Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

13th session

The Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia regional meeting, Wednesday 2 December 2020

Mr. Tuomas Aslak Juuso

President

Sámi Parliament in Finland

Madame Chair,

I am speaking in my capacity as a President on behalf of the Sámi Parliament in Finland and the President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council

As you will be aware, in September 2019, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution outlining further steps to facilitate the participation of Indigenous Peoples’ representatives and institutions in the work of the Human Rights Council, in particular during the dialogue with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur and in the annual half-day discussion on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This resolution decided to hold an intersessional round table on possible steps to be taken to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples’ representatives and institutions in meetings of the Human Rights Council on issues affecting them at the thirteenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The roundtable was however cancelled due to the prevailing circumstances revolving around COVID-19 pandemic.

During the Human Rights Council’s 45. session in September-October 2020, the Human Rights Council negotiated and adopted its annual resolution on Indigenous Peoples and human rights mainly virtually due the current COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to point out that it was challenging for Indigenous Peoples to participate in deliberations so that our concerns and opinions were genuinely taken into account as virtual meetings for Indigenous Peoples are not feasible or the best solution.

We attach great importance to Indigenous peoples’ active involvement in all the negotiations affecting indigenous peoples in partnership with Member States consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this regard, we would like to reiterate our request that the President of the Human Rights Council would initiate an Intergovernmental Negotiation-process taking into account full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, on the possible measures necessary, including procedural and institutional steps and selection criteria, to enable the participation of Indigenous Peoples’ representative institutions in meetings of the Human Rights Council on issues affecting them. We believe that it is extremely difficult to reach acceptable outcomes in multilateral decision-making processes affecting Indigenous Peoples, in the absence of a due process that fully involves Indigenous Peoples’ governance institutions. An important lesson learned from the negotiation process of the Declaration, adopted in 2007, and the Outcome Document of the World Conference, adopted in 2014, is that participatory rights and substantive outcomes are indivisibly linked.

We look forward to proactively engaging in the future process during the forthcoming sessions of the Human Right Council when in-person meetings can take place allowing the broadest and most inclusive participation possible of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.