

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The 7th session

Agenda Item 5 - Human Rights - Study on the structures, procedures and mechanisms that address the human rights of indigenous peoples

Statement by the Arctic Indigenous Caucus

Thank you Mdm Chairperson,

The Arctic Indigenous Caucus would like to congratulate Professor James Anaya on his appointment as Special Rapporteur. We are convinced that Professor Anaya is the best suited person to take on the role as Special Rapporteur and are hence deeply grateful to Professor Anaya for accepting the position as Special Rapporteur. At the same time, we extend our gratitude towards the outgoing Special Rapporteur, Professor Rodolfo Stavenhagen for his excellent work during his six years as Special Rapporteur. In particular, we remain in depth to Professor Stavenhagen for his intervention which stopped the forceful slaughter of reindeer of Saami reindeer herders in the Nellim area in northern Finland.

Clearly, the most important task of the Special Rapporteur from now on is to further the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Special Rapporteur must have the Declaration as the guiding standard in all his activities. We urge the Special Rapporteur in all his reports - including the country specific reports - to focus on how countries have made progress with regard to the implementing the Declaration.

Mdm. Chairperson,

The Arctic Indigenous Caucus would like to thank former Forum members Ida Nicholaisen and Willie Littlechild for their excellent study on existing and potential UN human rights mechanisms on the rights of indigenous peoples. We actually believe that their proposal for an Expert Mechanism under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council was superior to the structure and mandate of the Expert Mechanism that the Human Rights Council opted

for. Nonetheless, the Arctic Indigenous Peoples are looking forward to cooperating with the Expert Mechanism. We urge the Special Rapporteur and the Permanent Forum to cooperate closely with the Expert Mechanism, to cater for coordination and avoidance of duplication of work.

As to the forms for the cooperation between the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism, it appears to us that there are at this stage not enough clear ideas on how this cooperation should be formulated in detail. The Arctic Indigenous Caucus therefore believes that the time is not ripe at this stage for the Forum to make any decisions on this cooperation at this session. We are not convinced that the establishment of a Permanent Forum Committee on the UN Declaration on the Declaration is the most efficient way of implementing the Declaration, as suggested in the Paper prepared by Ida Nicholaisen and Willie Littlechild.

The Arctic Indigenous Caucus therefore submits that the Permanent Forum does not at this session adopt a recommendation calling for the establishment of a Forum Committee. Rather, a workshop should be arranged to which a small number of indigenous experts on the Declaration are invited, to discuss how the Permanent Forum can best cooperate with the Expert Mechanism and the Special Rapporteur to advance the implementation of the Declaration. The workshop shall report to the Permanent Forum, and the report serve as background for a more in depth and enlightened discussion on the possible forms for cooperation between the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum at its 8th session, after which a decision by the Forum on this issue can be made.

Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.