



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

**The 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council  
Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous  
peoples and Expert Mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples  
18 September 2012**

**Statement by the Delegation of Finland**

Madam President,

Finland expresses its thanks and appreciation to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples for his report where he also examines the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls.

Fighting violence against women and girls is one of the key priorities for Finland. The issue is complex and it is related to many structural reasons like unequal division of power as well as to discrimination.

Indigenous women and girls face violence both inside and outside their communities, in private and public sphere. As the Special Rapporteur points out, fighting this violence requires a holistic approach. This means that both their rights as women and children, and their rights as indigenous peoples need to be advanced. Also in this regard Finland welcomes that the Special Rapporteur has raised the question of participation of indigenous peoples themselves in the design, delivery and oversight of programmes related to preventing and punishing violence against women and girls. It is essential that indigenous women and girls have a say on issues affecting them and that they are not only seen as victims but as active participants of society.

Finland expresses its thanks and appreciation also to the Expert Mechanism for the reports presented to this Council session, and especially welcome EMRIP's study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples.

Language is a cornerstone in the culture and identity of indigenous peoples. Language is not only crucial to preserve the culture but also to develop it and to transmit it to future generations. In this regard Finland stresses the role of indigenous women who are key actors in revitalising the culture and identity, and calls for particular attention to their rights and special needs in the process of protecting and promoting indigenous peoples' cultures as enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In Finland, as in many other States, the revitalization of indigenous languages calls for urgent special measures. In this regard, we promote the objectives of the Declaration by means of a national program for the revival of the Saami languages spoken in Finland. Moreover, a new cultural centre devoted to Saami culture and administration was inaugurated in Finland last April.

Thank you.