

SWEDEN



Statement

by

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**at the United Nations Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues Tenth Session Agenda Item 4 a
United Nations Declaration
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation is honoured to participate in the 10th session of the Permanent Forum. Sweden welcomes this annual dialogue and the opportunity it gives to address national situations, under the heading and agenda item on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Last year my delegation gave an account of measures undertaken by the Swedish Government on a Nordic, national and regional level. We mentioned the consultations on a Sami bill to the Swedish Parliament; the entry into force of a new Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages, and thereto related protective and promotional measures on the Sami language; the preparations for the launch of negotiations on a Nordic Sami Convention; and the pending visit of Special Rapporteur Anaya.

My delegation is pleased to re-take these topics, reporting on progress made and challenges ahead, focussing on matters related to reindeer herding.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me start by thanking Special Rapporteur James Anaya for the report on the situation of the Sami people in Norway, Sweden and Finland, published in January this year. Mr. Anaya concluded that Sweden gives a relatively high level of attention to indigenous people overall. He also stated that the plans and programmes related to the Sami people in the Nordic countries set important examples for securing the rights of indigenous people. My Government has duly taken note of Mr. Anaya's observations concerning further challenges regarding self-determination, Sami influence in decision-making and the power of the Sami parliament in Sami-related questions.

In this regard, I would like point to the growing authority of the Sami Parliament. It was established in 1993, in order to strengthen the participation of persons belonging to the Sami indigenous people in political life, and to further recognize the status of the Sami as an indigenous people. The Sami Parliament is a publically-elected parliament and a public administrative authority, tasked to act for a vibrant Sami culture, including activities pertaining to Sami livelihoods.

Among the special responsibilities of the Sami Parliament are: participation in social planning and monitoring of compliance with Sami needs, including interests of the reindeer industry as regards land and water; deciding on the distribution of state grants and the distribution of other financing made available for the Sami; appointment of the Board of Sami Schools; management of Sami language projects; and dissemination of information on Sami conditions.

Recently, the Sami Parliament was awarded further responsibilities with regard to reindeer herding issues. It is the central administrative agency responsible for reindeer herding husbandry. And at the regional level, County Administrative Boards have special reindeer herding delegations consisting of representatives from the reindeer herding communities and regional politicians. Their mandate is to decide on land lease and other matters of concern to the Sami villages.

Strengthened policy dialogue, development and implementation of existing policies is underway. In this connection, we note that the rights of the Sami reindeerherding communities granted in the Swedish Reindeer Herding Act, were upheld on April 27 by the Supreme Court of Sweden. The Court examined customary reindeer pasturage of three Sami villages, affirming the “prescription from time immemorial” of such practice.

In addition to legal protection, it is also critical to encourage young Sami and to make reindeer herding attractive. We are therefore enthused to register innovative projects such as the “Reindeer Peoples’ Ambassadors”, which is a trainee and exchange program for young reindeer herders. They organize a side-event tomorrow, which Sweden is pleased to co-sponsor.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the Nordic level, a decision was taken in November 2010 to launch the negotiations on a Nordic Sami Convention. The first round of negotiations was held in March this year. Sweden remains fully committed to reach a convention, which should be legitimate and effective, inclusive and responsive.

And beyond, at the Arctic level, my Government is honoured to have taken over the chairmanship from Denmark, on 12th of May, of the Arctic Council. The Council is a body with unique participation, in all organs and matters, of representatives of indigenous peoples. Under the Swedish chairmanship, emphasis will be placed on the human dimension in the Arctic. A second Arctic Human Development Report will be elaborated, for the purposes of increasing knowledge and understanding of the interplay between physical and social processes of change, and how they impact on living conditions and adaptation capacity in the Arctic. Strengthening the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council, which works on the human dimension among other aspects, will be a priority task for the Swedish Chairmanship.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of my Government to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is an instrument that will continue to direct and inform efforts at the international, regional, national and local levels – it has certainly done so for Sweden.

Thank you.