



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

24th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3 - Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

18 September 2013

Statement by the Delegation of Finland

Mr. Vice-President,

As this may be the last time the Special Rapporteur, *Mr James Anaya*, will address the Council in his present capacity, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to him for his outstanding work over the past six years. He has relentlessly explored ways to reach solutions to challenges between indigenous peoples, governments and local communities by emphasizing dialogue, mutual understanding and, most of all, respect for human rights.

We welcome that the Special Rapporteur also brings up the question of gender when referring to indigenous participation through representative institutions.

Indigenous women possess valuable traditional knowledge, also in relation to land and resources. At the same time, they are among the most vulnerable to the effects of extractive industries, including loss of livelihoods. It is therefore vital for them to be included in the decision-making in this field, too.

In Finland the Mining Act includes special provisions aimed at an improved consideration of the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people. If the rights of the Sami were not adequately considered when making decisions pursuant to the Act, the Sámi Parliament has a right to appeal. In Finland, the Sámi women are equally represented in the Sámi Parliament and thus included in the decision-making.

The case studies have shown that the best opportunity for indigenous women to get involved in decision-making is during the initial negotiation phase, when companies are most sensitive to local demands. Women should be empowered to participate, and indigenous peoples encouraged to include appropriate gender balance within their representative institutions. However, this should not be imposed.

What can we do to overcome gender injustices related to decision-making processes as well as to control over and access to the benefits of extractive industries?

We thank EMRIP for its very substantive session held in July and for mapping pertinent themes for thematic studies and advice to be considered in the Council.

Thank you.