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**Indigenous Youth: Identity, challenges and hope: Articles 14, 17, 21 and 25 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**(New York, 29-31 January 2013)**

Paper Prepared by

**Mr. Tuomas Aslak Juuso<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Tuomas Aslak Juuso has been active on indigenous peoples issues for long period of time. He has been active in the National Finnish Sámi Youths (SSN) organization from the year of 2003 and is the president of the organization. In 2008 he was selected at that time as the history youngest member ever selected to the Sámi parliament of Finland. Mr. Juuso was the member of the Sámi parliament Finland that suggested and led the planning work of the youth council to the parliament. Also he has been active specifically in youth issues on international level as 2012 he was selected as a co-chair of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC). Mr. Juuso has also been the Arctic Focal point of the GIYC for many years. In 2012 he has been selected also to the United Nations World Conference of the Indigenous Peoples, Global Coordinating Group as a youth representative.

# UN International Expert Group Meeting

UN Headquarters, New York, 29-31 January

*Indigenous youth; identity, challenges and hope: Articles 14, 17, 21 and 25 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

**Mr. Tuomas Aslak Juuso<sup>1</sup>**

## **Introduction**

I would like to thank the organizers of this United Nations International Expert Group Meeting, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and its Secretariat, for providing me the opportunity to participate as an expert for the United Nations International Expert Group Meeting with a topic of **Indigenous youth: identity, challenges and hope: articles 14, 17, 21 and 25 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

When talking about indigenous youth issues we have to realize how wide the topic is, indigenous youth issues are connected to almost every aspect of indigenous people's issues in general. When the width of Indigenous peoples issues that are affecting indigenous youth is mentioned, we also have to realize that we could easily be talking about for example; Culture, Identity, Language, Education, Health, Self-determination, Right to participation in decision making processes, Indigenous peoples rights under the international law & convention concept, social service or other issues. It is important to remember that the youth approach for the indigenous issues is really important for the future of the indigenous peoples in the world, as we are the ones to continue practice our traditions, way of life, being individuals living in cultures of the world's indigenous peoples family.

In general indigenous youth are often facing the challenge of getting their voice heard as they often lack possibilities to represent themselves in different decision making processes regarding to indigenous peoples issues that specifically deal with youth and children issues. The Indigenous youth participation in the decision making processes is of great necessity when trying to understand the specific needs that the youth have on different issues, especially for the governments to improve the situations of Indigenous youth.

Another very important aspect is the implementation of the rights of indigenous youths and the different recommendations made for the states by various UN level & human rights actors and Indigenous peoples. The challenge is still to implement the rights of indigenous youth in many nation states, even though our issues often have been raised or recommended by the different international level human right actors like the different UN Human Right bodies

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In my report I will put more focus on issues relevant for the topics of the United Nations International Expert Group Meeting (EGM) for indigenous youth of importance with an Arctic view and need of action in manners of implementation of the good practices to be used in order to improve indigenous youth life situations. My main topics with an arctic perspective are the following;

1. Language, Culture & Identity
2. Participation in decision making processes.

In this report I will focus on the rights of the indigenous peoples specifically regarding to indigenous youth issues and to the different situations that we are facing today in the Arctic. I would like to recognize the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC) for its support and specifically the Arctic Focal Point Mr. Áike Niillas Peder Selfors of the GIYC and Mr. John B. Henriksen, the international representative of the Sámi Parliament of Norway for their consultation and input to my report.

## **1. Identity & Language and Culture**

Identity is one of the basic cores for an indigenous person overall, especially for indigenous children and youth as they are trying to form an image of their own society and culture as well as they are finding their place in it. It is often said that the identity of indigenous people is closely linked to the geographic area that they come from, but identity is more than that. Identity is individual but there can be found similarities within the indigenous youths as the identity is often based/attached on language, traditional knowledge, traditional livelihoods, traditional home areas, traditional handicrafts, family, nature and its animals, traditional beliefs and friends that belong to the same indigenous society.

Traditional knowledge is one of key elements of building identity; it is transferred mostly from parents, grandparents or from other close relative to the youths. The traditional knowledge supports indigenous youth's identity in many ways like; explaining the history of the people and history of the home region, transferring traditions and other forms of knowledge that is of importance for the indigenous youth to strengthen their identity. As the traditional knowledge is one of the influential issues on identity I would like to mention the positive improvements taken by Finland as pushing on implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>2</sup>. In Finland the government with its every ministry and the Sámi Parliaments representatives had a joint working group<sup>3</sup> on defining the meaning of article 8j. The outcome<sup>4</sup> of it has been accepted in consensus where one of the main goals was securing traditional knowledge as part of today's Finnish society where the indigenous traditional knowledge is secured as a living knowledge. This achievement is supporting strongly the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)<sup>5</sup>. This is important for the

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, article 8j

<sup>3</sup> The Finnish Contribution to the CBD Notification on March 29th 2011, Ministry of the Environment of Finland (SCBD/SEL/OJ/JS/DM/74443)

<sup>4</sup> Biologista monimuotoisuutta koskevan yleissopimuksen alkuperäiskansojen perinnetietoa käsittelevän artikla 8j:n kansallisen asiantuntijatyöryhmän loppuraportti, Ministry of the Environment of Finland (The final report of the working group of national experts on Indigenous peoples traditional knowledge regarding to the Convention of Biological Diversity and its article 8j)

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, article 31

indigenous youth identity as traditional knowledge is more recognized and implemented in education and other parts of society.

As mentioned identity can also be in contact to the home region and nature but also especially to the traditional livelihoods. Especially in the Arctic region the identity for the indigenous youths that live and work or that are from a family who works with traditional livelihoods have a special impact to their identity. Especially in the Arctic, the identity is built a lot from traditional clothing, other forms of handicrafts and traditional music as they also have a spiritual meaning for the people.

One of the challenges is how to strengthen indigenous youth's identity that live outside of the traditional regions of the indigenous peoples as language is one of the main key elements for the most indigenous peoples. One of the examples can be found in the Nordic countries where especially in Finland the Finnish Sami Parliaments research made in 2011 found that over 70 percent of children under the age of 18 lived outside the Sámi traditional home area in 2011<sup>6</sup>. About a half of the Sami people in Finland live outside the traditional Sami homeland. The number of the Sami people living in urban areas continues to rise. We have today an increasing generation of Sami people who were born in the city. We are starting to discover the new challenges this poses on preserving and building up the Sami identity and the realization of our rights. Urbanization presents a challenge to the enjoyment of the rights entitled to the indigenous peoples, especially in relation to our language and culture. These challenges are in part practical ones, but even further they relate to our sense of community: The question of how to best preserve the culture, identity, traditional knowledge and heritage when one is not included in a tightly knit community rises to the fore. Further, the Sami youth, need to have the right to choose the type of education and livelihood they want to pursue, on equal grounds with the rest of the population. At the same time the constitutional right to preserve and develop the Sami culture and languages<sup>7</sup> is already established, even when located outside the Sami homeland. This signalizes the need for specially focusing on the identity questions for the indigenous youths on having the necessary possibilities to use & learn their indigenous language in having adequate kindergartens, other social and educational services.

There are very few research/studies made about the indigenous youth. This is a challenge as the governments often are directing research funds to other selected issues whilst indigenous youth issues are neglected. The study of Sami children's welfare and their rights Implementation in the Finnish Sami traditional home area<sup>8</sup> was the first study ever made with the topic of regarding to indigenous children and youth in Finland. The report was made by The Finnish Ombudsman's for children's office and it was the fourth ever made study about the indigenous youths in Nordic countries. It is important to ensure that research about the indigenous youth is done and that it is not neglected in comparison to other topics of research made, and that that the topics of different studies are made by or consulted with indigenous peoples, specifically with the youth.

The identity is created from the birth of a child and throughout its childhood and youth, and it needs support from the parents but also services and policies. As the identity of the child is being shaped, adequate kindergartens and school services that respect and intend to promote indigenous cultures and languages are important to have for the indigenous peoples. Many indigenous parents need help

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Sami Parliament of Finland, 73, 54 % of Sami children and youth under the age of 18 lived outside the Sami Homeland Region in 2011

<sup>7</sup> Finnish constitution law, section 17.3

<sup>8</sup> A report study of Sami children's welfare and their rights implementation in the Finnish Sami traditional home area, Office of the Finnish Ombudsman for children

on providing opportunities to their children and youth to learn and develop indigenous languages because many of the parents have lost their indigenous language or never had the possibility to learn it due to different reasons. UNDRIP<sup>9</sup> clearly is supporting indigenous children & youths right on having the necessary possibilities arranged by the states for necessary Social, Health and Educational services in their own language and content necessary to the culture. Especially the kindergarten services are poor on having the service in indigenous mother tongue and with content from indigenous culture, and are often also lacking good resources to arrange the necessary services.

One of the most serious threats against indigenous identities is hate speech, racism and other forms of discrimination. These have a negative effect on the identity building process that indigenous youth go through. In addition to often facing different kind of discrimination, indigenous peoples in the Arctic are increasingly facing racism and hate speech, which also is rapidly growing in different regions where the indigenous peoples live. The Arctic have lately seen a lot of cases where indigenous youths experience hate speech and harsh racist attitudes. Especially, the Sámi youth in the Nordic countries are increasingly harassed mentally, but also increasingly much in physical ways. According to recent research, compared to the majority population, Sami are twice as likely to be subject to bullying.<sup>10</sup> Not a long time ago in 2012 in Trondheim, Norway, a Sámi female youth was harassed physically by a group of young Norwegian men, they even they tried to put a fire on her. This allegedly happened because she spoke Norwegian with a Sámi accent, as she is a Sámi from the northernmost parts of Norway. This incident was filmed by a security camera that proved what was happened. In the wake of the public debate about discrimination of Sami and the report by Hansen<sup>11</sup>, the case reached national media, which put more pressure on finding solutions on how to prevent these issues. The Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, also highlighted this incident in the New Years speech. Similar incidents occur more frequently than before and violate almost all of the basic human rights that a person, especially a youth has. Comments by the public on such cases, in social media and web news tend to show that the majority does not acknowledge these incidents as racism or discrimination. This was also the case in Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg speech, when Stoltenberg marginalized this incident and characterized this as bullying.

In Finland as an example we see more and more hate speech towards indigenous peoples. This occurs both locally among citizens but also in the context of local politics and surprisingly also in the national politics. All kinds of discrimination, racism and hate speech towards indigenous peoples have a negative affect towards the identity of indigenous youth. It strengthens the indigenous youths presumption of not being accepted by the majority in society. Indigenous youth can also be afraid of belonging to indigenous peoples with an effect of not even wanting to be recognized as indigenous. Especially the racism and hate speech that appears on social media on other internet forums has been a great concern of the Finnish Sámi Parliaments President<sup>12</sup>. Special focus is needed on these issues to put a stop on these human right violations that happen towards

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous peoples, Article 14 and 21

<sup>10</sup> Hansen, Ketil Lenert: Ethnic discrimination and bullying in relation to self-reported physical and mental health in Sami settlement areas in Norway, doktorgradsavhandling ved Universitetet i Tromsø, 2011

<sup>11</sup> Hansen, 2011

<sup>12</sup> Finnish Sámi Parliament, Presidents blog 2012 October. Also in January 2013, YLE Sámi Radio News.

indigenous peoples. National States should make special measures to ensure that these kinds of human rights violations<sup>13</sup> do not happen in their countries.

One of the actions needed for supporting the identity of indigenous youth is securing good enough media services for the youth. Especially TV and radio programs for indigenous children and youth are of importance<sup>14</sup>, with their use of indigenous language and with a content based on indigenous cultures the children and youth get to experience that their language is used also in other arenas than home. The youth and children are in that way given the possibility to identify themselves with the characters that are displayed in for example TV-shows for children, if only for a few hours a week. Media has a bigger and a bigger role of a child's or a youths life in today's society, therefore equal media services compared to the major society would be a supportive action for the indigenous youth identity as it would support the value and use of the language. This would enhance the feeling of being a part of a unity and would therefore be strengthening the identity of indigenous youth and also fulfill<sup>15</sup> the rights<sup>16</sup> of indigenous children and youth

It is important to recognize the relevance of the language for the Indigenous peoples, especially for the youths as it is a key for communication, traditions, traditional knowledge, identity, traditional livelihoods and other aspects of forms of culture.

The right to use the language is one of the most vital things to secure indigenous peoples future as living cultures. From an Arctic perspective we can see that the Inuit and the Sámi languages are spoken in many different countries with different dialects. It is important to recognize the different dialects of the different languages as they describe the richness of the indigenous people's cultures and in many cases have a great importance to the specific region. It is important to put focus on real possibilities (implementation of the language rights of the indigenous peoples) to use the language in different officials and localities. Special importance to indigenous youths identity is how the surrounding society is accepting Indigenous language. Also equal possibilities for the use of the language in social, media, education, free-time and some other services in the local and national level is important to strengthen the identity of indigenous youths. One of the important actions to support indigenous youth's identity is to secure an adequate level of social and educational services on indigenous languages in kindergartens and schools. When a good knowledge about the language is given to a youth, she or he has a much better accessibility to traditional knowledge, traditions, believes and communication trough language. Many or most of the above mentioned things are key things when adapting to the Indigenous societies but also for understanding the history as it is told among the Indigenous societies.

Indigenous languages are in many cases in danger of disappearance, as an example I would like to raise up the situation in Norway where the Sámi languages are critically endangered. Recently, a large survey was done on the Sámi language situation in Norway, ordered by the Sámi Parliament in Norway. The survey title is "Samisk språkundersøkelse 2012"<sup>17</sup>, where two of the critical findings in terms of children and youth in the language survey, were that there is a lack of Sámi

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<sup>13</sup> See United Nations Declaration on the Rights of a Child, Article 19 & International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 24

<sup>14</sup> Finnish National Minorities, Minority Right Group Finland, 2012

<sup>15</sup> Gáldu Čála, Journal of indigenous peoples rights No. 1/2009. The Convention on the rights of the child and Sámi children in Norway, Hadi Krosravi Lile. Preambled by Lucy and Carsten Smith

<sup>16</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 17

<sup>17</sup> Sámi Language Survey 2012, Norway

kindergarten spaces and the capacity of the Sámi language teaching in primary schools is limited. In spite of many promising plans and policies from the national level, the implementation on the local level seems to lack widely. These similarities can be found all across the Arctic.

It is important to remember the importance of state policy programs that direct how the language policies are done and which kind of policies are prioritized, when talking about language issues. The policies made by the states are often what direct funding for different language projects and programs. I would like to highlight the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities<sup>18</sup> and the Convention of the Right of the Child<sup>19</sup> and their importance. It is important that the state policies are consulted with the indigenous peoples but specially also with the indigenous youth as they are the main target group of language re-vitalization or education policies. As an example I would like to mention the situation in Finland, where the state has added a Sami language re-vitalization program to the government program for ongoing parliamentary period. Even though the program has been added to governments plan to execute, there are some challenges. The language re-vitalization program was never consulted straight with the youth representatives, all though Finnish Sami Parliament has been active in this process from the beginning. Today the situation of the program is that it lacks funding from the government, the importance of these kind of actions can't be putted a side and necessary funds should be pointed to the program as it is one of the prioritizes of the government.

It is equally important to the indigenous youths identity to have separate education policies, plans and curriculums based on the needs of the indigenous peoples. The right<sup>20</sup> of the indigenous peoples on having education possibilities and the education policies, content and curriculums must be respected. It is equally important to secure sufficient funding for the above mentioned actions. I would like to highlight the report<sup>21</sup> made by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the implementation of the right of indigenous peoples to education pointed by the UNs Human Right Council (A/HRC/12/33). Specifically the paragraphs<sup>22</sup> between 32 and 36 are important to emphasize what does article 14 of the UNDRIP<sup>23</sup> means and how to implement it to practice.

Traditional livelihoods play an important role for the indigenous youths and can be an important part of the youth identity. Traditional livelihoods can provide ; the possibilities to continue our traditional way of life, to secure traditions, giving income for the youth (work), to preserve traditional knowledge as living knowledge and food security on having food on the table. In the Arctic traditional livelihoods are large land and sea area users, the most common indigenous people's traditional livelihoods in the Arctic are; reindeer herding, hunting, fishing and traditional handicrafts. As the Arctic has been highlighted with high prosperity of natural resources, we need to put special focus on existence of the above mentioned livelihoods. Extraction of the natural

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<sup>18</sup> UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Article 4 and 5

<sup>19</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29

<sup>20</sup> The UN declaration on the rights of the Indigenous Peoples, Article 14. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 28 & 29

<sup>21</sup> Study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the implementation of the right of indigenous peoples to education (A/HRC/12/33). UNs Human Right Council, twelfth session. 2009

<sup>22</sup> See pages 9-10 of the Study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the implementation of the right of indigenous peoples to education (A/HRC/12/33).

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples

resources like gas, oil, energy resources, forestry, mining and other forms of mineral extraction are affecting widely in many different ways for the indigenous youth that work within traditional livelihoods.

Reindeer herding is facing major challenges such as loss of the grazing lands in the Arctic, like the worlds reindeer herders<sup>24</sup> have noted with concern, and with increasing numbers of predators. The fact that grazing lands are diminishing because of the mineral extractions and that the livelihoods profitability is decreasing due to the fact that the number of predators has increased rapidly, has led to that the mental health of some of the indigenous youth working with reindeer herding has been affected in forms of depressions and suicidal tendencies.

I would like to put special focus on the indigenous youth working with reindeer herding in Sweden as example of effects of above mentioned. UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples on his report<sup>25</sup> to the UN Human Right Council stated on increasing pressures on their traditional lands from mining and wind-power development projects. The loss of the grazing land and high number of predators has had negative effect on reindeer herding Sami youth as their suicide rates have increased rapidly. The suicide rates has been a concern of the indigenous Sami youth in Sweden<sup>26</sup>

In Norway the indigenous youths are facing similar challenges on loss of the grazing land and high numbers of predators. One of the main challenges in Norway is the oil and gas development in the far north. Also the states plans on decreasing the number of reindeer herders (siida shareholders) and the number of reindeers allowed can have a negative effect on the Sámi reindeer herding youth's possibilities to continue their traditional livelihood, as these decisions will make it harder for them to acquire the right/share/license to work as reindeer herders. The tradition has always been that children follow their parents and continue working as reindeer herders after their parents. This tradition wasn't protected by the Reindeer Husbandry Act of 1978, but §12 in the new Reindeer Husbandry Act of 2007 gives youth the opportunity to acquire a siida share from their parents in a way that is closer to the Sámi traditions, and in that way the youth could have a possibility to continue working with their traditional livelihood. The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, which is responsible for the reindeer husbandry in Norway, on the other hand, neglects to fund this and is thereby preventing this regulation from functioning as intended.

In Finland the indigenous youth have the similar challenges on loss of the grazing lands and high rates of predator damages for the livelihood as it decreases the profits of the livelihood. Also one of the main concern for the Sámi youth also is the issue on having necessary possibilities to continue traditional Sámi reindeer herding as it is not recognized in the reindeer herding act.

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<sup>24</sup> Kautokeino Declaration, The 4<sup>th</sup> World Reindeer Herders Congress

<sup>25</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya, The situation of the Sami people in the Sápmi region of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Human Rights Council, Eighteenth session

<sup>26</sup> Forthcoming report by Permanent Forum member, Eva Biaudet. a study report on the right to participation in decision-making processes of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries



Traditional fishing, hunting and handicrafts are also important livelihoods for the Arctic indigenous youth. Talking about above mentioned livelihoods we have to put focus on profitability of the livelihoods and to the possibilities to practice these livelihoods. I would like to put special focus on fishing rights and to the situation in Norway that has been addressed by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of the indigenous peoples in his report<sup>27</sup> of the Nordic countries. As an example of the challenges that traditional handicrafts are facing, I would like to mention situation in Nordic countries where the traditional handicraft entrepreneurs are facing difficulties to sell their works to another country where the Sámi people live due to the fact of custom manners on having high custom taxes. This is a huge challenge specifically for the young entrepreneurs trying to gain enough profits from their livelihoods. This is also making it difficult to the Sámi people to practice cross-border businesses that they have done traditionally over the centuries.

## **2. Participation in decision making processes**

The right of the indigenous youth to participate in decision making processes is one of the main topics in my report. The indigenous youth have the right to be heard<sup>28</sup> in all matters relevance to them. A common definition of the words “the right to be heard”, is that proper consultations are been taken in to practice so that the indigenous youth would have the necessary possibilities to represent them in official and un-official occasions. The indigenous youth participation in decision making processes can be in many levels, it can mean; participation inside the indigenous peoples own institution, NGO’s, meetings and other actors, participation inside on the national and local level and participation on international level.

It is important to define what “participation in decision making” actually means. There can be different kinds of interpretations on what actually counts as a participation in decision making processes. The good practices<sup>29</sup> for participation in decision making processes means consultations with the youth. This often is a challenge as indigenous peoples rights overall are neglected specifically as they are not consulted properly. I would like to highlight final report<sup>30</sup> made to the UNs Human Right Council by the EMRIP<sup>31</sup> of a study on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making. The report focuses on examples on good practices in different levels on decision-making. Specifically in the reports annex part, it has good explanation on what are the rights of the indigenous peoples in decision making processes secured by different international conventions like the UNDRIP<sup>32</sup> and the ILO 169.

We as indigenous youth often see that governments, ministries, specifically governmental youth departments, local level political institutes, national youth NGO’s, sometimes the UN systems and other actors participating in decision making processes sometimes or often forget the principles of consultation with the indigenous youth. As said that, I would like to praise and express my enthusiasm, because we are now sitting on the EGM talking specifically indigenous youth issues

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<sup>27</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya. The situation of the Sami people in the Sápmi region of Norway, Sweden and Finland

<sup>28</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 & 13

<sup>29</sup> Promoting Children’s Participation in Democratic Decision-Making, UNICEF, Gerison Lansdown. 2001

<sup>30</sup> Final report of the study on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making (A/HRC/EMRIP/2010/2). UNs Human Right Council, Eighteen Session, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

<sup>32</sup> The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous peoples

In the forthcoming study report <sup>33</sup> on the right to participation in decision-making processes of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries, permanent forum member Ms. Eva Biaudet is highlighting cases from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Greenland. The report focuses on indigenous youth, participation right to decision making inside their own institutions like the Sámi Parliaments in Finland, Sweden and Norway and the Inatsisartut (Government of Greenland). The report has also a conclusion and recommendations part. Even though the report mostly concentrates on participation right inside indigenous peoples own political institutions it is important report that specially gives a picture what kind of practices are needed for the indigenous youth worldwide. As the role of the Sámi Parliaments is to officially represent the indigenous people specifically in Nordic countries, it can be used for an example on defining good practices on how to secure indigenous youth voice in an institution that officially represent the indigenous people in different nation states.

I would like to mention the youth council of the Sámi parliament of Finland as an example of best practices on existing practices how to secure the right for the indigenous youth to participate in decision making processes inside indigenous peoples own political institutions. The youth council was established in 2010 with unique rights to represent the youth in the highest possible arenas of the Sámi Parliament, like the assembly meeting and board meetings of the Sámi parliament. It has also unique role to actions as it self-determines the actions and the budget of the operating year. I would like to recognize the decision made by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland to support the idea on having the youth council and for funding it. In the year of 2012 the Ministry funded the youth council with a 110 000 € and the fact that the decision of contribution is made on a yearly base with variations of amount of money.

We want to be a part of the decisions that are made today and that will effect on our lives in the future. In the future indigenous youth have to live with the decisions that are made today, this itself shows why youth need and want to be a part of different decision making processes at all level. As an example one of the topics that affect youth is language issues, in decisions that are made regarding to how to secure survival of our languages, the youth have a vital role as we are the generations that can still in many areas learn their languages from elders and in the future pass it on for next generations. It is important to work towards securing scope for actions for indigenous youth that the continuity for our cultures would be secured in all different ways.

One of the most important levels of decision making for the indigenous youth is the right to participate on national level on decision making processes that concern indigenous youth. The decision making processes on the national level are made in many levels.

On the local level indigenous youth often lack the possibilities to represent themselves in issues that concern them. Especially on municipality level, the right <sup>34</sup> of indigenous youths voice to be heard is violated often. It is important that the local political level notices the need of consultations with the youth, but specifically the need of consultations with the indigenous youth that are representing the people of indigenous peoples. Especially on the local level issues like right <sup>35</sup> to meet together and have the possibilities for that secured by the local political level are concerns of the indigenous youth.

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<sup>33</sup> Forthcoming report by Permanent Forum member, Eva Biaudet. a study report on the right to participation in decision-making processes of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries

<sup>34</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 & 13

<sup>35</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 15

On the national level it is most important to remember that indigenous youth have the right<sup>36</sup> to be heard and to be consulted in decision making processes affecting them on the national level. Especially the national youth policies, policy programs and funding decision do affect a lot to the indigenous youths lives. It is important to remember that national youth policies are guiding on every level what is to be done with youth generally but also with indigenous youths on government level on improving the situations of the youth. Quite often the needs of indigenous youth or the indigenous youth overall are not mentioned in national state policies. As indigenous youth, they have special needs that should be noticed on national level of youth policies as they direct the possibilities to act for the youth in overall on national level. The national youth policy programs also often direct the funding decision and the decision on what to be prioritized on youth issues. Consultations with the indigenous youth on above mentioned issues are crucial on understanding the needs of indigenous youth. This right<sup>37</sup> of the indigenous youth is neglected widely in the Arctic region, even in countries like Finland, Sweden and Norway where the presumption of having good and fair youth policies is widely recognized on international level, especially on EU<sup>38</sup> level.

The right<sup>39</sup> to participate in decision making processes for the indigenous youth is also a question of having the adequate possibilities to act and represent themselves. In many cases the indigenous youth don't have the necessary possibilities to represent themselves as they lack funding and possibilities to organize themselves. On the Arctic aspect I am really concerned on the situation on Russia where the possibilities and the right for the indigenous peoples to act peacefully in their own organizations seems to be decreasing by the actions of the government.

It is important that the national states do take actions in order to secure possibilities for the indigenous youth to act in their own institutions. Necessary funding is needed to be located for indigenous youth to secure necessary possibilities to participate in different decision making processes that are directly or in-directly affecting them.

On the international level we have seen some improvements regarding on the indigenous youth issues, especially on securing the participation of the youth. On the UN level, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC) has been active especially in the UNPFII<sup>40</sup> and EMRIP<sup>41</sup>. The recognition made by the chair of the UNPFII in 2008 of the GIYC as full and effective actor in the UNPIFF has been one of the key factors for strengthening the actions of the GIYC and for having the possibility to hear the voices of the youth. Even though the GIYC has been active on making different recommendations to the states and different UN bodies, the implementation of these issues has been neglected in many cases. Especially the demand on having enough good possibilities to sufficient funding resources has not been noticed with an enough good level.

As the GIYC represent the indigenous youth voice in the UN system, it is needed that adequate funding resources and structures are made available for the GIYC to be used. In relations to that I would like to recognize the support given by the UNICEF on supporting the GIYC on its actions in the UNPFII on providing much needed meeting facilities/space. In order that GIYC would have necessary possibilities to act on representing the indigenous youth voice in the UN system, GIYC

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<sup>36</sup> The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous peoples, Article 18 & 22

<sup>37</sup> The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous peoples, Article 18 & 22

<sup>38</sup> European Union

<sup>39</sup> The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous peoples, Article 18 & 22

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues

<sup>41</sup> Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

need adequate funding so that it could work better around the year and that the coordinating group of the GIYC would have the necessary possibilities to meet in a regular basis.

The indigenous youth participation in decision making processes is based on the need of having the necessary and equal possibilities comparing to the major society to address specific needs of the indigenous youth. This conclusion is crucial to be understood by the national states as many times the governments lack the correct information or understanding of the needs of indigenous youth. One of the challenges can also be that often national youth NGO's are one of the main actors to be consulted when talking about youth issues on national level. It is important to remember that these NGO's do not always speak on behalf of the indigenous youth specifically when they have not consulted with the indigenous youth to establish common understanding of issues of importance. The common understanding must be founded on the base on free, prior, and informed consent of the indigenous youth.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude my report I would like to point out that the identity questions are very important to the indigenous youths and this topic touches widely almost every aspect of indigenous issues like; education, social services, language, culture, traditional livelihoods, health and other issues as well. The right to participate in decision making processes would clearly improve the situations of the indigenous youth and when fulfilled by the national states it would give specific information on special needs of the indigenous youth. Also more effective actions to ensure the rights of the indigenous youth to participate in decision making processes on the local, national and international level (UN) should be prioritize more. Finally I would like to say that even in the year of 2013 we do lack proper implementation on the rights of the indigenous peoples/youth, this is a challenge that is needed to be addressed specifically towards the member states.

## **Recommendations**

1. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to take special measures to secure and strengthen indigenous youth identity in matters of suggestions made by the indigenous peoples/youth representatives in different national states where indigenous peoples live.
2. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to secure Indigenous peoples need of having specific education policies, plans and curriculums on indigenous languages and with the content and understanding of the needs of indigenous peoples cultures.
3. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to take effective measures to put a stop to all kind of forms of discrimination against indigenous youth. Especially talking about racism and hate speech affects.
4. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to secure specific social services for the indigenous peoples regarding specifically to kindergarten services with the content of indigenous languages and respect and understanding of the indigenous cultures.
5. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to secure the continuity of traditional livelihoods as demanded by the indigenous peoples. And to secure the possibility to the youth to continue indigenous peoples traditional livelihoods

6. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to secure indigenous youth rights to participate in decision making processes, where they are consulted in proper matters.
7. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to secure for the indigenous youth possibilities to act and to secure adequate funding for indigenous youths NGO's and the youth representative bodies of the political institutions of the indigenous peoples.
8. Call for action from the UN Member States and the UN agencies to secure adequate resources for the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus to succeed and act sufficiently representing the indigenous youth on international level.
9. Call the UNPFII to make a study report on Arctic indigenous youths participation to decision making processes on national level.
10. Call the UNPFII to make a study report on racisms and hate speech towards indigenous youth in the Arctic