

# Jokkmokk Winter Conference 2010

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*February 2, 2010*

*Speech by the President of the Sami Parliament Sara Larsson,*

Today's host is the Sami parliament in Sweden and the theme for this day is the northern perspective, climate change and the northern societies. JWC is addressing an issue, climate change, which the whole world talks about. It is important that indigenous peoples and local communities in the Arctic take part, or why not the lead - in this global debate. I believe that we have a lot to contribute to the world and I am glad to be the host for today.

The indigenous peoples of the Arctic does not only know how the climate change affects our daily life – as we will be aware of when watching the film today *Climate changes first victims* by price-awarded producer Samuel Idivouma.

The societies of the Arctic can also contribute with solutions on how to change the development and the policies in our own small societies, as we have heard from Linda Ylivaino, mayor from the municipality of Övertorneå.

The climate changes that we will inevitably face is, as I am certain of, possible to cope with only if we address the changes with the traditional knowledge of the peoples of the north on how to meet changes and adaptation.

This is why it is so important for us in the Sami parliament to be able to host this kind of conference. We will later today hear my colleague Nanna Borchert tell us more about the Living Environment Program for the Sami parliament, what it means and how it affects the work in the Sami parliament.

I will try to tell you more about our political motives to make the question of sustainable development an important question for us. For me sustainable development is about two things:

Firstly: Human rights.

If you don't sustain human rights - you will not gain sustainable development. And if you don't achieve sustainable development you will not be able to guarantee human rights. We are a part of the nature and if you don't respect the nature you will not be able to build healthy societies. The Sami people know a lot about the work to gain human rights and I know that it can be an important aspect of the focus for this conference.

Secondly: Traditional knowledge.

The other important step towards sustainable development is about traditional knowledge. Peter Sköld told us yesterday that from an historical perspective it is important to be active agents - not passive objects. For me it means making use of, and being proud of your own, often traditional, knowledge. This means that for all peoples of the world who are vulnerable and threatened by the ongoing climate crisis, it is fundamental that we stop being passive victims of the process, begging the world to stop development, saying no - But become active participants in the process, possessing the right to demand change and be a part of the progress.

These explanations make it so obvious that we are to host a youth conference on the issue of climate change. I am certain the youth of today are not looking at themselves as victims but as agents for change. Putting a youth perspective to issues like policy governance, climate change jurisdiction and technical solutions will be necessary to have progress in the politics regarding the indigenous people's rights in Sweden.

Whatever we do hear today, discussing the northern local societies we are doing a global thing, that will affect the international cooperation.

I went to Cop 15 in December last year. We all know it failed to bring forward an international deal on how to combat climate change. It is disappointing. But it did result in an even stronger knowledge on the importance of cooperation also on the grassroots level. The leaders of the world could not come up with hardly any common view. As an indigenous leader, attending the conference, I was amazed about how we, representing totally different parts of the world could agree on a couple of sentences to bring forward to the negotiating personnel. Sentences that simply asked the negotiating parties to acknowledge indigenous peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.

The work we are doing here, learning more about our northern societies and local communities will, if we can add these globally agreed principles, in the end also help the indigenous communities in other parts of the world in their work.

The northern countries have a great opportunity to be world leading in climate change policy - and I do believe that Sweden were important in the COP 15. If Sweden could use the indigenous people's perspective it might be even more successful in the future.

Thank you.