

EMRIP fifth session 9 – 13 July 2012  
Statement by Norway  
Item 5 - *Role of languages and culture*

Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian delegation would like to express appreciation to the Expert Mechanism for the excellent work on the draft report on the study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples (A/HRC/EMRIP/2012/3). We are also grateful to the Expert Mechanism for giving us the opportunity to submit written contributions to the study.

The revitalisation and preservation of indigenous peoples' languages and cultures are of course of utmost importance in order to secure, promote and protect indigenous peoples' identities and rights. A close and faithful cooperation between the indigenous peoples and the governments is required to reach this end. This important work must take place in conformity with the states' international obligations and the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

The Norwegian delegation thus welcomes the draft report's outline of the international obligations in this field, the description of the relationship between the indigenous peoples' right to language, culture and other rights, and the analysis of remaining challenges as regards the national implementation of these rights. The annexed draft advice provides a comprehensive list of recommendations which will be useful for all stakeholders working with the protection and promotion of indigenous peoples' linguistic and cultural rights.

The draft report points at the Norwegian Constitution and Sami Act as good examples of a legislative framework for securing and promoting indigenous peoples' language and culture. Despite these and other achievements, we are still faced with serious challenges especially when it comes to securing the Sami languages. All the Sami languages present in Norway are listed by UNESCO as endangered languages. This situation is the result of many factors, including past assimilation policy by the Norwegian state; the division of Sami communities across state borders; the relatively small number of the indigenous peoples; lack of human resources; and new settlement patterns.

To encounter these challenges the Norwegian Government, in dialogue with the Norwegian Sami Parliament (the Sámediggi), in 2009 launched an Action Plan for Sami Languages. The main objective of the Action Plan is to secure the future of Northern, Lule and South Sami through language education, increased use in the public and private sphere, and greater visibility for instance in the media, online and on public signs.

The Norwegian Government has recently also initiated a review of the Sami Act's provisions on language rights. The review will *inter alia* examine how Norway's international obligations in this field are implemented in the national legislation. In addition, the review will look into possible models for securing the Sami languages in light of the increased number of Sami moving to the cities and urban areas. The review is conducted in close cooperation with the Sámediggi.

Chair,

the Norwegian Government is firmly committed to identify challenges and find solutions in order to secure the future of the Sami culture and languages. A recently published survey shows that Norway has made some progress with the measures for revitalising the Sami languages. In good cooperation with the Sámediggi, and with due regard to the Sami's right to self-determination, we will continue our efforts for securing and promoting Sami culture and languages. In this respect we welcome the final version of the present report and we will carefully take notice of the Expert Mechanism's findings and recommendations.

Thank you.