effective cooperation with Indigenous Peoples and to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to improve the situation for Indigenous Peoples globally.

We believe that the World Conference must express the UN Membership's commitment to take decisions to ensure ways and means to promote the participation of representatives of Indigenous Peoples at meetings of relevant United Nations bodies and other relevant United Nations meetings and processes on issues affecting Indigenous Peoples during the 69th session of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General's report from 2012 (A/HRC/21/24) gives important guidance in this respect. We have taken note of the Indigenous Peoples' recommendation in the Alta outcome document, which refers to the issue of observer status.

On the national level Finland will prepare its contributions to the negotiations on the outcome document through a negotiation between the authorities and the Sámi Parliament obliged by the Act on the Sámi Parliament. Finland's delegation to the World Conference will include a representative of the Sámi Parliament and we encourage other Governments to include representatives of their Indigenous Peoples in their national delegations. Finland channels support through the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples (VFIP) and the UN Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues as well as the Indigenous Global Coordinating Group (GCG) to support Indigenous Peoples' participation in the World Conference.

In conclusion, Finland wishes to reiterate its longstanding commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are ready to take part in a constructive manner in a preparatory process that respects the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.