

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**  
**15<sup>th</sup> session May 9-20 2016**

**Statement by The Saami Council on item 4**

Thank you Mr Chair,

Distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, Member States, Indigenous relatives, ladies and gentlemen,

The Saami Council wish to draw your attention especially to *three priorities*.

First the importance of education and language.

The Norwegian government underlined the importance of education for Saami children in their statement earlier at this forum. This, however, does not reflect the Norwegian governments policy in practise. One of the few schools that give education in the South Saami language, is being closed. South Saami language is considered highly endangered, and still, the Norwegian authorities are not giving sufficient institutional support.

Further, we welcome the report of the *Expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages*, and will especially support the recommendation outlined in paragraph 50, regarding the General Assembly to proclaim an international decade of indigenous languages, given that the revitalization of the world's indigenous languages would require a sustained effort over many years. We will urge the the nordic states, to also proclaim a decade of the Saami language.

The second issue the Saami Council wish to draw the attention to, is the importance of collection of data on indigenous peoples including the Saami people. Lack of statistic is a way to marginalize indigenous peoples. The Saami Council therefore welcome the conclusions made in the "Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda" about Indicators and data collection.

In Norway and Sweden there exist no collected data or statistics on the Saami people, which is criticized by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for regional or minority languages.

The third issue is the recognition the Saami peoples rights to land and natural resources. Saami territories are largely infected by different interference, inter alia mining activities, wind mill parks and other development projects. For example, in the southern Saami territories there are planned a gigantic wind mill park. The reindeer herders using these territories have stated that a start-up of this project will mean the end of their reindeer herding and thus the end of the South Saami culture in this area.

With this, the Saami Council will recommend the following points:

**(1) that the permanent forum recommends the member states to implement the indigenous peoples right to education in their own language, and to proclaim an decade of indigenous languages both at the international as well as at the national level.**

**(2) that the permanent forum recommends the member states to improve national-level data collection and sharing of disaggregated data that highlight the progress made on indigenous peoples' priorities.**

**(3) that the permanent forum recommends the member states to implement the Declaration, including the indigenous peoples property rights over land and natural resources, and their right to free, prior and informed consent.**

**Thank you!**