



Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Second Session

Statement

by

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the Swedish Delegation to the Second Session of the
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

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**PERMANENT MISSION OF SWEDEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will use this opportunity to say a few words about the Sami people and in particular about the Sami education and Culture in Sweden. Allow me first, however, to express on behalf of the Swedish delegation, our sincere thanks to the Permanent Forum and the Secretariat for having planned and organised this second session of the Permanent forum in such a successful and efficient manner.

Sami Education and Culture

Although the Sami people has a common history, a common culture, traditions and languages, we are spread out in four different countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia, Kola peninsula. We have nine main languages crossing the borders. In Sweden we have the north Sami language (Davvisamigella), Lule sami language (Julevsamigiella) and south Sami language (Aarjelhsaemien giele). There are very few speakers in Lule- and South Sami languages.

Sami children are allowed to complete their compulsory education in Sami schools instead of public elementary schools. Sami schools are comprised of grades 1 – 6 and the education is equal to public education. In addition to the standards and goals set nationally for elementary and secondary schools, Sami schools are also responsible for ensuring that every Sami has a good understanding of the Sami cultural inheritance and that he/she can speak, read and write Samish.

According to the Sami School Ordinance and in agreement with the Sami School Board, a local municipality can arrange integrated Sami education for Sami children in elementary schools.

In June this year a new curriculum for Sami schools and integrated Sami education is going to be applied.

The Sami School Board shall, in accordance with the Sami School Ordinance, promote development and production of study materials and books to be used for Sami education. However, there is a shortage of financial resources and thus we have not been able to produce sufficient such material.

Concerning pedagogical questions and development of study materials in order to utilize mutual resources and competence it is also important to cooperate with Sami educational organisations in Norway and Finland but lack of resources effects many good projects even if there are good EU-programmes for this area.

As well as providing children with good sound education, more initiatives must be taken for revitalising the Sami language. Lack of financial resources is the reason why *immersion programmes* are missing in especially Sweden. Sami languages are still in a language-changing process and the government try to find economic possibilities for municipalities to write agreements with the Sami School Board so that education in history, culture and language is possible for all Sami children.

Unfortunately it must be said that the development is delayed by a shortage of teachers and teaching materials especially in south Sami area.

Outside the formal school system we also try to get children a Sami experience since we are very well aware that schools alone will not keep the language alive in a meaningful way. In Sweden we use drama as a tool since money is given to a permanent Sami theatre. It is especially important for developing the south Sami language, because the EU-conventions for national minority languages do not include south Sami area, so we have to find different ways to survive.

So, to make Sami culture and language to live and develop through immersion and revitalising projects we need support and grants not only from governments and EU but also from UN-bodies.

Government's Information Campaign

The Government has embarked on an information campaign aimed at the entire Swedish population. Opinion surveys show that there is a need for more information on the Sami and their culture and rights. The currently insufficient awareness of the situation of the Sami among the general public has led to a proliferation of the myths, prejudices and stereotypes. The public debate on Sami issues has thus far been one-sided with a clear focus on territorial disputes, reindeer breeding rights and spectacular events. The aim of the information campaign is to rectify that situation. The campaign is scheduled for a period of five years and amounts to a total of 2 000 000 EURO. It will target public authorities, non-governmental organisations, schools, the media as well as the general public.

The Government has decided to support, among other things, a joint project between the reindeer herders' organisation and the landowners' organisation. The main objective of the project is to promote a dialogue and facilitate a closer co-operation between the reindeer herding and forestry in order to minimise conflicts. The project will result in a sustainable network between the parties.

Another project supported is directed towards tourism as means of transferring knowledge from the Sami to non Sami tourists.

The Swedish Government has also decided to establish a National Information Centre in close co-operation with the Sami Parliament. The Centre will function as a focal point in terms of spreading information to the public in general.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.