



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF ESTONIA TO THE UN

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Margus Kolga,**

**Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Estonia**

**At the Fourteenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on  
Indigenous Issues**

**Human Rights: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the  
Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Madame Chair, representatives of indigenous peoples and delegates,

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks in our national capacity.

At the outset let me congratulate you on your assumption of the position of the Chair and commend you for your skillful stewardship of the Forum.

Estonia values highly the work of the Permanent Forum. We are glad to see the high number of indigenous peoples attending the Forum each year which proves the relevance of this Forum. The Forum is a unique body in the whole UN system, providing an opportunity for genuine discussion between the indigenous peoples

and the Member States. We should try to make full use of this and facilitate by all means available the participation of Indigenous Peoples at the Forum as well as at other relevant meetings.

Estonia strongly supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and we urge all states to fully endorse it and follow it as a road map in their relations with the indigenous peoples.

In this respect we were pleased that in the outcome document adopted at the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, governments reaffirmed our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The outcome document includes clear deliverables to further improve indigenous peoples' rights, including stronger action by the UN. We hope that the outcome document will serve as a basis for the way ahead and are looking forward to its swift implementation, among others through the establishment of the System Wide Action Plan.

Madame Chair,

The great majority of states support UNDRIP. Unfortunately, however, in many countries, material gains are often prioritized over fundamental rights, thereby more prominently over the economic, social and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples.

It is also crucial to understand that the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples is a form of wealth that clearly outweighs the economic profit gained by extensive and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

For Estonians, the future of Finno-Ugric peoples with whom we are linked in kinship and language is particularly close to our hearts and we follow closely, often also with concern, the developments in their traditional territories. To support our kindred-nations, the Estonian Government launched the Kindred Peoples Programme in 1999. This year marked the start of the 4th-cycle of the Kindred Peoples Programme (for the years 2015-2019) through which a total of 1.27 million euros will be allocated for cultural and educational projects to support our kindred Finno-Ugric peoples. An example of a project that has been supported by the Kindred Peoples' programme is Finno-Ugric Capitals of Culture, an initiative of Youth Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples (MAFUN). This year's Finno-Ugric Capital of Culture, ethnic Seto village of Obinitsa in South Estonia, is looking forward to hosting representatives of many indigenous peoples, including those present at this Forum, throughout this year.

As to another regional topic, I would like to outline the situation of Crimean Tatars. We need ensure that the human rights of Crimean Tatars as indigenous peoples of Crimea are fully respected and we hope that the international community pays close attention to this.

Let me mention that for years Estonia has provided financial support to the UN Fund on Indigenous Populations. We shall continue to do so in the future.

In conclusion, Madame Chair, let me also use this opportunity to welcome this year's focus on the working methods of the Permanent forum. We have heard many good recommendations during this session and hope that the discussion will be followed by a change in the working methods that will increase forum's ability

to to more effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate. In particular, we welcome a stronger focus and commitment to the implementation of Permanent Forum's recommendations, as well as improving transparency of the process whereby ideas discussed on this floor become Forum recommendations.

(Estonia, as currently member of ECOSOC would also be interested in contributing to the improvement of working methods of the forum taking into consideration the role of ECOSOC which currently is rather limited as also mentioned during the session.)

Thank you and I wish you successful continuation of the session!