

EMRIP fourth session 2011-07-11
Statement by Norway
Item 4

Chair,

Norway would first like to express appreciation to the the Expert Mechanism for their excellent work and for the very valuable studies they have provided in order to improve the basis for discussions on the rights of indigenous peoples. Hopefully these studies, along with the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other initiatives, will also help to trigger practical action and the establishment of concrete measures and mechanisms in states and areas concerned. Mere words are not enough to secure the rights that many indigenous peoples have long been denied. Now that the UN Declaration is broadly supported, the time has come to find practical approaches and mechanisms to ensure its implementation on the country level.

The actual report on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making has focused on examples of good practices of participation at different levels. It shows a wide range of ideas and practices, both in internal decision-making processes and in processes initiated by government or other authorities at different levels. Many will be able to seek inspiration from these examples. The multitude of different examples serves also to remind us of one important point, namely that effective participation in decision-making processes cannot be defined or practised without close regard to the landscape in which it has to be exercised.

The Norwegian government and the Sami Parliament (Sámediggi) established an agreement on consultation procedures in 2005 – procedures as to how consultations between state authorities and Samediggi (and sometimes also other Sami interested parties) are to be carried out. Since that time a large number of consultations have taken place, up to 40 or 50 each year. Most consultations end up in agreement, some do not. The important fact in those cases is that the views of Sametinget, formulated in their own words, will clearly be stated in the final documents to be presented to decision makers, which often will be the National Parliament. The procedures for consultation can, and will be improved. A proposal is now under consideration to adopt specific rules governing the consultation process in national legislation. It is also proposed that procedures shall apply to regional and local authorities.

The positive side effects of establishing mechanisms for participation should not be underestimated. In Norway, the knowledge of Sami matters has increased markedly in society and in ministries and state authorities, the general dialogue has improved, and the Sami parliament has established itself as a more visible and constructive partner in the shaping of society

Chair,

Allow me also to mention a particular question which has been discussed lately between Samediggi and the Government. That is the question of the possible participation of Samediggi, through consultations, in the processes of preparing the annual State Budget – which of course is a matter of considerable interest to the Sami people. So far, the parties have accepted that they hold different views on the substantial question of the use consultations in these particular processes. Nevertheless, agreement has been reached on a set of routines and meetings that will enable the Samediggi to present the financial needs and requirements in the

Sami society directly to the relevant ministers, including the minister of Finance, in time before the government start their first strategic deliberations on next years' budget.

Finally,

In the annex to their report the Expert Mechanism has come up with a number of concrete measures to be considered. I think these are important recommendations which ought to be taken very seriously, and look forward to forthcoming discussions on these topics.

Thank you.