

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Sixteenth session

**Item 8: Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration**

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Statement by Finland

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Madam/Mr. Chair,

Finland is committed to the goals of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Likewise, we attach great importance to the work of the UN mechanisms enhancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Fulfilling the objectives of the Declaration requires continuous and consistent work. The UN Member States made an important re-commitment to the UN Declaration at the General Assembly High-Level Plenary Meeting known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014).

The UN membership has also undertaken to consider ways and means to enable Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions participation at UN meetings on issues affecting them. Finland is honoured that the President of the General Assembly appointed the Permanent Representative of Finland (Ambassador Kai Sauer) as one of his advisors in the consultation process on this topic.

It is vital to recognize that Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions, such as the Sámi Parliament in Finland, are not NGO's. Therefore, they have a more limited access to many UN meetings on issues affecting them than, for instance, Indigenous Peoples' NGO's, which can seek consultative status with the UN.

Finland is convinced that a viable, consensual outcome on enhancing Indigenous Peoples' participation at the UN can only be achieved in a respectful partnership between Indigenous Peoples and Member States. The consultations have again witnessed the existence of such a partnership and a genuine will to uphold it. We look forward to continued discussions in this

same spirit during this Forum and in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations.

Madam/Mr. Chair,

The dialogue by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the empowerment of Indigenous women was a remarkable step in the follow-up to the UN Declaration and the World Conference. It is important that the UN continues to recognize and support the essential role indigenous women have in passing on their culture to future generations. We encourage also other UN bodies to stress the importance of empowering Indigenous women and promoting their central role in decision-making processes as well as in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of relevant programmes and projects.

Madam/Mr. Chair,

At the end of 2016 the delegations of Finland, Norway and Sweden achieved a preliminary result in the negotiations on a Nordic Sámi Convention. The Convention was negotiated jointly with representatives of the three States' Sámi Parliaments. It strengthens and consolidates the rights of the Sámi and cross-border cooperation. Before the States can sign the Convention, the Sámi Parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland will have to formally decide on whether to accept it.

Finland is committed to ensure the Sámi, as an Indigenous People, their constitutional right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. We recognize that challenges to reconcile the views of the Government and the Sámi Parliament exist in Finland and continuously work to overcome such challenges.

The Government pursues the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for example, through a second National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights that was adopted in February. The Action Plan includes a project that seeks to improve the participatory rights of the Sami nationally. Another project provides training to civil servants who handle Sámi affairs. This training will be provided in cooperation with the Sámi Parliament and the University of Lapland.

We look forward to hearing other delegations' experiences on enhancing Indigenous Peoples' rights in the tenth anniversary of the UN declaration. Thank you.