

Clustered Interactive Dialogue on Indigenous Peoples

UN Human Rights Council, 33 session. Statement by Sweden delivered by Ambassador Veronika Bard.

Mr President,

Sweden wishes to thank the Special Rapporteur for her report. We value the important work carried out by the Special Rapporteur, and would like to reiterate our genuine appreciation for her visit to Sweden in August 2015.

We are very pleased to take part in this important dialogue, and would like to mention some recent developments with regard to issues raised by the Special Rapporteur in her report.

The overall objective behind the Swedish government's Sami policy is to promote a thriving Sami culture, based on ecologically sustainable reindeer husbandry and other Sami economic activities.

The Government protects the Sami social and cultural life. However, we want to increase the level of ambition and further strengthen the opportunities for the Sami people in this regard. This also applies to the right of the Sami people to self-determination.

The dialogue on a future Swedish Sami policy is an important process that is underway. The idea is to conduct a dialogue with the Sami Parliament on how we can move forward on important policy issues.

The Swedish Government Offices have commissioned an analysis of the legal issues which would arise from the introduction of a national consultation procedure. Such a procedure would be a step towards strengthening the Sami people's ability to participate in, and influence, matters that affect them.

Strengthened Sami influence and participation through self-determination should also be reflected in the governance work of the Sami Parliament. The 2015 Budget bill increased the budget to the Sami Parliament with SEK 3 million to strengthen the opportunities for it to play an active role in the development of future policy.

Work on a Nordic Sami convention is also central to the Swedish Government's policy for the Sami people. The Government has intensified the negotiations on a Nordic Sami convention, which would strengthen and clarify the rights of the Sami people to preserve and develop their language, culture, livelihoods and community life.

Mr President,

Before a mining operation can start in Sweden, three main processes of clearance are required. During all three of them, Sami villages are consulted with in the same way as land owners and other rights holders. The Sami villages have the possibility to raise objections to planned operations and request that permits are subjected to special conditions to limit the impact on reindeer herding.

As of August 2014 the Minerals Act has been modified so that, if requested, the plan of operations must be provided in Sami language. In addition, a valid plan of operations has to be sent to the Sami Parliament.

As a follow-up to the 2013 national Minerals Strategy, the Government commissioned Norrbotten County Council to coordinate the development of guidelines on consultation and communication between the reindeer husbandry and the mining sectors. The Government Offices are now considering the County Council's report, submitted earlier this year.

Mr President,

Daring, wanting, and being able to speak one's own language constitutes a large part of people's identity. Amendments to the Education Act from July 2015 give pupils who belong to any of our national minorities, including the Sami, a stronger right to receive tutoring in their mother tongue. To increase the pool of qualified Sami school teachers, Umeå University was authorized to issue a subject teacher qualification for grades 7 to 9, and for specialised teaching in upper secondary school in Sami as a mother tongue. We are pleased that this course has been offered since the autumn of 2015.

Thank you Mr President.