

2018-07-10

Statement under agenda item 3: Country engagement

Madame Chair,

My name is Aili Keskitalo, I am the President of the Sami Parliament in Norway and I am speaking on behalf of the Saami Council and the Sami Parliament in Sweden.

First of all, I would like to thank all representatives and delegates for sharing their experiences from the country engagements of EMRIP.

The country engagement in Finland and the advisory note addressing the definition of Sámi for the purpose of the electoral roll, Sámi self-determination and other matters are relevant to the completion and agreement on a Nordic Sami Convention.

From yesterday's discussions we understand some clarifications are required concerning the current status of the draft Nordic Sami Convention. A draft Convention was initiated by the Governments of Sweden, Finland and Norway to its respective Sami Parliaments on 13th January 2017. Thereafter deliberations within the Sami Parliamentary Council have taken place and in June 2018, the Sami Parliamentary Council submitted its amendments to the Governments.

Two of the amendments are worth mentioning since they relate to matters discussed during EMRIP's country engagement in Finland. The first concerns the definition of Sámi for the purpose of the electoral roll in the current draft preamble text. The Sami Parliaments are of the opinion that the current wording can be understood as making the states able to determine who is a Sámi eligible to vote in the Sami Parliament elections and that non-Sami could be recognized as having this right. The definition of who is a Sámi for the purpose of registration on the electoral roll is clearly a Sámi matter. As such, a convention text which does not reflect

this, is not in line with the right of self-determination and indigenous peoples right of self-identification and cannot be accepted.

The other amendment we have proposed concerns article 4, second paragraph, which reads as follows in the current draft: *Self-determination is exercised through self-government in internal matters and through consultation in matters of particular importance to the Sami.* Self-government and consultations in order to obtain free, prior and informed consent are fundamental aspects of the right to self-determination. But they are not the only means through which self-determination can be exercised. In our opinion the current wording restricts our ways to exercise our right of self-determination and therefore we ask it to be removed.

The amendments are awaiting response from the Governments, and since all the Nordic states of the Convention have voted in favor of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in 2014 reiterated their commitment to fulfil the ends of the Declaration, we expect the Nordic Sami Convention to reflect no standard lower than what is set out in the Declaration and what the states have committed themselves to achieve.

We thank the EMRIP for the country engagement in Finland as well as the representatives from the Finnish Government and the Sami Parliament in Finland and hope that the experience shared can help us conclude on a Nordic Sami Convention reflecting the content of the Declaration as well as the will of the Sámi people.