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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Twelfth Session

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Agenda Item: 8

H.E. Ms. Tine Mørch Smith
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative

Mr. Chairperson,

Norway welcomes the *Study on the right to participation of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries in decision-making processes*. Indigenous youth represent an important voice in creating robust indigenous societies.

We want to commend the work of the Sámi Parliament of Norway, the Sámediggi, to include indigenous youth in decision-making processes. Norway notes that the establishment of a Sámi Parliament youth committee has strengthened the influence of young Sámi. The United Nations Permanent Forum for indigenous peoples' issues is another venue where indigenous youth can discuss matters in an international environment. We are therefore pleased to note that so many Sámi youth are attending this session of the Permanent Forum.

Mr. Chairperson,

The report brings to our attention an increase in anti-Sámi sentiments in the Nordic countries. This is not acceptable. In turn, this may lead to repression of Sámi identity, and in some cases even health problems. The Norwegian Government strongly condemns such statements. The study has concrete recommendations to the Norwegian Government, and we would like to comment on these.

First; Education is an important tool in combating prejudices towards Sámi people. In Norway we have a legal framework that ensures that all pupils learn about the Sámi peoples and their culture in school. Resource materials have been made available for teachers to ease access to information about Sámi culture and traditions. There is, however, still a gap before all teachers and school leaders acquire the necessary teaching competence about the Sámi culture.

(Check against delivery)

In June this year, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Sámediggi, will have consultations on the content of Sámi themes and subjects in school curricula. Participation by the Sámediggi in this process is a criterion of success for ensuring a sufficient and up-to-date school curriculum.

Mr. Chairperson,

Second; The Norwegian Government has taken several steps to promote the value and the richness of the Sámi culture among the general public. We will here mention some of them:

- **Gáldu – Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** was established in 2001 by the Government, in cooperation with the Sámediggi. Gáldu is mandated to increase and promote the knowledge and understanding of indigenous issues at a national and international level. A youth-friendly version of the UN Declaration of indigenous peoples' rights was presented in English at a side event together with UNICEF last week. Gáldu launched translations of the text in Norwegian and Northern Sámi languages at the same time.
- Another measure is the **Sámi Pathfinders project**. This is run by the Sámi University College and financed by the Government. The Pathfinders visit upper secondary schools and organizations around Norway and provide non-Sámi youth with information on Sámi issues. The project started up in 2004, and has been a great success.
- The Norwegian Centre against Racism, together with other participants, launched recently a **Sámi Myth Buster** website. It is an online tool that will provide a fact-based input into the national debate on Sami issues. It addresses a number of common prejudices against the Sámi, and counters them with basic facts.

Mr. Chairperson,

- Last, but not least, the Norwegian Government has also launched **measures to prevent bullying and discrimination** in schools and kindergartens. The Anti-Bullying campaign is a commitment for an inclusive childhood and a good learning environment. In 2013 the Sámediggi was included in this partnership.

The most important efforts against ethnic bullying are initiatives formed at local level, and encouraged and brought forward by relevant partners. We all have a responsibility to combat discrimination and prejudices in our own communities.

Thank you.