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Item 8 - Panel discussion on recognition, reparation and reconciliation

United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Eleventh Session, 9 – 13 July 2018

Agenda Item 8: Panel discussion on recognition, reparation and reconciliation

The President of the Sámi Parliament of Norway, Aili Keskitalo

Thank you Chair,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Sámi Parliament of Norway, and I have two questions to the panel. First I have an update on processes between the Sami people and Norway.

The Storting (that is the National Parliament of Norway) has only a few weeks ago appointed a commission to investigate the Norwegianification policy and injustices in relation to the Sámi, Kvens and Norwegian Finns, and it has stipulated the commission's mandate.

The Sami Parliament has been in dialogue with the Storting about this matter, and expectations for this work are running high. I would like to bring our gratitude to our panelists today, Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild and Eduardo Gonzáles. They have been willing to share their experiences and thus given the Sami Parliament in Norway important input in the process of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation.

The Commission's task is three-fold. It is to carry out an historic survey to describe the Norwegian authorities' policies and activities in respect of said groups. The Commission shall also examine the after-effects of the assimilation policy today. Further, it shall propose initiatives aimed at promoting greater equality between the majority and minority populations. The Commission will submit its report in 2022. The Commission shall ensure that individuals and groups get the opportunity to tell their stories.

This was an update on the situation in Norway, but the Sami people is one people living in four different states. I would like to ask the panel how we can make sure that all the states the Sami people lives in approaches similar processes? The state borders and policies already creates difficulties and imbalances between us. How can we make sure that these processes doesn't further amplify these differences?

My second question is about the majority society. The majority people of the states we live in need to come to terms with their attitudes and myths about the Sámi. That will help make our common history more complete and correct. Accepting the indigenous peoples and the common history we share will make the countries a better place for everyone. But do the panelists have any thoughts on how to engage the majority people in these processes? It is kind of hard to reconcile by ourselves, it needs to be a two-way process.

Thank you!