

United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
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Agenda Item 6: Ten years of the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: good practices and lessons learned

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Thank you, Madam/Mr Chair.

Today, I am speaking on behalf of the Sámi Parliament of Finland, the Sámi Parliament of Norway and the Sámi Parliament of Sweden.

This year, we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These 10 years have been important ones for developing and safeguarding indigenous rights. However, while the Declaration embodies good intentions and principles, thus far, it has led to far more talk than action.

The most important event for strengthening the process and implementation of the Declaration was the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. We regard the outcome document of the World Conference as an important step forward towards improved implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as it contains concrete and tangible commitments towards the implementation of the Declaration. The preparations and coordination carried out by indigenous peoples resulted in a document that will provide guidance for processes going forward, including the amendment to EMRIP's mandate.

Through the adoption of the Outcome Document, Member States have agreed that the Declaration is not merely an aspirational document, and that special measures are required in order to ensure better implementation at the national and international levels alike.

Notwithstanding, implementation is still lacking in Finland, Sweden and Norway. In fact, the consultations between the Sámediggis and the State governments are sorely lacking in all three countries. The principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is not being followed, and there are blatant examples of objections to encroachments that directly affect Sámi people or the Sámediggis in Sámi areas not being respected.

We have examples of mines and windmill farms being authorised to commence operations despite the fact that the Sámi people have said no to them because they will adversely affect Sámi interests, Sámi industries and Sámi culture. For example, Finland is planning a new railway to Kirkenes in Norway. It will run straight through Sámi territory, but the Sámediggis and the affected Sámi have not been involved or consulted at all.

The Sámediggis also lack adequate budgets for exercising genuine self-determination on behalf of our people. Self-determination is one of cornerstones of UNDRIP, meaning that as a representative institution for the Sámi, it should be funded in a way that ensures that the Sámi are free to determine their own economic, social and cultural development.

One important lesson learned from the negotiation process in the run-ups to the Declaration, adopted in 2007, and the Outcome Document of the World Conference, adopted in 2014, is that participatory rights and substantive outcomes are indivisibly linked.

Thank you