



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Third Session, 12-16 July 2010  
Item 3

Statement by the Government of Finland  
12 July 2010

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, delegates and participants of the third session,

Finland very much welcomes the dedicated work by the Expert Mechanism on its study on the indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making. Finland has also had the possibility to submit information for the purpose of the study.

We have now before us the draft progress report on the study, for which my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the experts. The right to participate in decision-making covers several aspects, as recognized in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The broad elements laid out in the draft progress report are a good basis for the study.

It is crucial that attention is paid to the follow up of the study. It is important to ensure that the results of the work done will be carried further. Finland looks forward with great interest to the finalization of the study, and wishes to recommend that concrete measures of follow-up will be considered by the Expert Mechanism.

Mr Chairman,

The Sámi people are the only indigenous people in Finland. At present, the Act on the Sámi Parliament guarantees cultural autonomy of the Sámi as an indigenous people with respect to their language and culture. The social welfare and health services provided to the Sámi in their own language have also been further developed over the past decade. The obligation to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament applies to all levels of administration.

Lately, there has been an effort to improve legislation concerning the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people and their opportunities to participate in decision-making. Two recent examples, including the new Government Bills for a Mining Act (*HE 273/2009*) and a Water Act (*HE 277/2009*), submitted to Parliament in December 2009 and January 2010, respectively, include provisions aimed at an improved consideration of the Sámi as an indigenous people.

In addition, the Government proposes that the Sámi Parliament is suggested to be given a possibility to appeal, if the rights of the Sámi as an indigenous people were not adequately considered when taking decisions pursuant to these Acts.

Finland wishes to express its strong support to the Expert Mechanism and its mandate. We are looking forward to continued cooperation with the Mechanism.

I thank you.