



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

**CEREMONIAL OPENING OF THE FIFTH SAMI PARLIAMENT OF SWEDEN
Kiruna, 25 August 2009**

**MESSAGE FROM THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS
ISSUES**

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The Sami People
Distinguished Members of the Sami Parliament
HRH Highness Crown Princess Victoria
Municipal Officials of Kiruna
Mrs. Nyamko Saboni, Minister of Integration and Gender Equality
Mr. Eskil Erlandsson, Minister of Agriculture and Sami Affairs
Mr. Lars Anders Baer, Chairman of the Board of the Sami Parliament and Distinguished
Member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Ms. Silvia Simma, President of the Sami Parliament of Sweden
Mr. Egil Olli, President of the Sami Parliament of Norway
Mr. Klemetti Nakkalajarvi – President of the Sami Parliament of Finland
Mr. Mattias Ahren, President of the Saami Council
Presidents of the ICC and RAIPON
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I would like to thank the Sami Parliament for the inviting me to open the Fifth Sami Parliament. I will also congratulate, in advance, the new Chair and Members of the Board and the President of the Sami Parliament who will be elected tomorrow.

It is such an honor that the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues got invited to this historic occasion. This is the first time for the Forum to take part in a ceremonial opening of an Indigenous Peoples' Parliament. The Permanent Forum is a body within the United Nations which is mandated to provide advice to States, UN bodies, programmes,

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United Nations



agencies and funds on indigenous peoples' issues and to raise awareness on indigenous peoples. It is with this mandate that I am here before you for this Ceremonial Opening. I also greet you on behalf of the Igorot peoples of the Cordillera Region in the Philippines, the people I belong to.

The Sami Parliaments of Sweden, Norway and Finland and the Saami Council have played crucial roles in raising indigenous peoples' rights and concerns at the national and global levels and helping create spaces and instruments for indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which was established through a UN Resolution in 2000, is one of these international bodies which came into being because of systematic efforts of indigenous peoples. We, in the indigenous peoples' caucus, had to work in partnership with States and State Bodies like the Sami Parliaments to be succeed in our goal. Another victory which the Sami Parliament can also claim ownership is the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the UN General Assembly in 2007. This contains the minimum international standards to ensure the survival and dignity of indigenous peoples all over the world.

Let me use this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to the Sami Parliament and the Government of Sweden for their contributions to the establishment of the Forum and the adoption of the UN Declaration. These deeds will be remembered in the history of the Permanent Forum and the UNDRIP. I hope we can continue to rely on the continuing support you will give to the Forum and other UN bodies and procedures, like the Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people.

The role that the Sami Parliament plays in the international arena, like the United Nations and the Council of Europe, should not be underestimated. You have helped in projecting and amplifying the concerns and voices of indigenous peoples, not only those from the Arctic, but also those from the developing countries. When we were negotiating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples we stayed in close contact with the Sami Parliaments of Sweden, Norway and Finland to update you on the developments. When this finally got adopted in 2007, your representative, Lars Anders Baer, was with us to witness the event and to celebrate.

This was the same case with the establishment of the Permanent Forum, the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples' Rights under the Human Rights Council. Again, the Sami Parliament strongly supported the resolutions for the establishment of these bodies. As you all know the First Chairperson of the Forum is Ole Henrik Magga and the First Chair of the Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples' Right is John Henriksen.

I hope this kind of support which you have given to the global indigenous peoples' movement will be sustained and even increased further in the future. There is no doubt that the adoption of the UNDRIP has brought indigenous peoples one step further in our struggle to get States and the broader society to respect and protect our rights.





However, we know that getting this implemented will even be more difficult. I suspect that this is not just the case with us, indigenous peoples in the poorer countries, but also with you who come from the rich countries. I hope the Sami Parliaments can do more work in terms of getting the Declaration implemented not only by you but also by your national governments. If the UNDRIP is used to adopt new policies and laws at the national level and will be invoked by Courts of law and the Treaty bodies of the United Nations, it will acquire the status of international customary law in a faster way. This is the case with the UN Declaration on Human Rights. It is a Declaration, but it is now international customary law as many governments include it as part of their national law.

Our world today is facing two major crises, the ecological crisis as manifested in climate change and erosion of biological diversity and the global economic crisis. Indigenous peoples are directly affected by these. While these are serious problems which we should help provide solutions to, we also should use these as opportunities to challenge the structures and mindsets which have caused these crises. Climate change is the result of unsustainable production and consumption patterns and lifestyles of rich countries and people and the global economic crisis by the unregulated finance capital market which feeds on greed for profits. Indigenous peoples have not contributed much to these problems and yet we are the ones who feel the biggest impacts. We believe we have much to contribute in solving climate change but our involvement in the processes of the UNFCCC has been marginal.

Since the Permanent Forum took up the issue of climate change as its special theme in 2007, indigenous peoples have engaged more constructively in the negotiations on climate change. I know that the Arctic indigenous peoples, which includes the Sami peoples, have raised the issue of the impacts of climate change in your territories and on your traditional livelihoods. Because of our active involvement, for the first time in the history of the negotiations in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change we managed to bring in indigenous peoples rights. There are three important issues which are in the text of what will be agreed upon in the 15th Conference of Parties of the Climate Change Convention on December 2009 in Copenhagen.

First, is the respect and protection of indigenous peoples rights, as contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These can be found in the sections of mitigation and adaptation. There are also explicit references on the need to obtain indigenous peoples free, prior and informed consent when mitigation and adaptation measures are being done. Second, is the need to recognize the importance of indigenous peoples traditional knowledge. And third, the need to protect the traditional livelihoods of indigenous peoples. I strongly believe that one of the key solutions to climate change is the implementation of the UNDRIP. Therefore, if we get the Conference of Parties 15 of the UNFCCC to recognize the link of the respect and protection of indigenous peoples rights to climate change, we are on the right track.

We want to ensure that these paragraphs will remain in the Copenhagen agreement and it is within this that I am specifically requesting that the Sami Parliament will try to include some Sami representatives as part of the government delegations





taking part in the negotiating sessions until Copenhagen. The Swedish Government now holds the EU Presidency so it will play a crucial role in these negotiations. By getting into the government delegation and also taking part in the global indigenous peoples' caucus, the Sami peoples will be able to influence not only the Swedish government but the European Union and other States Parties to the Convention.

As far as the global economic crisis is concerned, we also have been out in the multilateral discussions on this issue. But we see not only as a threat but an opportunity to assert our right to self-determined development. For so long our sustainable traditional livelihoods have been undermined by the dominant society. Yet, these livelihoods are the ones which have low ecological footprints and which sustained our cultures and communities for thousands of years. Since the dominant economic model of overconsumption is now collapsing, we have to think of how to strengthen our economic systems . We have shown that we are capable of sustaining our communities without destroying nature (which we consider as part of our community). Therefore, we have the moral authority to design a low carbon path to development. We can demonstrate how to balance environment and development. Thus, we have to assert our effective participation in the discussions on how to solve both the climate change crisis and the global economic crisis. We owe this to our children and the seven generations after them.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate my appeal to the Sami Parliament to continue to play an active role in the international arena to promote and protect indigenous peoples' rights and promote their self-determined development. Specifically, this means to ensure that the UNDRIP is implemented by the Parliament, itself, by States and society at large. I also appeal that you consider taking a more active participation in the Climate Change negotiations up to Copenhagen and beyond. You can do this by being part of the Swedish government delegation or being part of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change.

I warmly thank you for this privilege to speak before you. I wish you Good Luck and Best Wishes for your future work. I now declare this 5th Session of the Sami Parliament open.

