



Finland to the UN Security Council in 2013-2014

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Item 3
Report on the Expert Group Meeting:
Combating Violence against Women and Girls**

Statement by

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(check against delivery)

Distinguished Chair, members of the Permanent Forum, participants of the eleventh session,

Finland would like to thank the international expert group for its comprehensive report on combating violence against indigenous women and girls. The report gives us an eye-opening insight to violence indigenous women and girls face both inside and outside their communities, in private and public sphere.

Women's rights are one of the key priorities of Finland's human rights policy. Furthermore, Finland's Development Policy promotes and supports the participation of women in decision-making and fights against discrimination that causes, among other things, violence against women and girls. Finland has also strongly promoted the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and we emphasize giving special attention to groups in the most vulnerable situations such as indigenous women. Therefore, we have studied the report with great interest and would like to make a couple of remarks.

As the expert group report shows, indigenous women and girls face in many cases multiple discrimination and several forms of violence, both physical and mental. However, violence remains often unidentified and unreported. Therefore, awareness-raising among society is a key to identify the problems and to make the situation change.

As the recommendations of the expert group point out, it is important that indigenous women and girls are not only seen as victims but as active participants of society. Their contribution to the society is important. It is crucial to ensure all indigenous girls and women access to education that enables economic empowerment, and to encourage indigenous women to leading and decision-making positions in society in order to fight violence against them.

We must also remember that a woman or a girl can only be an active participant in the society if she has the right and knowledge needed to make decisions concerning her own body, sexuality, and reproductive health. Therefore indigenous women's and girls' right and access to sexual and reproductive health and services is an important element in their empowerment.

Access to justice is fundamental to guarantee the fulfilment of the rights of indigenous women. Finland is committed to this both nationally and through international conventions, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Council of Europe's European Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic violence, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides valuable normative guidance in this regard.

Combating violence against indigenous women and girls is a responsibility of everyone. Only by working together with the indigenous peoples and by improving the co-operation among the authorities, service providers, professionals and NGOs we will be able to yield tangible results.

No change is truly possible if not all members of the communities and the whole society are included. Therefore, the role of men and boys cannot be forgotten. Finland agrees that deconstructing stereotypical gender roles that are based on aggression and control contributes to the well-being and empowerment of the whole community. Sensitization on gender roles and involving boys and men in promoting indigenous women's and girls' rights is therefore essential.

Thank you.