



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
14th session

Item 3a) Outcome of the high-level plenary meeting of the
General Assembly known as the World Conference on
Indigenous Peoples

Nordic Statement by

H.E. Mr. Kai Sauer
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Finland
to the United Nations

New York, 20 April 2015

(check against delivery)

Chairperson,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark with Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland. Allow me first to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of the Forum.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was an important milestone in recognizing the status and rights of indigenous peoples. Fulfilling the objectives of this Declaration requires continuous and consistent work. We therefore welcomed that the UN membership reaffirmed its support for the Declaration at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and undertook commitments to promote its realization. Now we must live up to our commitments.

The Outcome document provides an important road-map for the realization of Indigenous Peoples' rights. Now focus must be set on its implementation. In this regard, the recent UN Secretariat's questionnaire on the implementation of the Outcome Document was an important step to prepare ground for concrete realization of commitments at the UN level. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report and recommendations. We hope that the deliberations of this permanent forum will be taken into account in the preparations of the report. We also encourage the UN to make an extra effort to reach Indigenous Peoples as broadly as possible and to seek their input, advice and recommendations for the report.

International human rights law and the UN Declaration recognize Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves. For the Nordic Countries it is of utmost importance that the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples is ensured throughout the follow-up of the World Conference and its Outcome document. This applies both to the UN as well as regional and national levels.

Chairperson,

Let me illustrate concretely why the Nordic countries believe it is essential to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations. Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions are not NGO's. Due to their status they cannot attend most UN meetings and make their voices heard independently.

Examples of such institutions are the representative bodies of the Sámi – the Sámi Parliaments – in Finland, Norway and Sweden. In accordance with the Self-Government arrangement, the Government of Greenland may speak on its own behalf in matters of interest to Greenland.

Therefore the Nordic countries propose - in addition to existing participatory rights of Indigenous Peoples - that Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions that are constitutionally, legally and/or politically acknowledged should have the right to participate in meetings of relevant UN bodies on issues affecting them. From our point of view this is the minimum starting point for the discussions. This participatory status should not be below the one given to NGO's having ECOSOC consultative status.

The Nordic countries stand ready to take actively part in the decision-making on Indigenous Peoples participation in ECOSOC and during the 70th session of the General Assembly.

Chairperson,

The Nordic countries support the work of the three UN mechanisms for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples. These mechanisms are and should remain complementary. We appreciate the coordination that has been developed in order to avoid duplication of work and to create synergies.

We are open to consider options that strengthen the mandate of the Expert Mechanism. EMRIP has much potential to serve as a new kind of platform for dialogue between States and Indigenous Peoples on achieving the ends of the Declaration. Indigenous Peoples' deliberations on this issue in Geneva in March and earlier this year in Arizona were a valuable contribution that we will take into account. We look forward to start discussions on the revision of the EMRIP's mandate in the near future in the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

To conclude, Chairperson,

A UN system-wide approach is crucial for the full realization of Indigenous Peoples' rights, including in the Post-2015 context. The Nordic countries welcome the identified key action areas by the UN on the basis of the call of the World Conference.

The system-wide action plan should include support to UN agencies in order to ensure that operational policies and guidelines relating to Indigenous Peoples are in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To be successful the system-wide approach must fully embrace a gender perspective and be based on participation of Indigenous Peoples in matters that affect them.

Thank you.