

Chair,

First, we would like to express our appreciation to the Expert Mechanism for the preparation of the progress report on the study on indigenous peoples' right to participate in decision-making. We will also thank for the opportunity to submit a written contribution to the study.

Participation in decision-making processes is of fundamental importance for the realization of a number of indigenous peoples' rights. Thus, the right to participation and consultation is a central element both in the ILO Convention No 169 and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To ensure indigenous peoples' participation, special consultation procedures are called for when State decisions may affect the particular interests of indigenous peoples. In Norway, Sámediggi – the Sami Parliament – and the Government have agreed on specific procedures as to how consultations between Sámediggi and state authorities are to be carried out.

As a consequence of the establishment of these procedures, 20-40 formalized consultations take place every year. Our experience is that the many consultations have enabled Sámediggi to strengthen their position as a representative and competent voice for the Sami people. It has also enhanced the awareness and knowledge of Sami issues in Government ministries and agencies, and among cabinet ministers and parliamentarians. Admittedly, agreement is not always reached between the Government and Sami representatives. However, the consultation mechanism ensures that decision-makers are increasingly well acquainted with the views of Sámediggi.

We would like to highlight the importance of dialogue and cooperation between state authorities and indigenous peoples' representatives, both in domestic issues and in international affairs. In this regard, paragraph 96 in the progress report is central. Norway is of the opinion that indigenous peoples ought to be invited to participate in international processes on matters that concern them directly. The modalities of participation, however, will probably have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. To give an example, the representatives from Samediggi in Norway are part of the Norwegian delegation to UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. However, when the representatives of Samediggi

address the Permanent Forum, they speak on behalf of the Sami in Norway, and not on behalf of the Government of Norway. One other example is the participation of Samediggi, both at the political and administrative level, in the Norwegian delegation to the Climate Summit in Copenhagen in 2009. The main purpose of the participation was that representatives from Samediggi were to be fully informed, in the same manner as other members of the delegation. Still, the representatives from Samediggi did not present their own statements or express diverging points of view on behalf of the Sami in Norway.

These brief examples highlight that the modalities of indigenous people's participation internationally from time to time raise complex issues, and we are looking forward to hear the views of the Expert Mechanism on this subject in the coming study on indigenous people's right to participation.

Thank you.