

April 19, 2015
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
14th session, 20 April to 1 May 2015

Arctic Indigenous Caucus

Delivered by Mr. Hjalmar Dahl, President, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Greenland

Madam Chair,

On behalf of the Arctic Indigenous Caucus, let me begin by congratulating you upon your election as Chair of this important forum.

The Arctic Indigenous Caucus would like to express our great appreciation to the United Nations General Assembly, Member States, indigenous peoples and many other partners for their active contribution to the successful outcome of the High Level Plenary Session known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) in September 2014.

The reaffirmation of world-wide support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the commitment made to respect, consult and cooperate in good faith with indigenous peoples through their own representative institutions in order to obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect indigenous peoples, and prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories and other resources is of key importance to meeting the ends of the Declaration.

In this regard, the Arctic Indigenous Caucus values the participation in United Nations and the ability of the UN to assist in the monitoring and implementation of the UNDRIP, as provided for in Articles 41 and 42 in the Declaration.

To this end, capacity building at all levels and among all parties to ensure knowledge and understanding of the provisions of the UNDRIP and their importance to ensure the rights of indigenous peoples is key.

Unfortunately, not enough is yet done to further the crucial monitoring and implementation of the UNDRIP. Renewed and constructive action must be taken in this regard. In our view, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) represents a good candidate for an effective monitoring mechanism, provided its mandate be modified and the mechanism be improved as provided for in paragraph 28 of the WCIP Outcome Document.

Madame Chair,

The Arctic Indigenous Caucus recommends that an improved and amended EMRIP mandate truly complements the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and this forum. Accordingly, the mandate should include the opportunity for EMRIP, inter alia, to:

- Seek, receive and consider communications and other information from States and Indigenous Peoples on specific cases and matters of concern for the rights in the Declaration,
- facilitate face to face dialogue between states and indigenous peoples' representatives;

- provide technical assistance and advice to states, indigenous peoples and the private sector to overcome obstacles to implementing the UNDRIP;
- provide practical and technical advice to states and indigenous peoples including assistance with national implementation plans and legislative, policy and administrative measures;
- provide advice for implementation of UN human rights bodies for which there is substantial consensus between states and indigenous peoples;
- build the capacity of indigenous peoples to engage effectively with states and the UN, including technical assistance and facilitating issues and complaints being channeled more effectively into existing UN human rights mechanisms;
- contribute to the Universal Periodic Review Process and the work of Treaty Bodies, which have an existing role in ensuring states meet their obligations; and
- make proposals to the Human Rights Council regarding gaps in existing standards and norms for the protection of Indigenous peoples' human rights.

Furthermore, an improved EMRIP should be composed of well qualified independent experts, taking into account regional and gender balance and selected in cooperation with indigenous peoples' representative institutions. And, very importantly, the EMRIP should have adequate financial and human resources available to effectively fulfill its mandate, including adequate meeting days and opportunity for inter-sessional meeting.

In closing, Madame Chair,

The Arctic Indigenous Caucus, consistent with the right of self-determination, further recommends full and affective participation in all United Nations bodies by indigenous peoples' representative institutions, including indigenous governments and parliaments, based on their own determination of which issues under discussion in those bodies and processes could affect their rights. Reference is also made to Theme 2, paragraph 10 of the Alta Outcome Document and paragraph 33 of the WCIP Outcome Document, both concerned with providing specific proposals to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples' representative institutions.

Thank you for your attention