

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Eleventh session

Agenda item 5: Fifth Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Statement by the Arctic Caucus

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Indigenous peoples' and state representatives, Excellences - the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Saami Council participated actively in the process resulting in the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 11, 2007, a date that is marked as historic in both our peoples' calendars. We are excited and honored to be back in the General Assembly, joined by so many of our friends and colleagues that made this truly remarkable achievement possible.

Mr. Chairperson,

All Arctic states participated actively in the negotiation process. Many of them worked together with us to achieve the adoption of the Declaration. For this we are grateful. Subsequently, two more Arctic states have officially endorsed the Declaration. For this the indigenous peoples of the Arctic are grateful as well. We are hopeful that the Russian Federation will soon endorse the Declaration too.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Arctic indigenous peoples are heartened by how during the five years since its adoption, the Declaration has been used, implemented and endorsed by the UN system, regional human rights institutions, domestic courts, and beyond. This is evidence of the Declaration genuinely enshrining minimum standards on indigenous peoples' human rights.

Still, redoubled efforts are needed to implement the Declaration. The lack of full implementation of the Declaration results in indigenous peoples' traditional territories being consumed by industrial activities at uncontrolled speed, in particular in the Arctic. This has detrimental effects on Inuit and Saami communities. This is why the Arctic region has proposed that one of the main outcomes of the 2014 World Conference on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be the establishment of an Optional Protocol to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for the effective implementation of indigenous peoples' land and resource rights and our right to self-determination. We will continue to elaborate on this proposal during the World Conference process.

Again, thank you for allowing the indigenous peoples of the Arctic to address the General Assembly to celebrate a truly historic day.