

Introduction of Study
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would like to thank those that proposed the subject matter of this study and hope that I have been able to capture some of the key concerns of Arctic Indigenous peoples through the limited space that I had to address the diverse conditions facing them. I would also like to thank those Sami who took the time to review earlier draft versions of the study and in particular, those who elaborated upon the Laponia Management system discussed therein.

Because the study is accessible in hard copy and electronically, there is no need to for me to detail its contents, conclusions, and recommendations. Rather, I will make some general remarks as to some of the fundamental concerns that I identified in this very cursory study.

Emerging from the overall international trend to acknowledge and accommodate the status and human rights of Arctic indigenous peoples, we have seen willingness by nation-states to engage indigenous peoples in order to resolve outstanding claims to lands, territories and resources. Likewise, I believe that Arctic Indigenous peoples have shown good faith through their willingness to engage governments domestically. Such evidence can be found in a number of successfully concluded agreements in Canada and Greenland.

It is my hope that these few examples, which have emerged generally consistent with the minimum human rights standards embraced by the UNDRIP, are identified by other Arctic-rim nations as templates to re-define the important political and legal relationships that should exist between northern Indigenous peoples and states. This is especially true in the context of uneven

or incomplete recognition of Indigenous human rights in Alaska, Nordic states, and the Russian Federation.

I want to recognize that, in my assessment, significant legislation, political pronouncements, declarations, and initiatives have been made by each of these Arctic-rim nations. And, I welcome such expressions and I'm sure that the Arctic Indigenous peoples concerned do as well. However, at the same time, it is apparent that much remains to be done to concretely secure respect for and recognition of the individual and collective human rights of the Arctic Indigenous peoples concerned. It is time to transform such legislation, political pronouncements, declarations, and initiatives into real dialogue and real results, through a human rights based approach.

For a wide range of reasons, from non-renewable resources to climate change to security, the eyes of the world are on the Arctic. The vocal interests of China and other non-Arctic rim nations have been registered within the context of the Arctic Council as well as bilateral arrangements and agreements. The probability of rapid industrialization of this fragile ecosystem is a frightening prospect for the Indigenous peoples who have sustainably inhabited this region for centuries. Where the right of self-determination and rights to lands, territories and resources have not been recognized, it is unacceptable to move toward any such political and economic agendas without comprehensively addressing such basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. And, where recognition of these basic human rights have been affirmed in treaties and agreements, it is imperative that they are fully and effectively implemented. Such actions must be taken at the national as well as regional and local level.

The constant tension that exists between resource development and the human rights of Indigenous peoples must be carefully considered by all concerned. The stakes are very high. Some of these tensions and the attempt to balance them can be found in the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development. In addition, the Laponia Management system principles provide an outline for how to engage states, Indigenous peoples, and UN mechanisms in the overall effort to uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples.

In regard to the conclusions and recommendations of the study, there are a range of good practices that have been identified. My aim has not been to be punitive toward Arctic-rim states through this study. Rather, my aim has been to identify what I perceive to be shortcomings and to suggest ways to positively respond to them. The steps toward ensuring the creation of real Indigenous participatory mechanisms in the Arctic should be taken by states; by this I mean that the burden to prove the existence of Indigenous human rights and to seek guarantees from Arctic-nation states for the promotion and protection of such rights should not be borne by those most disadvantaged by the states that have grown up around us.

In conclusion, it is my hope that there will be interest expressed by Arctic-rim nation-states, Arctic Indigenous peoples, and others to convene at least several gatherings to specifically discuss the future of the Arctic in a comprehensive fashion; gatherings that genuinely allow for the cross-fertilization of ideas, approaches, and initiatives that will ultimately result in the full realization of the standards embraced by the UNDRIP in an Arctic specific context. Quyanaq.