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**Position paper of the Sámi Parliamentary Council on the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform**

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - Conference of the Parties, COP23, 6-17 November 2017, Bonn**

## **0. Background**

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the average Arctic temperature has so far been rising at least twice as fast as the global temperature. One reason for this is that the melting ice and snow cover does not reflect back sun's radiation so effectively. If the snow cover melts, the revealed dark soil and water absorb heat and increase the melting.

This is resulting in widespread social, environmental, and economic impacts in the Arctic and worldwide, and the pressing and increasing need for mitigation and adaptation actions and to strengthen resilience of Arctic communities. The Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic are especially vulnerable because of the close connection between traditional livelihoods and nature, i.e. the use of renewable resources in herding, fishing, small scale farming, hunting and gathering. The on-going work on adaptation and resilience shows that the Barents region/Sápmi is a hot spot in terms of warming, and climate change. If the Arctic warms 4-6 degrees in average temperature, then areas in the Barents region/Sápmi can be around 8-10 degrees warmer.

Before the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009, COP13, The Sámi Parliamentary Council (SPC) stated the position to see global emissions reduced so the temperature of the earth does not rise more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial times. Among other positions, the SPC also stated to work to establish a separate working group for indigenous peoples and climate changes under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The entry into force of the Paris (2015) Agreement on climate change and its implementation, and reiterating the need for global action to reduce both long-lived greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants. The Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

## **1. Introduction**

The Sámi Parliamentary Council (SPC) welcomes the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' platform established by paragraph 135 of the Paris decision, which provides as follows:

*135. Recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and Indigenous Peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and establishes a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.*

Furthermore, the SPC notes the article 7, Paragraph 5 of the Paris Agreement, that provides: *“Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should... be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems... “*

SPC acknowledges, that the determination of when the use of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is appropriate can only be made with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and can only be done effectively if paragraph 135 is fully supported.

SPC considers that the initiation of various activities in connection with climate change impacts in many ways on human rights and other rights of Indigenous Peoples. The voice of Indigenous Peoples needs to be clearly heard in connection of global climate negotiations consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

A global challenge such as climate change can only be met through cooperation and by utilizing the best available knowledge – which is why traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples is extremely important in solving this challenge. In considering issues related to the protection and promotion of traditional knowledge, it is equally important to consider its inter-linkages with ensuring intergenerational transmission and continued access to and sustainable use of the lands and natural resources on which this knowledge is based.

Traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples has emerged as an essential resource, alongside western science, to inform environmental decision-making in national and global intergovernmental processes. The only way traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples' can be used correctly in decision making is to

include the traditional knowledge holders into decision-making processes.

The Finnish Working Group on Article 8(j) has defined the essential content of the traditional knowledge protected by the Convention on Biological Diversity and its article 8(j):

*The biodiversity-related traditional knowledge of the Sami manifests itself in the traditional use of nature by the Sami and in the Sami livelihoods based on nature, i.e. reindeer husbandry, fishing, hunting, gathering and handicrafts – as well as the Sami people’s relationship with nature. The knowledge is communicated through the terminology in the Sami language pertaining to nature, the terrain, the weather, reindeer husbandry, handicrafts as well as hunting and fishing, in addition to the Sami place names. Traditional knowledge is transmitted by means of conscious teaching, the example presented by the older generations, yoik singing and oral traditions as well as through the practices of reindeer husbandry, fishing, hunting, gathering and handicrafts.*

## **2. Purpose of the Platform**

The Platform should strengthen the role of Indigenous Peoples in the climate change policies at the national and international level by contributing to decision-making and improving actions to address climate change, consistent with the rights of Indigenous Peoples affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Platform should facilitate the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices and lessons learned on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner. It should be part of a larger United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process of strengthening knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of Indigenous Peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change.

To serve as a mechanism through which Indigenous Peoples, including traditional knowledge holders, interface directly with Parties to the UNFCCC, and assist them to uphold their obligations with respect to the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This will be accomplished by *inter alia*, providing high-level policy recommendations on relevant issues that support the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

### **3. Functions of the Platform**

- Create a space for Indigenous Peoples to fully and effectively participate in the UNFCCC process on issues affecting them and their rights.
- Develop an explicit linkage between the Platform and decision-making, to ensure that Indigenous Peoples may interact with Parties on decision-making under the Convention. All participants should have equal status within the Platform. The full and effective participation of traditional knowledge holders should be ensured during all stages of elaboration climate change policies, plans and programs, alongside the scientific and technological community and with an equal value. Traditional knowledge should have an equal value alongside scientific knowledge in the decision-making processes including all stages.
- Enable Parties and non-Party stakeholders to learn more from the knowledge systems and practices and experiences of Indigenous Peoples and gain from the sharing of best practices, experiences, and lessons learned on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner by the involvement of Indigenous peoples.
- Facilitate and enable the integration of Indigenous Peoples' diverse knowledge systems, practices, innovations, experiences, rights, interests, and perspectives into all climate change related decisions and interventions, actions, programs, and policies while improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of Parties.
- Develop linkages with other UN bodies and processes to ensure complementarity in taking action at the national, regional and global levels to address climate change, while respecting, upholding and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Explore creating a mechanism or process to provide for the ongoing input, advice and guidance of Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge holders and practitioners into decision-making taking into account regional and gender balance.
- Strengthen and build capacity for Indigenous Peoples to participate in the UNFCCC process, including the implementation of the Paris Agreement and other climate change related processes.
- Subject to the concept free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples (FPIC) and Article 31 of the UN Declaration, provide support to Parties for integrating traditional, Indigenous, and local knowledge systems into, as well

as engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities in, where appropriate, mitigation and adaptation actions and sustainable development policies at the international, national, and subnational levels, including when designing and implementing NDCs, National Adaptation Plans, and other relevant policies which might affect the rights or interests of Indigenous Peoples.

#### **4. Structure of the Platform**

In accordance with the UNDRIP, SPC suggests the following structure for the Platform:

- Balanced representation from Parties as well as Indigenous Peoples from the 7 regions of the world. Indigenous Peoples' representatives should be chosen by themselves in accordance with their own laws and procedures.
- Co-Champions/Co-Chairs will be selected by Indigenous Peoples and State Parties with a broad mandate to lead the work on the Platform. Co-Champions should reflect a balance between State Parties and Indigenous Peoples, as well as regional and gender balance. Co-chairs should also rotate through the seven regions, to the extent possible.
- To support the Platform's work, a Focal Point for Indigenous Peoples in the UNFCCC process should be designated. Annual meetings should be arranged for the Platform with open participation of States and Indigenous Peoples.

#### **5. Funding the Platform**

- Resources should be equally available to Indigenous Peoples from all regions. A fully funded program on Indigenous Peoples should be established within the UNFCCC Secretariat. Parties should be invited to immediately make voluntary contributions to support the Platform, including capacity building, travel support and funding support for intersessional meetings to make sure adequate resources are allocated to Indigenous Peoples to guarantee the full and effective participation in the Platform.

#### **6. Operationalizing the Platform at COP23**

- The Platform must be operationalized with the full and equal participation of Indigenous Peoples. To operationalize the platform, SPC suggest the creation of an Open-Ended Working Group assigned with the responsibility to develop the structure, modalities, and procedures of the Platform. Adequate resources should be allocated to guarantee efficient operating of the Working Group. The

Working Group should develop a thematic agenda of work with annual or biennial priorities (Indigenous Peoples' Platform Work Plan) and road map and a timeline. Periodic reviews of progress by Indigenous Peoples and States should be conducted including the ability for the Platform to review its work undertaken and to make recommendations for further enhancements to its mandate.