

Statement Given by Mr. Hjalmar Dahl

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
4th session, May 16-27 2005

Joint Arctic statement: Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference

Item 3 (b)

Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals: "Achieve universal primary education"

Thank you Mdm. Chairperson;

The right to education is a fundamental right, recognized in various international instruments, such as the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. We believe that those instruments are applicable to Indigenous Peoples and in many cases, also when we are talking about issues related to education and language.

We welcome UNESCO's response within the framework of its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its Action Plan adopted in 2001. Among others, it recognizes indigenous cultures as part of the common heritage of humanity and emphasizes the protection of indigenous human rights and fundamental freedoms as *an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity*. (Article 4, UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity).

We appreciate that UNESCO has taken concrete actions and policies related to recommendations from previous sessions of the PF and includes indigenous peoples in its policy making as member of the IASG to the PFII.

Mdm. Chairperson;

Children are the most valuable resource in all of our societies and represent our future leaders. Therefore it is important to include primary education and focus on it in the MDG. There is a need to formulate, implement and control a universal primary education policy and therefore it is of utmost importance to ensure indigenous peoples, including indigenous children, are visible in policy making with regard to this MDG.

Educational programs in our own languages are still very limited and approximations of western curricula still dominate in the schools, despite different efforts to make them more culturally appropriate. We are convinced that PF guidance towards a culturally sensitive approach could help to shape cultural policies of the nation states in which indigenous people live. We would like to pay particular attention to indigenous peoples who live under the shadows of the developed and rich nation states, where indigenous peoples generally are disadvantaged in regards to enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and basic human rights. In this context a new definition of national languages might be needed to help retain the indigenous and minority languages. In certain situations new paradigms of understanding and transfer of knowledge might be developed.

Curriculum development should also be closely associated with local communities and accommodate substantial differences in priority among the various regions of the world.

In conclusion Mdm. Chairperson:

During previous sessions of the PF it was suggested that an Indigenous Educators Caucus (IEC) be established. The purpose of the IEC was to work with the Permanent Forum and to serve as a vehicle to bring to center stage community, national and regional initiatives of Indigenous Educators. We would like to reconfirm our support for this initiative and are interested in knowing the status of the IEC.

The Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference offers the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

Prioritize recommendations on education to the Permanent Forum during the first three sessions adopted by the ECOSOC and establish a direct dialogue with UNESCO on implementation, and on how to include them in the MDG.

Recommendation 2:

The Forum notes that at least 11 UN agencies and organizations currently carry out programmes, activities and processes addressing issues related to the promotion, preservation and protection of genetic resources, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. Still, since these activities do not meet the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples, the Forum calls on a seminar to be arranged, involving all relevant UN system organizations, under the auspices of the Permanent Forum, and with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples. The seminar shall address the various GR, TK and TCEs-related activities being undertaken by the UN system and seek to promote a holistic and comprehensive approach towards these issues and shall further seek to enhance indigenous peoples' direct influence over the work on GR, TK and TCEs in the UN system.

Qujanaq!

Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.