

Joint High-Level Segment of the COP and CMP, Statement by the President of the Sámi Parliament of Norway

United Nations Climate Change Conference

Paris, France

Bures, ja ollu giitu.

Mr. President, Heads of States and Governments, Indigenous Peoples delegations, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great honour for me, as the President of the Sámi Parliament of Norway, to address the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

The Sámi are one of many indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

For me, it is good to see that many Indigenous Peoples from around the world are attending COP 21.

The work on this conference goes straight to the heart of the future of our unique cultures. For good reason, we fear that climatic change will hit us harder than others, and that we are in danger of losing our traditional way of life unless something is done very quickly.

The Arctic is getting warmer as I speak. Climatic change is taking place more than twice as fast in the Arctic as elsewhere in the world. In our area, we are not talking about 1.5 or 2 degrees of warming, but perhaps of 4 to 6 degrees already by 2050.

Many aspects of indigenous peoples cultures in the Arctic are dependent on snow and ice. If they disappear, we will find it extremely difficult to maintain our cultures.

The Sámi way of life, especially in relation to reindeer husbandry, is seriously threatened by climate change. Since reindeer husbandry is a cornerstone of Sámi culture, such a loss would have fatal consequences for Sámi languages, culture and community life.

I am gratified to see that my own country, Norway, is working diligently and comprehensively to ensure that the new Paris Agreement will be ambitious, and that Norway will continue to be a major contributor in the field of climate funding.

From my perspective, the Sámi Parliament's recommendations to the parties can be summed up in three main points. The Paris Agreement should:

1. Respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights legislation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
2. Recognise Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge, innovations and practices;
3. Ensure access to climate funding for indigenous peoples from all regions.

Mr. President,

This is the time in history when we have no other prudent alternative but to continue to work together: States, Indigenous Peoples, NGOs and other sectors of civil society.

Make no mistake; this is the time in history when we have to succeed.

This is the time in history when we must persist in realizing our common aspirations to reach a strong Paris Agreement.

This is the time in history when it is up to us to ensure a better future for the entire global community.

Ollu giitu – Merci beaucoup - Thank You!