

Statement of the World Reindeer Herders' Association

Mikhail Pogodaev, PhD, Chair

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Discussion on the special report

"Study on the impacts of land use change and climate change on indigenous reindeer herders' livelihoods and land management, including culturally adjusted criteria for indigenous land uses"

by Special rapporteur Anna Naikanchina

Thank you, Mr. Chair!

On behalf of the Association of World Reindeer Herders first of all I would like to thank the Permanent forum on indigenous issues for the special attention to reindeer husbandry and for an opportunity to address our comments regarding the special report on land use change and climate change in indigenous reindeer husbandry, made by the member of Permanent Forum Mrs. Anna Naikanchina!

Reindeer husbandry is not the industry of agriculture, it is first of all the way of life for more than 20 indigenous peoples living in 9 countries. This is a really circumpolar livelihood, this is civilization and unique culture which gives a foundation for life in extreme Arctic climate from time immemorial.

The terrestrial ecosystems in the northern areas are complex ecosystems. The changes in these ecosystems are now taking place rapidly due to climatic changes and the effects of the industrial development of the Arctic. It is therefore important that we use all available knowledge, both scientific as social sciences and especially the indigenous peoples' traditional ecosystem knowledge to understand the changes and plan for the future. This will require a new type of cooperation between herders, industry, researchers, management and governments. Experience has shown that many world environmental problems are not solved by use only of conventional science with linear cause-effect approaches. A priority must be to provide the authorities with better management tools.

Reindeer peoples' respond to changes in the environment has traditionally relied on flexible operating practices that are now hampered because of several non-climatic factors such as permanent loss of grazing land due to economical development.

So today permanent loss of pastures is a most important and critical issue for reindeer herders.

Because of growing human activity in the Arctic as a result of climate change, there is a need to find ways to regulate this activity and be ahead of the development. Natural resource development, transport and tourism represent some of the drivers in the development.

There are many cases, and there are both positive and negative examples, some of them were described also in this report across the Arctic in such countries as Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

We support that there is a need to develop and implement integrated management plans for reindeer pastures in the Arctic, on national levels, to secure future sustainability of indigenous herding communities and cultures in the face of climate change and land use change in the Arctic region.

We recommend to UN agencies to support and assist in development of a new survey to investigate the process of loss of pastures, establish a monitoring systems and create mechanisms to protect traditional lands and biodiversity, in order to maintain the sustainability and resilience of indigenous reindeer herding communities and cultures in the future.

National States and private industry need to support the establishment of new institutional mechanisms based on reindeer herders' knowledge, rights and world views that secure the ability of reindeer herders to negotiate with industrial developers on an equal footing.

National states and industrial developers must recognize the integrity and holistic view of the use of reindeer pastures based on herders' traditional knowledge.

There is an urgent need to improve the standards used on impact assessments and agreements with herders so that they take into account the structure, knowledge of nomadic societies and the cultural base for pasture use and to include herders in the process as early as possible to avoid conflicts.

On the top of these challenges related to climate change and loss of pastures there are many other challenges like socio economic challenges, access to education and health care. What we can offer against these challenges? Our answer is knowledge! During thousands of years our traditional knowledge helped us to adapt and we know how to survive in a harsh climate. But there is also a need to secure education opportunities for reindeer herding youth, both in terms of locally-based education programs and in terms of funding options. As the system of education of reindeer herders cannot exist outside of a nomadic way of life, it is very important to develop educational institutions and adaptive models of education that are suited to the specific needs of reindeer herders and their families in particular, such as Nomadic Schools and distance learning systems. Capacity building for indigenous reindeer herding peoples is critical in face of industrial development and climate change.

Finishing my statement on behalf of World Reindeer Herders I would like to thank special rapporteur the member of the Permanent forum Mrs. Anna Naikanchina for this significant report and recommendations!

Thank you Mr. Chair!