UN Expert Mechanisms on Indigenous Peoples holds its 9th session


The 2016 EMRIP session discussed:

- the follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples including the review of the mandate of the Expert Mechanism;
- the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous persons with disabilities;
- a study from EMRIP on the right to health and indigenous peoples, with a focus on children and youth;
- human rights of indigenous peoples in relation to business enterprises;
- the Sustainable Development Goals and the rights of indigenous peoples; and
- best practices and strategies for the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Commissioner Karen Johansen and Kaiwhakarite Matua Pereri Hathway from the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (NZHRC) participated again at this year’s EMRIP session.

Further to the NZHRC’s submission to the Expert Mechanism’s study on the right to health, Commissioner Johansen delivered an oral statement stressing that despite the progress made, in overall “Māori continue to have higher rates for most health risks and conditions, and also are more likely than non-Māori to have unmet health needs” as highlighted by a Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the ‘determinants of health for Māori children’.

Commissioner Johansen also addressed EMRIP regarding the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration) in New Zealand. “In the absence of an overarching plan or strategy for the Declaration’s implementation, progress on fully implementing these standards remains ad hoc”, she said.
Commissioner Johansen shared as a good practice in monitoring the implementation of the Declaration, the NZHRC’s work in monitoring and updating the Government’s National Plan of Action on Human Rights (NAP). The NAP sets out the actions the government has committed to undertake through the Universal Periodic Review process. The NZHRC has established an online monitoring tool, designed to promote accountability through transparency. The Commission is currently developing a Declaration search category which will link the articles of the Declaration with the Treaty of Waitangi, UPR and other Treaty recommendations.

EMRIP Chairperson Dr Barume, when giving the floor to Commissioner Johansen, noted that: “We believe that the domestication of all these standards at national level will not be possible if we do not engage with NHRIs”.

A major outcome of this session was the inclusion in the report of the 9th session of EMRIP, the recommendation to the Council to enhance EMRIP’s “collaboration with national human rights institutions, including through joint activities at national and regional levels”, in the review of EMRIP’s mandate.

The Outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples invited the Human Rights Council to review the mandate of the Expert Mechanism. Following this invitation, the Council (A/HRC/RES/30/11) requested the OHCHR to organise an expert workshop to discuss the review of the mandate. EMRIP, building on the report of the workshop, has made a proposal to the Council that will be discussed at the Council’s 33rd session in September 2016.

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