Mun lean Gáppe Piera Jovnna Gáhteriinná Risten, chair of the Youth Council of Sámi Parliament in Finland. I am addressing this forum because I strongly believe our people can offer a highly qualified knowledge educating the non-indigenous people. I am standing in front of you asking for support to all of our indigenous peoples that by doing so, it will still be possible to keep our cultures and languages alive.

We would kindly ask the members of the UNPFII to give recommendations to the ongoing Finnish high school curriculum plan reform to include obligations to teach correct information about Sámi people. We would like to recommend the members of the UNPFII to hold expert group meeting on identifying good practices how to tackle ignorance, disinformation, the lack of distributing correct information on indigenous peoples.

The political decisions made by the government of Finland concerning Sámi people seem to be lacking political will to develop national legislation and the knowledge based on a view produced by indigenous peoples themselves, as nominated in article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This lack of political will, all around the world, is sad to see as a young indigenous woman wanting to believe on equal human rights and legislation that is for the implementation of our rights as indigenous peoples and fulfilling the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Through the past decades and especially the past years, we are in a situation where we have to report ignorance, disinformation and serious challenges on the implementation of our indigenous rights, for example the Arctic Railway process and the Deanu/Teno salmon fishing agreement. Based on a doctoral thesis written by Juha Guttorm last year, the improvement of the act on Sámi Parliament has been static for over 23 years. That means that almost my whole life the self-determination of our people has not advanced at all.

Moreover, the Finnish curriculum plans seem mainly to ignore the Sámi substance. The Sámi Parliament’s Youth Council launched Dihtosis project where Sámi youth educate the Finnish youth. One small scale project cannot change the world but we have seen the huge hunger for information inside the Finnish society, especially among the youth. It is time for the government to take multiple action to rectify the past and teach their own society together with us about us, instead of continuing the tradition of misinformation and ignorance. We no longer deserve to be stifled to die.

Giitu, thank you.