

Rune Fjellheim

Indigenous Peoples

Land

Mr. Chair

First of all let me thank the UNECE for facilitating this highly interactive session and inviting a keynote from the Indigenous Peoples on this important topic.

My name is Rune Fjellheim. I am a Saami from Norway now serving as the Executive Secretary for the Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, a support secretariat for the 6 Indigenous Peoples' Organisations that are Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council. For this meeting I've been asked to present some of the challenges the Indigenous Peoples are facing regarding land management and land administration.

Coming from the Arctic region an obvious issue to address is the global challenge of climate change. Indigenous Peoples in the UNECE region has been centre stage in bringing the message about ongoing climate change in the Arctic the last decade. We now recognise that we are entering a time of consequences of climate change. Recent reports confirm that once again Indigenous Peoples are most vulnerable and in many cases also most affected by climate change. Adaptation is obviously high on the agenda for Indigenous Peoples within the UNECE region. The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world and as snow and ice are disappearing, alternatives to traditional occupations are sought to prevent social, cultural and economical break down. Adapting to climate change is a very local and regional challenge. One of the most important tools in adapting successfully is that you are in control of the land you live on. Climate change calls for changes in land use and land management that are unprecedented, and a continued non-

recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights to their ancestral lands will contribute profoundly to the pressure they otherwise are under.

Another emerging issue related to climate change and land is in fact the mitigating solutions. This was a topic high on the agenda yesterday with droughts and agricultural challenges including the consequences of the fast growing market for biofuels. Indigenous Peoples' in the south are already reporting about displacement and deforestation to make room for ethanol and biodiesel production. It is comforting to hear that many of the UNECE members are aware of this and also are developing strategies to combat this unwanted effect of mitigating climate change. Unfortunately most of the current energy production alternatives pose similar serious land use challenges. Hydroelectric power requires large dams and most of the potential projects in the world are on Indigenous Peoples' land. Nuclear power plants require uranium. Most of the known uranium deposits are on Indigenous Peoples' land. Even land based wind mill parks may infringe heavily on Indigenous Peoples' land, like some of the projects on Saami land in Scandinavia.

As we discuss alternatives to oil, gas and coal, the shortage in production facilities and soaring prices makes new areas profitable and we are currently experiencing a boom in oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the Arctic region. Bear in mind that most of the Arctic region land mass is Indigenous Peoples' land.

The United Nations has in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples developed a declaration to guide us on this topic. The UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, is the instrument that the member countries have adopted as a minimum standard in dealing with Indigenous Peoples issues. The important thing now is to use it.

Indigenous Peoples are not against change and development as such. The thing is that Indigenous Peoples are left with no other option than oppose changes they are not a

part of. Partnership was one of the key words in yesterdays discussions. Make sure to include Indigenous Peoples in the partnerships established to find sustainable solutions.

Indigenous Peoples are prepared to share our knowledge and information and work together with you all on the tasks ahead.