

Presented by Mr. MATIAS ÅRÉN

**Fourth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues**

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**Statement by the Arctic Caucus: Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Saami
Council, Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North
(RAIPON) and Global Indigenous**

**Agenda Item 3 (a) – Goal of the Millennium Development Goals: “Eradicate extreme
poverty and hunger”**

Thank you Mdm Chairperson,

In the outset, allow the indigenous peoples of the Arctic to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Permanent Forum. We would like to underline that even though the Arctic Region no longer holds the Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues the Arctic Caucus remain committed to work with you and the other Forum members to make the Permanent Forum successful in its daunting task to advance the rights and interests of the world’s indigenous peoples.

Mdm Chairperson,

As to the eradication of extreme poverty, as many has pointed out before us, for indigenous peoples, poverty is directly related to continued access to, and the right to control, their traditional lands, waters and natural resources. Essentially, indigenous peoples that have lost access to their traditional lands are poor, those that have not are not. Consequently, measuring whether MDG 1 has been reached with regard to indigenous peoples cannot be done simply by a dollar counting exercise. Rather, any such evaluation must focus on to what extent indigenous peoples’ rights to land and resources are respected in the countries they inhabit. Further, any activity that aims at combating poverty among indigenous peoples must seek to restitute and restore indigenous traditional lands, waters and resources that have been destroyed or which they have been deprived of so that they can reinstitute their traditional land uses, and land management systems associated with such.

Allow us to offer an example of good practice from the Arctic and Russia. Earlier periods of communism, and more recent capitalization of reindeer herding, did more or less destroy traditional Saami reindeer herding practices on the Kola Peninsula. We are now, with the acceptance of the Russian government, in a new project assisting Saami reindeer herding families on the Russian side of the Saami areas, that used to be reindeer herders, but with the arrival of communism were forced to work in the "reindeer meat producing industries", to reintroduce traditional Saami reindeer herding. As we speak, these reindeer herders are again starting to move their reindeers in a traditional manner, in their traditional areas. Hopefully, they will from now on be able to provide for themselves and their families, in a sustainable manner. We firmly believe that for these reindeer herders, getting their old life back is worth much more than any form of material aid. We hope that this project will set an example for the entire Russian north.

A less positive practice is anti-harvesting lobbying groups, situated outside the Arctic, but with aspirations to manage and control our wealth and resources. The lobbying impacts of the so called animal rights movements on the cultures of the subsistence life-styles of the indigenous peoples in the Arctic are enormous and have to be addressed by the Permanent Forum.

Further, climate change is affecting the ability of indigenous peoples of the Arctic to maintain in a sustainable manner our subsistence way of life. It will only get worse. The path breaking Arctic Climate Impact Assessment of the Arctic Council recently released predicts very dramatic and stark realities for the peoples of the Arctic in maintaining our hunting, fishing and herding cultures. This will have major negative cultural and economic impacts, thus resulting in poverty.

Mdm Chairperson, in conclusion, the Arctic Caucus offers the following recommendation:

"The ECOSOC recognizes that respect for indigenous peoples' right to lands, waters and natural resources constitutes a pre-requisite for the eradication of poverty and hunger among indigenous peoples, and calls on UNDP, when evaluating the implementation of MDG 1 as regards indigenous peoples, to measure the success of implementation not only in monetary terms, but also in terms of access to and control over their traditional lands, waters and natural resources."

Thank you Mdm Chairperson.