

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Third Session, New York, 10 – 21 May 2004**

*Joint Statement of the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference*

Item 4 (a) Economic and Social Development

Thank-you Mr. Chairman,

As this is my first intervention of this third session, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to convey my heartfelt gratitude for the way in which you have guided this process since its inception. You have done a superb job.

Mr. Chairman, I am speaking on behalf of both the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. Our Arctic voice is often a common one, as it is here today.

The economic development of our lands and waters -- and the related social dimensions -- are at the heart of what it means to be indigenous. These two interdependent processes -- economic and social -- can lift us up as indigenous peoples, and help us to thrive. These processes can also destroy us. It all depends on how they are managed and who controls their levers.

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference published a guide over a decade ago, called *Principles and Elements for a Comprehensive Arctic Policy*. It exhorts governments, corporations, international bodies, and Inuit to pay attention to key elements of our unique world so that Inuit development proceeds in harmony with our values -- so we can thrive economically and socially, as well as culturally and politically. These *Principles and Elements*, which could easily apply to much of the Saami experience as well, call upon industry and governments to involve us and not to cast us aside.

One principle calls for addressing the alarming and growing economic gap between Inuit and non-indigenous peoples (p. 121). Another principle speaks to the linkages between economic rights and social rights, political rights and cultural rights (p. 123). Another principle stresses the need for Inuit participation in bi-lateral and multi lateral trade talks (p. 125). Indeed, the Saami and the Inuit, as well as other indigenous peoples, have been struggling for a long time to have an effective impact on the decision-making process of the development of our environment and our resources.

Now let me refer you to another, more recent, document -- the report of last year's session of the Permanent Forum. Paragraph 28 notes concern "over development practices that do not take into account" indigenous peoples (p. 6). Paragraph 26 makes a specific recommendation that today's world bodies should "rethink the concept of development" by taking into account indigenous peoples. (p. 6)

The Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference urge those here to pay very close attention to this recommendation. Before we produce another lengthy list of recommendations pertaining to social and economic matters; before we fall into the trap of making this important body a "house of complaints", as someone mentioned here last year, let us find ways of addressing past recommendations. We believe paragraph 26 is a first priority.



Let us look at the UN bodies, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. How well have they done on this recommendation? Which, if any, of these bodies have started a dialogue on "rethinking the concept of development"? Which bodies have invited indigenous peoples to help them redefine it? Which bodies have seriously included indigenous peoples into their various development processes?

And who is monitoring this important recommendation of 2003?

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**We urge the Permanent Forum to recommend to ECOSOC to set up an evaluation and monitoring process that pursues these questions.**

The first question we think might be the following: has the international body in question formally received the recommendation?

Second, have they set up a formal process to at least start a dialogue?

Third, have indigenous peoples been invited to be part of this dialogue?

Fourth, has this involvement been meaningful or merely token? Has it been widespread?

Fifth, has the institution made a fundamental shift in how it views development, and how it implements projects? Or, at least, has it set up a process to do that?

These are some ideas we believe need to be considered as we hold international bodies accountable.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, with reference to the World Bank, the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference are fully endorsing the statement made by the *Indigenous Caucus* under the mandate area of "Human Rights".

Thank-you, Mr. Chairman.