



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

33rd session

Item 3 and item 5

Clustered dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples on the human rights situation of the Sámi people in the Sámi region of Norway, Sweden and Finland

Statement by Finland

Mr. President,

Finland attaches great importance to the work of the Special Procedures and to the advancement of the rights of indigenous peoples. Finland highly values the continuous constructive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz.

Together with the Sámi Parliament in Finland we wish to thank the Special Rapporteur for the follow up visit to the Sámi region last August. The visit provided an important opportunity to exchange information and views on national and cross-regional issues between the Special Rapporteur, representatives of Governments and Sámi Parliaments of Finland, Norway and Sweden. We appreciate the interest showed by the Special Rapporteur in the follow-up to her predecessor's earlier recommendations. We will carefully consider her new recommendations.

The promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples are longstanding priorities for Finland. Fulfilling the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires continuous and consistent work both nationally and internationally.

Mr. President,

The Government of Finland is fully committed to ensure the Sámi, as an Indigenous People, their constitutional right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. We do recognize that challenges to reconcile the views of the Government and the Sámi Parliament exist in Finland. As the Special Rapporteur also notes in her report, there have been differences of opinion between the Government and the Sámi Parliament in Finland on how the Finnish Forest and Park Enterprise Act impacts the right of the Sámi to maintain and develop their culture.

Finland wishes to highlight that the management, use and protection of natural resources governed by the Finnish Forest and Park Enterprise (Metsähallitus) in the Sámi Homeland takes into account the opportunities of the Sámi people to practice their culture. New municipal advisory committees are set up in municipalities located entirely in the Sámi Homeland to deal with the sustainable management and use of State-owned lands and waters and related natural resources. The Sámi Parliament has nominated its representatives to these advisory committees. The committees are estimated to strengthen to some extent the rights of the Sámi.

As regards the revitalization of languages, the Government Action Plan for the revival of the Sámi languages contains a vision, by 2025, on the revival of all three Sámi languages spoken in Finland, as well as measures to improve the situation. One of the concrete measures is language nests, which are

childcare units where everything takes place only in Sámi. These activities have developed well in the Sámi Homeland. At the moment, there are seven language nests in the Sámi homeland area, run with the support of a special allocation. Three language nests outside the Sámi Homeland area have recently started with separate state subsidies.

The Government pursues the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for example, through a second National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights to be adopted in early 2017. The Action Plan includes a project that seeks to improve the participatory rights of the Sami.

Consultations on Sami issues between all relevant ministries and the Sami Parliament will be organized later this year. These consultations are planned to be organized on an annual basis.

The Special Rapporteur notes in her report the development of a Nordic Sámi Convention as an important cross-border initiative. This week negotiations on the Convention are held in Finland. Finland is committed to achieving a result that would have the support of Governments and the Sámi.

Finland prepares for its chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017-19, taking into account the unique role that Indigenous Peoples have in Arctic cooperation.

To conclude, Mr. President, Finland wishes to thank both the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for their active engagement for Indigenous Peoples' participation at the United Nations. As a part of its longstanding policy, Finland hopes that also Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions, such as the Sámi Parliament in Finland, will in the near future have the possibility to make statements independently at the Human Rights Council when the Council addresses Indigenous Peoples' rights. As the Sámi Parliament in Finland does not have the right to address this Council at this dialogue, Finland includes the independent views of the Sámi Parliament as an annex to this Government statement.

Thank you.

Annex: Statement by the Sami Parliament of Finland



SÁMEDIGGI
SÄMITIGGE
SÄÄ'MTE'G'G'
SAAMELAISKÄRÄJÄT

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Statement by the Sami Parliament of Finland

The Sami Parliament of Finland would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for the follow up visit to the Sápmi region in August 2015 and the staff at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the assistance. Furthermore, the Parliament acknowledges the governments of Finland, Norway and Sweden for the co-operation with the Sami Parliaments with the visit.

The Sami Parliament of Finland welcomes the report and wishes the state of Finland genuinely consider the recommendations. The Sami Parliament sees that the co-operation with the state of Finland can be achieved with consultation and dialogue.

The Sami Parliament agrees with the Special Rapporteur that the natural resource extraction currently under way in the Sápmi region has created an unstable atmosphere of social conflicts. The Sami Parliament acknowledges the situation is challenging, and underlines the Special Rapporteur's annotation that for the Sami people rights over their lands and resources are the essential conditions for their long-term well-being and a requirement for them to be able to continue to exist as a distinct people. The Sami Parliament encourages the state of Finland to consider attentively these recommendations.

In conclusion, The Sami Parliament of Finland expresses its willingness to reach an agreement on the Nordic Sami Convention that satisfies the negotiating parties and hopes that a full agreement can be reached, particularly on the right to self-determination and the rights to lands, waters, natural resources and traditional livelihoods.

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President

Inka Saara Arttijeffer

Advisor to the President

The President of the Parliament decided upon the statement on the 20.9.2016

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