



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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“Discussion on the special theme of the year: Principles of good governance consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: articles 3 to 6 and 46”

Statement by

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Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland
to the United Nations

New York, 12 May 2014

(check against delivery)

Madame/Mr. Chair,
Distinguished members of the Permanent Forum
Honorable delegates and participants of the Permanent Forum

Finland welcomes the discussion on good governance consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by emphasizing the right of Indigenous Peoples to define and formulate their own public policy agenda.

Madame/Mr. Chair,

A key attribute of good governance is the right to participate in decision-making. The empowerment and inclusion of groups subject to discrimination is a top priority. The most sustainable results are achieved by improving their opportunities to participate in decision-making that affects them. Special measures may be required even in democratic systems to ensure the equal protection and enjoyment of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In Finland the most significant way for the Sámi to participate into societal decision-making processes is based on the obligation of authorities to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament, which is established as an independent institution elected by and among the Sami, set out in the Act on the Sámi Parliament. This obligation applies to all far-reaching and important measures which may directly and specifically affect the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people and which concern matters in the Sámi Homeland. The obligation to negotiate applies to a wide range of issues and to all levels of administration, in other words, to local, regional and nationwide authorities. For example, in the preparations for the World Conference on the Indigenous Peoples, the Government is obliged to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament on the process and the outcome document of the Conference. In environmental matters, the obligation to negotiate is supplemented in practice by the Akwé:Kon Guidelines.

The Act on the Sámi Parliament is currently being reviewed with a view to determining the need for amendments. A proposal to extend the contents of the duty of the authorities to conduct consultations with the Sámi Parliament has been put forward.

Madame/Mr. Chair,

The protection of Indigenous Peoples' linguistic rights is another essential component of good governance. Good governance also encompasses transparency. Information – also all principal regulations - should be made available to the general public, including to Indigenous Peoples, in their own language.

The right of the Sámi to use their own language before courts and other authorities as well as the obligations of public authorities to realise and promote the linguistic rights of the Sámi are regulated by the Sámi Language Act. A central goal of this legislation is to ensure that the right of the Sámi to use their own language is realised also in practice. Efforts in this regard have been made in conjunction with special measures to revitalize Sámi languages and secure possibilities to influence and participate for indigenous children and youth.

Madame/Mr. Chair,

Good governance is not limited only to the national level. Also regional and international organisations should respect good governance commitments. Finland is satisfied that Indigenous Peoples' organizations have been granted Permanent Participants status in the *Arctic Council*. This entails for them full consultation rights in connection with the Arctic Council's negotiations and decisions. Another good example is the *Barents Euro-Arctic Council* that has established a Working Group on Indigenous Peoples that has an advisory role.

Finland is pleased to note that the World Bank has engaged in consultations with the Indigenous Peoples in the past year to ensure that the Bank's functions are in line with Indigenous Peoples rights. Finland is happy to support the presentation of the outcome of these consultations later this week.

The United Nations furthers good governance through the UN mechanisms set in place for the Indigenous Peoples: the Permanent Forum itself, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Indigenous Peoples. The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples lies ahead of us. It is up to UN Member States to show steadfast commitment to the principles of good governance and the rights set forth in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Finland is confident that the membership can live up to the task. As regards the outcome document, we look forward to discussing how we best can ensure the participation of representatives of Indigenous Peoples at meetings of relevant United Nations bodies and other relevant United Nations meetings and processes on issues affecting Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.