



14th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations Headquarter, New York
20 April to 1 May 2015

Agenda Item; Human rights with focus on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
7.b. Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples
and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Statement by
Sámi Parliament of Finland

Thank you Madam Chair, distinguished Government delegates, Members of Permanent Forum, inter-governmental delegates, sisters and brothers:

I stand here for the Sámi Parliament of Finland, of which president I was elected a month ago, after turbulent days when Finland once again failed to ratify ILO Convention no. 169, despite earlier promises.

Firstly, I want to mention that I'm a member of the Skolt Sámi community, which is the most endangered of existing Sámi groups in Finland. The future of our culture and language is depending on the 300 language speakers we have left, including my 6-year-old daughter, who is the only one in her age group learning the language at home from her mother. I am standing in front of you asking for support for her, for my people, to all of our peoples who are still trying to keep our cultures alive:

Recently, after three years of negotiations between Sámi Parliament and Finnish Government, the Finnish Parliament rejected the negotiated government bill for the Amendment of the Act on the Sámi Parliament and the former president of the Sámi Parliament, mr. Näkkäläjärvi, resigned from his position as a protest.

The law reform was to improve the Sámi cultural self-governance and the administration of the Sámi Parliament. The proposed bill stumbled with the collective right to self-determination, which Finland chooses not to recognize despite of many recommendations given in different connections. Contrary to the UNDRIP Article 33, it retained the right to determine who is a Sámi to Finnish State and its Supreme Administrative Court. We have been deprived from the right to define our identity or membership in the community in accordance with our own customs and traditions.

Simultaneously with the Act on the Sámi Parliament was linked our long-term goal: that Finland could finally ratify the ILO Convention no. 169. To our disappointment, Government bill for the Ratification of the ILO Convention no. 169 was transferred to the next electoral term.

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Finnish Parliamentary elections approaching and the campaigning already in heat, the Finnish Parliament simply lacked any political will and courage to promote the rights of the Sámi. Situation does not look promising after the elections either. The new major parties have been the most vocal opposing the ratification of the ILO 169.

Still, we are not giving up hope that the next government commits to promoting the rights of the Sámi. Without that, we cannot fully carry our responsibility as the guardians of our lands and cultures. First step would be publicly announcing it in the new government programme.

Finland is a well known and respected state when it comes to the human rights. And indeed we, the Sámi have respected it in many ways after the years of good co-operation. But when it comes to promoting the rights of the indigenous peoples and the co-operation between the Sámi Parliament and the Parliament of Finland this spring, we cannot show much respect.

We will be monitoring carefully the choices Finland is going to make when it comes to promoting the Sámi rights; law reform and ratification of the ILO 169. How Finland will respect rights laid down in the UNDRIP? This requires also your attention.

Madam Chair,

We need international support, from the UN bodies and NGOs, to convince Finnish parliament to ratify ILO 169 and to respect the rights laid down in the UN's declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Sámi Parliament pleads that the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples will do follow-up remarks on the situation in Finland.

Sámi Parliament of Finland also supports recommendations stated in joint statement by Suoma Sámi Nuorat, Sáminuorra and Saami Council.