



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**  
**Eighth Session, 20-24 July 2015**  
**Item 7**

**Statement by the Government of Finland**  
**22 July 2015**

Mr. Chairman,

In Finland we are studying with great interest the Expert Mechanism's new thematic **study and advice on the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples with respect to their cultural heritage**. We welcome the Expert Mechanism's holistic approach to this theme.

Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. However, urbanization presents a challenge to the enjoyment of the rights entitled to the Indigenous Peoples, especially in relation to their culture. The challenging question is how to best preserve the culture, identity, traditional knowledge and cultural heritage when one is not included in a tightly knit indigenous community.

In Finland over 60 % of the Sámi people live outside their Sámi Homeland. The constitutional right of the Sámi to their language and culture also applies to the Sámi residing outside the Sámi Homeland. The National Board of Education gives state subsidies to providers of education to instruction of Sámi language outside the Sámi Homeland. In order to meet the challenges concerning the right to education outside the Sámi Homeland in Sámi language, the minimum number of Sámi students to receive state subsidies to study Sámi language has been dropped from four to two beginning from 2010. The State subsidy for producing teaching material in Sámi language has increased this year.

Last year the Government approved the Action Program for the Revitalization of Skolt, Inari Sámi and North Sámi Languages. The Program reinforces, *inter alia*, the Sámi education and language nest activities and the development of the Sámi language education throughout the country.

As regards the study, we welcome the recognition of indigenous women as active agents of transformation. The role of women has always been central in preserving culture and heritage. This continues to be the case even if indigenous women and their families live in urban areas. They carry an essential role in passing on indigenous culture to future generations. More needs to be done to empower indigenous women to influence the future of their people through activities both in the public and private spheres. The role of indigenous women should be seen as an opportunity and a great asset.

In Finland the Sámi culture is supported in various ways. The State budget allocates a special annual appropriation for the promotion of Sámi arts and culture. It is allocated to the Sámi

Parliament's cultural committee to promote Sámi-language culture and for the activities of Sámi organisations. Its purpose is to ensure that a certain minimum amount of the subsidies for arts and culture is used for the promotion of the Sámi culture. According to the principle of the Sámi cultural autonomy, the Sámi Parliament makes decisions on granting the subsidies. In addition, the State budget provides other additional funds for the Sámi people for the maintenance and development of their language, culture and art.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has prepared the State Cultural Policy Development Strategy until 2020. According to the Strategy, the objective is to reinforce the position of the indigenous Sámi culture by supporting the Sámi cultural centre and the new creative production arising from Sámi tradition.

The Sámi Museum Siida, mentioned in paragraph 68 of the study, is supported also through State budget appropriations. Siida is a special museum which stores in its collections the Finnish Sámi immaterial and material culture and presents it in various exhibitions and publications. The main objective of the museum is to support the Sámi identity and cultural self-esteem. The museum is also responsible, according to the contract drawn up with the Finnish National Board of Antiquities, for the expert activities related to the Sámi homeland cultural landscape.

The consideration of the ratification of the ILO Convention no. 169 is pending in the Parliament of Finland. A Government bill on the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on genetic resources and access and availability to associated traditional knowledge is due to be submitted to Parliament this fall.

I would like to conclude by expressing Finland's support to the Expert Mechanism's mandate to provide the Human Rights Council with thematic advice, in the form of studies and research, on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Thank you.

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