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141

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STATEMENT BY

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AMBASSADOR

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Agenda Item 5: Human Rights;
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the
situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples,
Mr Rodolfo Stavenhagen**

New York, 18 May 2007

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Madame chair, Mr Stavenhagen,

Let me begin by expressing the appreciation of my Government to the important work that this Permanent Forum and you, Mr Stavenhagen continuously deliver.

In your report and your work, once again, you have addressed many important issues that affect the lives of indigenous peoples around the world. In the interest of time, let me take this opportunity to focus on just one of them.

Despite many agreements and legal documents, there is still a wide gap between norms and policies and the day-to-day reality of indigenous peoples. This implementation gap relates not just to internationally agreed instruments, the application of a human rights based approach to development, the Millenium Development Goals or national legislation, but also to the recommendations of

the Permanent Forum and the Special Rapporteur and other authorities. Too often the recommendations are ignored or just not brought to the attention of the appropriate decision and policy makers, such as national parliaments, ministries or regional and local governments.

There are many ways in which the governments and various international, regional and local organisations, agencies and NGOs and even individuals can address this implementation gap. I will mention only a few.

Indigenous issues and the human rights in general need to be kept continuously on the agenda. All the work undertaken for example for the implementation of the Millenium Development Goals must both bear in mind obligations under international human rights instruments and take into account the situation of indigenous populations in the affected geographical areas.

Direct cooperation among as many actors as possible must be initiated and continued to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and, most importantly, to enhance the use of resources that are always more scarce than what would be needed. Many agencies work with and around the same or similar issues but more often than not are not aware of each other's activities. Synergy could bring about considerable savings both in time and money.

Awareness-raising amongst the population as a whole must be intensified. Awareness is crucially important for implementation, since often at the core of discrimination and non-fulfilment of obligations related to human rights and fundamental freedoms lie ignorance and lack of understanding. This applies not only to the situation of indigenous peoples but to that of all the vulnerable groups. The work needs to begin at grass root level.

As we have noted before, it is of utmost importance that States display greater political will and capacity to effectively promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, including indigenous peoples. An effective way of displaying this is to support the implementation of the various instruments and recommendations that are relevant to the situation of indigenous peoples, and to continue contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council, the Permanent Forum and Special Rapporteurs as well as the work of the other human rights bodies in general. Lack of support for these actors in effect leads to disrespect for human rights and hampers their joint efforts to make the world a better place for us all.

With regard to the presentations by the other two special rapporteurs, Ms Erturk on violence against women and Ms Huda on trafficking in women and children, my Government finds it vitally important that all the States as well as the indigenous peoples around the world take note of the highly alarming issues highlighted by the rapporteurs and take immediate steps to eliminate the violence against women and children, whatever form it may appear. The wellbeing of women and children is vital for the wellbeing of the society as a whole.

Finally, and at the present moment most importantly, we urge together with you Mr Rapporteur, with many Governments and with all the indigenous peoples in all corners of the earth that those countries that have concerns related to the final adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to whatever they can, by means of interpretation and good will, so that the General Assembly can endorse the text as adopted by the Human Rights Council last year. And in the meantime, we hope that the implementation of the Declaration can begin gradually.

Thank you.