

Norway

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Second session, 12-23 May 2003



Item 4 (c): Human Rights

Intervention by Mr. Petter F. Wille

Mr. Chairman,

Norway firmly believes that the full realisation by indigenous peoples of their human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential for eliminating discrimination directed against indigenous peoples. Their contribution to the development and cultural pluralism of society and full participation in all aspects of society is important for political and social stability, and for the development of the states in which they live. Adoption of a UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, before the end of the International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples, would contribute greatly to this end. Norway, thus urges everybody to make all possible efforts to demonstrate flexibility in the drafting process in order to achieve the necessary progress and bring the negotiations on the draft to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Chairman,

The OHCHR implements a range of mandates, activities and technical co-operation programmes which focus on indigenous issues. The Commission on Human Rights has established a number of human rights mandates specifically addressing human rights of indigenous peoples, such as the special-rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, and the establishment of a working group on the draft UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. The Sub-Commission has undertaken many important studies in relation to indigenous rights, including the preparation of the mentioned draft declaration. The International Labour Organisation should also be mentioned as another core UN agency with a special role in the promotion and protection of human rights of indigenous peoples.

Norway believes that it is important that the Forum looks into how the different mandates and sections of the UN human rights system may further develop their potential to promote and protect human rights of indigenous peoples, including whether there are any gaps which need to be filled. It is thus encouraging that the Forum has established a close and good working relationship with other relevant parts of the UN family.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I conclude, allow me also to mention an issue concerning indigenous rights on our national agenda. The Government has recently submitted a bill to Parliament with a proposal that will i.a. safeguard land rights of the Sami people as well as other parts of the local population in Finnmark, the northernmost county in Norway.

Today, the vast part of this county is under state ownership. It is proposed to establish a new entity which will hold title to the areas and with the responsibility to administer

these areas. The board of the proposed entity will consist of three members appointed by the Sami Parliament, three appointed by the county Council and one member appointed by the Government who will not have regular voting rights and will act as a consultant. Particular regard has been given to relevant international instruments, including ILO convention No 169 and art 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in preparing the bill. We will shortly provide written information in English about this proposal.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Permanent Forum has a broad and challenging mandate, where human rights is one of several components. While the Forum should not become an additional human rights body, addressing and integrating human rights aspects of the various parts of the mandate, will in many respects be crucial to the continued success of the Forum. Your role and mandate give you a unique position in the UN system in your work for indigenous peoples worldwide.

Thank you.