

#22

May 12, 2004

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Third session, 10 - 21, May, 2004

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Agenda item 4 (e); Culture



Joint intervention by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Saami Council

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

This is a joint intervention by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Saami Council. Our organizations hear the call from the Permanent Forum members and recognize the need for the Forum to develop a greater focus and priorities in all its activities. We see the need that the Forum devotes more time to follow-up and implementation. We will thus not offer a large number of recommendations under the mandate area "Culture". Rather, we will focus on a few areas that we believe should be the priority of the Forum.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Saami Council submit the following recommendation

"The Permanent Forum recommends that the CBD, OHCHR, UNESCO, WIPO, the WTO, and other relevant UN system organizations, together with the Permanent Forum, organize a work-shop to discuss a holistic protection for indigenous peoples' cultural heritage, prior to the fourth session of the Permanent Forum. The work-shop should aim to establish a frame-work within which protection for indigenous peoples' cultural heritage can be discussed, possibly in the form of an international regime. The frame-work should involve all relevant UN system organizations, and have the Permanent Forum as coordinator"

Circumpolar

536?

We further call on the Permanent Forum Secretariat to start taking steps towards the arrangement of such a work-shop.

Mr. Chairperson,

As is also the case for other indigenous peoples, the Inuit and Saami cultures are constantly being misappropriated and elements thereof stolen. Non-Inuit and Saami artists use our songs, handicrafts and other cultural expressions without respect and without recognition of the source. Our traditional knowledge is used by others for commercial purposes, without recognition and without monetary compensation. Our culture is sometimes ridiculed for tourist purposes.

Indigenous peoples' lack of control over our cultural heritage constitutes a huge threat to our cultures. Many UN system organizations are conducting work within the area of biodiversity, genetic resources, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. These processes can potentially greatly impact indigenous cultures, sometimes in a positive manner. The work conducted within e.g. WIPO can lead to an increased protection for certain elements of our cultures. However, it also has the potential of entrenching property systems that actually allows other peoples to acquire rights to our cultures. Even more important, however, none of the ongoing processes that deal with indigenous knowledge etc. take a cohesive approach towards indigenous cultural heritage, and lack an understanding for indigenous peoples' particular way of life, needs and concerns. As a consequence, there is an apparent risk that the protection systems being elaborated upon will not be apt to address the particular needs and concern of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Saami Council therefore call on the Permanent Forum to take the lead in developing an international regime that adequately - in a holistic manner - protects the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. Of course, the work should also be carried out with the full cooperation of indigenous representatives.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,