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PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT BY

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Ságadoalli, árvvostahhtton bissovas foruma delegáhtat ja oassálastit,

Chair, respected members of the permanent forum, honorable delegates and participants of the session

I have the honour to address this distinguished Forum as the present acting president of the Sami Parliament in Finland and a member of the delegation of Finland. The Sami Parliament is an elected body with autonomous decision-making functions on Sami issues that concern the cultural self-government of the Sami people in Finland.

The delegation of Finland truly appreciates this timely discussion on the Arctic. The aim of Finland is to promote human rights also in the arctic cooperation. The Arctic Council is the most important forum for cooperation for Finland on arctic issues. One of the important aspects of the Council is that it includes also the representation of indigenous peoples. From the perspective of Arctic indigenous peoples, the importance of the Arctic Council cannot be underestimated. It is the first inter-governmental organization in which the indigenous peoples have the right to participate actively at all levels and all meetings. Any decisions are taken by consensus of the Arctic States, in full consultation with the organizations of the Arctic indigenous peoples. Yet challenges remain in their effective participation, including in relation to resources. This was stressed also by the Foreign Minister of Finland in the ministerial meeting of the Council last month. All Governments in the arctic region should try to do their utmost in order to tackle this.

In this statement I will focus on human rights and climate change.

The indigenous people are in the immediate frontline of vulnerability to climate change, in particular in relation to our traditional livelihoods, which often are also the basis of indigenous cultures. The impact on the whole culture of indigenous peoples and languages can be massive, especially if the rights of indigenous peoples have not been sufficiently taken into account. This should also be seen in light of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, including its call to establish ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them.

The challenges are global but at the same time we all have specific national aspects in relation to climate change and indigenous peoples. The Sami homeland is characterized by tundra, lichen, reindeer and snow. Climate change is evident in the northern areas in many ways, including in the

increase of southern animal species and the decline in traditional species (like the Arctic fox) which are adapted to cold conditions but which do not survive well to the new competition. In Finland we face a long standing issue in relation to land rights and traditional livelihoods of the Sami people. The Government is therefore preparing ground to find legislative solutions to these matters in order to progress on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples also in this respect. Solutions need to be found.

I wish to remind that in their recent meeting the Arctic Council Ministers acknowledged that indigenous peoples in the Arctic are taking a leading role to use best available traditional and scientific knowledge to help understand and adapt to challenges related to climate change. The Ministers also welcomed initiatives to build the capacity of indigenous peoples in this regard.

Lastly, it should also be recognized that an indigenous community, like the Sami people, is not homogenous. When tackling climate change and promoting human rights, we need to take into account for example gender and age. The role and participation of women is vital also in this discussion and decision making. We are still facing difficulties even in the Sami community to ensure better gender equality when promoting our indigenous rights.

We all need to recognize that the urgent need for an effective global response that will address the challenge of climate change, with the full partnership of and participation by the indigenous peoples.

Thank you Chair.