



General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 July 2010

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifteenth session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya

Addendum

Preliminary note on the situation of Sami people in the Sápmi region spanning Norway, Sweden and Finland

1. From 14 to 16 April 2010, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya, met with representatives of the Sami parliaments and Governments of Norway, Sweden and Finland at a conference in Rovaniemi, Finland, to discuss cross-border and other issues affecting the Sami people in the Sápmi region of the Nordic countries. The present note contains general information on the conference and some initial impressions. A full report on the situation of the Sami people in the Nordic countries, with conclusions and recommendations, will be presented by the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council and made public at a later date.
2. The conference gathered indigenous representatives of the Sami parliaments, State officials from the Nordic countries in which Sami people live, and Sami non-governmental organizations from the Nordic countries, as well as from the Russian Federation. The conference provided a unique and valuable opportunity for consultation and dialogue regarding issues concerning the entire Sápmi region.
3. This was the first time that a Special Rapporteur on indigenous peoples has examined issues concerning one indigenous group living across several State borders, and represents a new approach for examining the human rights situation of a specific indigenous people. The Special Rapporteur hopes that it will be regarded as a good practice for addressing the human rights concerns of indigenous peoples who continue to live in their traditional territories that cross the formal boundaries of States.
4. The Special Rapporteur would like to express his appreciation to the Sami Parliamentary Council, a cooperative body representing the Sámi parliaments of Norway, Finland and Sweden, and which includes as observers the Sámi Council and Sámi people living in the Russian Federation, for initiating and organizing the conference. The Special Rapporteur is also grateful to the Sami parliaments and non-governmental organizations for their invaluable contribution to the conference and for the information that they provided on the current human rights situation of the Sami in the Nordic countries. The Special Rapporteur was inspired by the strength and the vitality of the Sami culture and by the resolve of Sami representatives when confronting the ongoing human rights challenges that the Sami people face.
5. The Governments of the Nordic countries are also to be commended for their openness and willingness to hold genuine and constructive discussions on the current situation of the Sami people. The Special Rapporteur considers this to have been an extremely fruitful and important discussion, and notes with approval the sincere attention paid by the Governments to the important issues raised at the conference.
6. The conference focused in particular on issues of self-determination, the rights to land, water and natural resources, and the situation of youth, with a particular focus on education and language. The implementation by the Governments of the relevant recommendations made by the various United Nations human rights bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee, was also assessed.
7. The Special Rapporteur notes that, despite the expressed commitment of the Governments of Norway, Sweden and Finland to protect the rights of the Sami people, the challenges ahead in Sápmi are significant, and that overcoming the harm inflicted by the discrimination and extensive assimilation policies carried out throughout history in the Nordic countries will require serious commitment, political will and hard work.
8. One positive development is the initiative to develop and conclude a Sami convention to establish a common framework in the Nordic region for advancing the effective enjoyment of the rights of the Sami people and for providing still needed measures to redress historical patterns of discrimination and oppression. The Special Rapporteur reiterates the importance of restarting negotiations on the proposed convention

with the full support of Norway, Sweden and Finland and the full participation, on an equal footing, of Sami leaders from each Nordic country. Such a convention will be a milestone along the path towards the strengthening and consolidation of protections for the rights of the Sami so that they can maintain and develop their language, culture, livelihoods and society.

9. The Special Rapporteur is committed to engage further in a constructive dialogue with the Governments of Norway, Sweden and Finland and the Sami parliaments and organizations to address the concerns raised during the conference and to develop potential solutions to meet ongoing challenges.

10. In his report, the Special Rapporteur will detail and evaluate the concerns raised at the conference by Sami leaders and the Government responses, and will make appropriate recommendations with the hope of advancing practical and workable solutions grounded in applicable international standards.
