

Agenda item 3 Discussion on the theme "Indigenous peoples, business, autonomy and the human rights principles of due diligence, including free, prior and informed consent"

In Sápmi, the traditional territory of the Sámi people, stretching over the lands known today as Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, we face many threats against our lands and ways of life.

In the Arctic climate change is reshaping our lands and lives. In addition to the pressure to find ways to adapt to the rapidly changing environment, we face increasing threats from climate change mitigation efforts, such as building of wind power plants and establishing mines to get minerals for the batteries.

Mines destroy reindeer-herding pastures and spoil our fishing waters. Both research and Indigenous knowledge have established that reindeer avoid wind turbines to such an extent that the area of the energy facility, and the 10 km surrounding area, must be regarded as lost pastures. We cannot afford losing any more of our lands.

In Finland mining companies have lately been granted several mineral exploration reservations to large areas in the Sámi territory. In the legislation of Finland, it is a mere formality for mining companies to make a mineral exploration reservation to any vast area of Sámi land.

Although this is just the first step in the process towards establishing a mine, for reindeer herders receiving news that a mining company has made reservation on their ancestral lands is like receiving a death threat. It means that the future of your way of life is questioned. It means that lot of efforts needs to be put towards writing complaints and participating in a process to defend the fundamentals of their lives.

We heard the example of the Fosen case from the president of the Sámi parliament of Norway. This case highlights that there is an urgent need to respect Indigenous peoples' rights from the very first steps of any project aimed at our traditional territories.

To conclude, the Saami council stresses that FPIC is not just a principle, it is a right. It is a tool for putting into practise Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. FPIC is not just a matter of process, a requirement to organise a meeting, to tick a box. FPIC means that Indigenous peoples have genuinely influence over outcome of decision-making processes of relevance to them.

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