NATIONS UNIES
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UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

TÉLÉCOPIE • FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

DATE: 17 December 2015

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PAGES: 3 (Y COMPRIS CETTE PAGE/INCLUDING THIS PAGE)

COPIES:

OBJET/SUBJECT: **Press release from the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz**

NEWS RELEASE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Finland / Indigenous peoples: New bill threatens Sami's rights to their traditional lands and livelihood

GENEVA (21 December 2015) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, today expressed deep concern at the lack of consultation and the reduced protections to the Sami indigenous people in the current draft law on the Finnish Forest and Parks Service (Metsähallitus) to regulate the management of State owned lands.

"The new draft bill presented to the Finnish Parliament earlier this month no longer contains valuable safeguards for the Sami people's rights to traditional livelihoods, lands, territories and resources, which had been included in the previous draft approved in 2014," Ms. Tauli-Corpuz warned.

"I hope that the draft law will consider that the Sami Parliament and the Skolt Sami Village Council have had limited opportunities to take part in this process which is contrary to article 19 of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* which Finland has endorsed," she said.

According to the new bill, most of the Sami Homeland will be transferred to a new State owned company that has yet to be established. This new company will have the responsibility for all logging carried out on State owned lands in Finland, including in the Sami Homeland region.

"States should consult with indigenous peoples concerned through their representative institutions to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them," the expert said quoting the Declaration.

"Without specific provisions safeguarding the Sami people, the revised Act will significantly weaken the rights of the Sami people, particularly their right to enjoy their own culture and to pursue their traditional livelihoods, and will further limit any recognition of their right to lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired," the expert warned.

The UN Special Rapporteur also stressed that "it is crucial that with the transfer of liabilities to a new company, successfully negotiated agreements with the Metsähallitus and Sami reindeer herding cooperatives, such as land which has been designated as off-limits from forestry activities including logging, be transferred."

(*) See the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/Pages/Declaration.aspx

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The Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Ms. ***Victoria Tauli-Corpuz*** *(Philippines), is a human rights activist working on indigenous peoples' rights. Her work for more than three decades has been focused on movement building among indigenous peoples and also among women, and she has worked as an educator-trainer on human rights, development and indigenous peoples in various contexts. She is a member of the Kankana-ey, Igorot indigenous peoples in the Cordillera Region in the Philippines. As Special Rapporteur, she is independent from any government or organization and serves in his individual capacity. Learn more, log on to:*
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