

Saami Council's input to the Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting 11.-12. October 2018

Main Message:

Full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in decision making and strengthen indigenous peoples' institutions for knowledge production.

Environmental Focus Areas

1) Biodiversity Conservation

Main Message (3-5 lines): Ensure full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in measures for biodiversity conservation. Strengthen indigenous knowledge institutions for knowledge production in biodiversity and ecosystem issues from an indigenous perspective based on the Saami peoples knowledge.

Main Challenges:

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognises that the biodiversity, customary sustainable use and traditional (indigenous) knowledge are intrinsically linked (CBD: PLAN OF ACTION ON CUSTOMARY SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, 2014). The Arctic indigenous peoples', including the Saami people's, customary sustainable use of biological diversity, linked with the indigenous knowledge contributes to the protection of Arctic biodiversity.

The Saami people finds however, that the mechanisms ensuring the full and effective participation of Saami people in management of land and territories, both terrestrial and marine, and in biodiversity conservation in areas where the Saami people live, still to a large extent are insufficient.

Best practice and proposal for common solution:

Study good practices of meaning full engagement and full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in biodiversity conservation, and based on the findings, encourage Arctic States to implement measures to strengthen the role of indigenous peoples in conservation measures.

Use best available knowledge, both indigenous knowledge and science, in biodiversity conservation. Enhance the indigenous communities' capacity to contribute by among other things strengthen and build indigenous peoples' institutions for knowledge production related to biodiversity issues.

2) Pollution Prevention

Main Message (3-5 lines):

The Saami culture still depends on living resources on land and in the sea. Healthy environment and productive ecosystems are thus the foundation for Saami culture. Pollution

and environmental change both impacts the Saami peoples' basis for life, thus it is of utmost importance to prevent pollution in vulnerable Saami areas.

Main Challenges:

There are reasons to believe that there are still unknown sources of pollution from e.g. old and hidden waste dumps spread around in Saami areas. The Saami Council is seriously concerned regarding the practice of mining in Saami areas, as mine tailings containing chemicals deposited on shore and potentially leak into ground water and tailings deposited in fjords that leak into the marine environment impacting the life there.

Best practice and proposal for common solution:

Identify and clean up hidden waste can be carried out by Saami and other people in the communities and in cooperation with the relevant authorities, potential sources for pollution can be taken care of. Mining in vulnerable areas and with risk for leakage should not be accepted and to deposit mine tailings in marine environment or near water and food sources, should be forbidden.

3) Climate Change

Main Message (3-5 lines):

The Saami culture is impacted by climate change and the Saami peoples are the first ones and to observe and feel the changes, while also being among those that holds first-hand knowledge on how to live with environmental changes.

Main Challenges:

The rapid climate change might impact the environment towards a shift from the environment as we know it today to something we don't recognize. Arctic is already undergoing rapid land use change, either due to efforts to mitigate climate changes (in search of alternative energy sources and green energy production) or utilizing the opportunities coming with it, like access to previously inaccessible resources (oil, gas, minerals, shipping routes and railways to transport resources out). The Saami Culture and economies are directly impacted of these severe changes, both the environmental change and land use change, which are closely connected and enforces one another.

The participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making at all levels in addressing the impacts of climate change and thereby protecting our culture, is insufficient at all levels, from the UNFCCC and to regional level. Stretched capacity in the indigenous communities to participate and contribute meaningfully, is also a challenge that need to be addressed.

Best practice and proposal for common solution:

Develop mechanisms for full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes. Enhance the indigenous communities' capacity to contribute by among other things strengthen and build indigenous peoples' institutions for knowledge production. Capacity will also be built through increased participation.