

10.7.2017

EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, 10TH SESSION

Agenda Item 3:

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE SAAMI COUNCIL

Thank you Mdm. Chair,

My name is Petra Laiti and I'm delivering this statement on behalf of the Saami Council.

The Deatnu agreement, a fishing treaty for the border river between Norway and Finland, has been implemented into effect, drastically decreasing Sámi rights in the area. The treaty decreases local fishing rights by 80% but grants new rights to tourists. Through the expensive fishing licenses, Norway and Finland are selling off Sámi rights to the highest bidder. The Sámi want only the best for river and the salmon we are now denied to fish. Why this is so difficult for the states to understand is beyond me.

The Deatnu agreement was negotiated without the Sámi, as noted by the Permanent Forum. The negotiation process broke several UNDRIP articles and does not comply with ILO 169 ratified in Norway. The Finnish Justice Chancellor and the Constitutional Law Committee of Finland noted, that Finland broke its own constitutional law by consulting the Sámi *after* the treaty was already approved. **So not only is there no legal basis for this treaty, but the country knows about this and still chooses to go through with the treaty.** The Deatnu agreement may be called an agreement by the states, but make no mistake, it is an illegal regulation under national and international law.

The treaty has sparked protests in the Deatnu valley. A local protest movement has declared a moratorium through which the treaty has been stopped in a certain area. The local community has written a declaration where they reject state ownership and management of the river. The message is clear; **the treaty has no place in Sápmi.**

The Saami Council recommends as follows: The EMRIP has a new mandate to engage and assist by facilitating dialogue in order to achieve the ends of the UNDRIP. Both Finland and Norway have failed us by not engaging us in dialogue, disrespected our right to self-determination and ignored the protesting voices. They have left us with no choice. The mandate of the EMRIP to facilitate dialogue between the states, the Sámi and national human rights institutions might be the only way left for us to convince the states that the Sámi must be heard.

We want the treaty to be re-negotiated. We want the dialogue we deserve. Let it be known, that the Sámi refuse to be ignored any longer. Ellos Deatnu. Olu giitu, thank you very much.