

Climate policy strategy of the Saami Parliamentary Council

Adopted by the Saami Parliamentary Council on 14th April 2010

The Saami Parliamentary Council (SPC) praises the UN's Human Rights Council for its decision and its action¹ to underscore the connection between climate change and universal human rights and for the consideration given to the vulnerable situation of the indigenous peoples in this context. SPC considers that the initiation of various activities in connection with climate change impacts in many ways on the human rights of indigenous peoples. The voice of indigenous peoples needs to be clearly heard in connection of global climate negotiations.

SPC sees climate change in a wider context: the growing environmental burden and increased exploitation of natural resources make it more difficult to act in a flexible way to adapt the Saami livelihood and way of life to a changing climate. SPC considers that the most important way for Saami society to adapt to a changing climate is by reducing vulnerability while increasing the resilience of people, animals and nature in Sápmi.

A global challenge such as climate change can only be met through cooperation and by utilising the best available knowledge – which is why Saami traditional knowledge is extremely important in solving this challenge.

The Saami language and its classification system carries on Saami culture and traditions from one generation to the next. In formulating a climate change contingency plan and systemisation of resources, one must take into consideration the status of the Saami language and secure its survival. The survival of the Saami language and the knowledge it embodies requires the retained vitality of Saami livelihoods.

The Saami Parliaments must be able to participate equally in the decision-making process regarding climate change at national and international level. The Saami parliaments are to be given broader rights to decide on administration and governance in their own areas. The reason is that this gives the best conditions for adapting to climate change with Saami culture as a base.

SPC considers that the states of Sweden and Finland must ratify ILO Convention 169 and that the states must implement the UN declaration² on indigenous peoples as an integral part of their national legislation. SPC demands that the Nordic Saami Convention³ be ratified without delay according to the proposal done by the expert group. The convention would enable Saami culture to develop in three states in a single Saami context. This would also facilitate adaptation to climate change and ensure the human rights of the Saami people.

¹ Resolution 7/28, 28 March 2008, Resolution 10/4, and Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights (A/HRC/10/61). Resolution 10/4, para 7 and 8 explicitly mention indigenous peoples among the most vulnerable groups who will feel the most acute affects of climate change:

“*Recognising* that these implications will affect individuals and communities around the world, the effects of climate change will be felt most acutely by those segments of the population who are already in vulnerable situations owing to factors such as geography, poverty, gender, age, indigenous or minority status and disability.”

² C169 The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (International Labour Organisation ILO)

³ Nordisk samekonvensjon. Utkast fra finsk-norsk-svensk-samisk ekspertgruppe. 2005.

SPRC demands that in the next climate conference COP 16 on The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Mexico December 2010 the parties shall agree on emission reductions that are legally binding and that parties shall agree to a system of sanctions for breaches against the reduction requirements. SPC demands that the rise of the global average temperature be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Greater increase in the average temperature would bring consequences that are impossible to predict and which would probably jeopardize the living possibilities of Arctic Indigenous peoples in the Arctic. States not meeting the emission conditions should pay heavy sanctions annually. The funds levied would be used to finance in developing countries energy production that does not give rise to emissions. An international body must be created under the auspices of the UN to enforce the agreement. In connection with this, a body for indigenous peoples is to be set up. This body shall scrutinise compliance with the agreement and the way in which indigenous people are affected by developments.

SPC demands that emission levels be significantly reduced. For a reduction in emission levels under the Kyoto Protocol⁴, the base year has been set at 1990. SPC considers that if the emissions of a single year are used as a benchmark, the result is uneven, permitting a situation where certain states in practice are not required to reduce their emissions at all. SPC demands that states shall reduce their amount of emitted greenhouse gases by 40 per cent on average up to the year 2020 and by 90 per cent up to the year 2050.

SPC demands that developing renewable energy forms shall cut the growth in emissions and new technology shall be made available to the population in an economically viable way. Improving energy efficiency in construction must be developed with the help of planning permission and aids. Climate legislation should be compiled at national level. Through this, emission levels are to be controlled and activities funded that prevent climate change and guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of climate change.

SPC considers that the aim in international politics dealing with indigenous peoples must be to mitigate the effects of climate change on indigenous peoples and create opportunities for indigenous peoples to secure influence in decision-making connected to climate change. Actions carried out to mitigate climate change must not be at the expense of indigenous peoples' wellbeing and their living possibilities.

SPC especially supports increased use of solar energy. The possible growth of wind power in traditionally Saami settlement areas is to take place in consultation with the Saami parliament involved, as well as in consultation with the representatives of traditional livelihoods that are affected especially with reindeer herding cooperatives. Wind power must not be allowed to impact traditional Saami livelihoods⁵ negatively even remotely, such as Saami reindeer herding. The increase of renewable energy forms demands increased use of bio-energy. In certain areas, bio-energy production threatens the living conditions of indigenous peoples. All bio-energy cultivation must be done sustainably and with the respect of the rights of indigenous people. SPC demands that increased use of bio-energy must not increase the level of particle emissions and demands that particle emissions shall be cut through effective filtration methods. The increase of hydro-electric power must not be allowed to threaten environmental values or influence negatively even remotely Saami culture. SPC wishes also to reiterate that peat isn't renewable energy source.

SPC is opposed to increasing nuclear power. The memory of Chernobyl's nuclear accident in 1986 lives on among the memories of the Saami, and its consequences still affect Saami society and traditional Saami livelihoods. It is not a clean energy source. It leads to uranium emissions, both during extraction and mining and during waste storage. In the Nordic countries and neighbouring areas in Russia , the

⁴ Kyoto Protocol, 1997

⁵ Saami reindeer herding, Sami agriculture, gathering, hunting and other forest based livelihoods.

acquisition and extraction of uranium and accidents in nuclear plants can destroy traditional Saami livelihoods.

In the new Framework Convention on Climate Change, parties must agree on reducing small particle emission substantially. An international monitoring body shall be set up to monitor the emissions. The states have to reduce small particle emissions in industries, traffic and households by legislation and energy funding. The small particle emissions aren't regulated specially, the limits apply only to total emissions. A financing system should be set up for the households and industries of the developing countries that could provide low-cost filtering system to reduce these emissions. This would be economical and efficient way to reduce particle emissions.

The residue particles of incomplete combustion, such as black carbon and soot plays a greater role than expected in global warming. The reduction of these emissions gives favourable and fast results. The particle emissions have negative effects on health. At global level, they give rise to early death. The particles accelerate climate change to Arctic areas and reductions of these emissions are of the utmost importance to mitigating climate change. The greater part of particle emissions spread from Asia to Arctic areas with air currents. When they fall on snow or ice, they make the surface darker. A dark surface absorbs the sun's radiation more effectively and in this way causes the ice and snow to melt at an increasing rate. The process also accelerates the warming of the climate in the Arctic.⁶

SPC appeals that the efforts to make snowmobile and ATV's more energy-efficient will be started quickly. These machines are essential in modern Saami livelihoods, but they need to be developed to reduce their emissions. ATV's need to be developed into safer vehicles with a smaller footprint in nature. This would also support the biological diversity. SPC proposes that development work should begin immediately, in which state research institutions, industry and representatives of traditional Saami livelihoods are represented.

SPC considers that in preventing climate change one must take into account the UN Convention on Biological Diversity⁷ Article 8 (j)⁸ as well as traditional knowledge⁹, innovations and practices and the possibilities of the Saami to influence in international bodies in accordance with this article. SPC wishes to draw attention to Article 10 (c)¹⁰ as well, which states that the parties shall protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements. SPC considers that the article requires states to respect traditional Saami ways to use nature.

SPC is concerned that states, as of 2010, still have not reached the target of stopping the reduction of biological diversity. SPC urges the states to protect and secure nature's diversity.¹¹ This applies

⁶ Se pres.: Co-Chair's Summary: Melting Ice: Regional Dramas, Global Wake-Up Call Tromsø, 28 April 2009

⁷ United Nation's Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992.

⁸ Article 8(j): *Subject to national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge innovations and practices.*

⁹ Traditional knowledge in other languages:

Finnish: perinteinen tieto

Swedish: traditionell kunskap

Norwegian: tradisjonell kunnskap

¹⁰ Article 10(c) *Protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements;*

¹¹ The sub-meeting on the Convention on Biological Diversity, COP6, in 2002 resolved that the parties to the agreement undertake to stop the decline in natural diversity by the year 2010.

specially during 2010, which is Biological Diversity Year. SPC sees it is of the greatest importance to research traditional knowledge and the influences of climate change to traditional knowledge. It's also highly important to take into account traditional knowledge and climate change in decision –making processes and in post 2010 biodiversity targets.

SPC proposes that at the COP10 meeting in Nagoya on 18-29 October 2010 should be agreed on a decision that in the multi-year work-programme on Article 8 (j) should be included a new task: climate change and traditional knowledge. SPC requests countries to advance the fulfilment of this task.

In connection with the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change, an official indigenous peoples' body should be established. Its task will be to administrate and follow the decisions made in the climate change process and which affect indigenous peoples. This body shall operate in cooperation with the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples and the work group for Biodiversity Convention, WG8J.¹² The basis for this body's work shall be the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,¹³ (indigenous peoples' declaration). The body shall be guaranteed adequate operational and expert resources. The body should operate in cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹⁴ and with the Arctic Council. The body shall be represented by an adequate number of representatives from representative organisations and organisations representing indigenous peoples, taking into account geographical cover.

The states shall contribute to the Saami parliaments annually receiving stipulated funding for adaptation to climate change, for research into this and for developing their own policies on climate change. In each Saami parliament, there shall be an officer to administrate environmental and climate issues and a committee of specialists to deal with them. The states should contribute permanent financing to these operations.

SPC considers that research on climate change should be increased and that in this research, studies of the effects of climate change should be intensified to minimise its effects in the habitats of the indigenous peoples in the Arctic. Research and its financing should be coordinated in consultation with the state, the Arctic Council and the indigenous people concerned.

SPC urges the Saami parliaments of Norway, Finland and Sweden in their operations to work towards sustainable development that leads to more effective energy use, and work for a reduction in the emissions that cause climate change. SPC shall also work to increase the use of renewable energy sources. SPC commits on preparing a climate policy programme.

¹² Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions

¹³ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.

¹⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)