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SÁMEDIGGI SAMETINGET

President of the Sami Parliament (Norway) Egil Olli  
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 10<sup>th</sup> session, New York, 17 May 2011

Mr Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this forum.

The Sámi would once again like to direct attention to the heavy pressure being exerted on indigenous territories in connection with the quest for energy and industrial resources. Further, we would like to mention our hope that indigenous peoples will become actively engaged in the preparations for the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014.

A year ago, I had the opportunity to visit Brazil, Bolivia and Chile.

In Brazil, I visited the Xingu Indian reservation. A few days after our visit, the Brazilian parliament decided that the Xingu River would be regulated to generate electrical energy. This will involve extensive damming up of large parts of the Xingu territory, as well as the drying out of areas where the river used to run. All indigenous communities in Xingu will be affected. Some will be moved from areas that will be dammed up, while others will experience dramatic changes in their living conditions since they will be losing their river and the life it creates.

During our visit to Chile, I had the pleasure of meeting representatives of different indigenous peoples' organisations. Representatives of the Mapuches complained about the Norwegian energy company SN Power and its CEO, contending that they had been bulldozing their interests. Likewise, Norwegian fish-farming operations were criticised for their behaviour.

The main shareholder of SN Power is Statkraft, which is a fully state owned energy company. In April this year the Sámediggi was informed by the CEO of Statkraft that SN Power would be withdrawing from the projects on the Bio-Bio River due to a lack of agreement with indigenous peoples in the area. This means that SN Power has taken the message that the realization of the project depends on an agreement with the indigenous local population.

Having said this, we are also experiencing ever stronger pressure on our territories on the Fenno-Scandinavian Peninsula and in northwestern Russia.

Against this background, we would direct your attention to the work being done by Special Rapporteur James Anaya, presented in connection with his report to the Human Rights Council in 2010 under the heading "Corporate responsibilities with respect to indigenous rights". In the report, he refers to his close cooperation with the Secretary-General's Special Representative John Ruggie. I would also draw your attention to his latest report on human rights and business enterprises, published not long ago.

The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated that Norway actively supports Ruggie's work ~~and that Norway supports an extension of his mandate~~. Naturally, we expect that this support also applies to the Special Rapporteur's work with regard to enterprises' responsibility for indigenous rights. This will have a major impact in the Nordic states' policy in the European High North, particularly as regards enterprises in which the state itself is the sole or part owner. Here, Ruggie's three established approaches, described by the terms "protect, respect and remedy", will encounter challenges since the state finds itself on more than one side of the table. We recommend in the strongest possible terms that this work be continued.

We warmly welcome the General Assembly's decision to organise a special session in 2014, designated the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. We expect efforts to be made to ensure that indigenous peoples themselves get the opportunity to participate actively in the preparations for this conference. However, active participation requires that indigenous peoples also get the chance to meet for discussions and to coordinate their priorities as needed prior to this conference. This will be the case even though there may be time for only a few representatives of indigenous peoples at the General Assembly's rostrum during this conference.

We want these representatives to be able to speak with the authority and legitimacy that coordinated preparations can facilitate. We would also like access to the preparations and to the compilation of the main documents for the conference and future working plans.

We will take advantage of these days together to talk and consult with our indigenous brothers and sisters as well as representatives of states and others who want to help develop a plan for indigenous peoples' own preparations for the World Conference in 2014. The Sámi Parliament hereby invites to a side-event here in New York on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May. Here we will inform further more on our intentions and thoughts concerning this conference. In the Sami Parliament view it is of the highest importance that Indigenous Peoples may meet before 2014 for together to plan and prepare the World Indigenous People Conference.

The Sami Parliament wants to invite indigenous peoples to a preparatory conference to be held in Alta in the Finnmark County in Norway 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June 2013.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

I have the pleasure to report that the Norwegian Government and the Sámi Parliament on the 9<sup>th</sup> May this year agreed on the final text on new legislation to be adopted on the rights to the fisheries in the Sámi areas in northern Norway. The Sámi Parliament considers the proposed legislation as a recognition of Sámi resource rights based on Sámi historical use in the coastal areas of Sápmi.

Thank you for your attention.