

The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region meeting in Helsinki

Thursday November 20th 2014

Item 9: Report on Arctic activities by members

Statement by Håkan Jonsson, President of the Sámi Parliamentarian Council

Mr. Chair, Arctic parliamentarians, observers and guests, thank you for the opportunity to speak at this meeting of SCPAR.

For those of you who attend this meeting for the first time I just want to shortly explain what the Sami Parliamentary Council is: The Sámi Parliamentary Council is the institutionalized cooperative body of the Sámi parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden. It also includes the permanent participation of Sámi in Russia. The Council is mandated to deal with cross-border issues affecting the Sámi people and to speak on behalf of the Sámi people at the international level.

The Sámi Parliamentary council held its board meeting two weeks ago in Oslo and has begun looking into possibilities for establishing a Sámi secretariat in Brussels. As we are the only Indigenous People within the geographical area of the EU, we are directly affected by many of the decisions taken in the EU, stretching from strategies for combating climate change and extractive industries to protection and support for endangered languages and cultures. It is therefore of vital importance for us to be able to actively participate at the EU policy making level.

The Council also decided in Oslo to begin the application process for a permanent accreditation with both the Nordic and the Arctic Councils. The SCPAR has taken positive steps in the direction of including us at the meetings and we are also able to ask questions and more actively participate in its work than what is now possible with our current status at the Nordic Council.

We believe that it is crucial for us, as an indigenous people in the Arctic, to be able to fully and actively participate in both the Nordic and the circumpolar cooperation.

Indigenous Peoples right to participate in decision-making in matters which affect their Rights is one of the most fundamental principles in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It is recognized that Indigenous Peoples participation in decision making on matters that affect their lives, forms the fundamental basis for the enjoyment of the full range of human rights. At its core, this principle enables Indigenous Peoples to be freely in control of their own destinies in

conditions of equality. Without this right, the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, both collectively and individually, cannot be fully enjoyed.¹

In this afternoon we will discuss security in the Arctic and among that the presence and development of unmanned aircraft systems in the Arctic. In this regard, I would like to mention the Swedish and sometimes also NATO operated testing area in Vidsel, Norrbotten. The FMV, The Swedish Defence Material administration recently decided to expand this already vast testing area with an additional 210 square kilometers, thus forcing the relocation of both prosperous and sustainable tourism industries and people living in the area. The testing activities will seriously hinder and damage the traditional food production, hunting and fishing as well as the reindeer herding in the area as the plan is also, to carry out these activities during the most vulnerable season. It is very serious that the Sámi Parliament in Sweden was not consulted in this process. Mr. Chair, this is one of the examples that concretely demonstrate the urgent need for us as Indigenous people to be able to participate in decision making activities that affect us.

In conclusion Mr. Chair, we are now asking you, the Parliamentarians and observers of the Standing Committee, to actively support and advocate for our applications in both the Nordic and the Arctic councils through your channels in the respective parliaments and councils.

¹ A/HRC/15/35, para 2