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The Saami Council has been informed that the Environment Audit Committee is reconsidering/evaluating the various forest certification systems recognized by UK through its PEFC – Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes.

We would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention the Saami Council's ongoing dispute with Stora Enso in Finland, which in essence also exposes the problems related with the Finnish Forest Certification System – FFCS.

First of all, the Saami Council is an international NGO organizing Saami organisations from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Saami people are the indigenous people of Fennoscandia with a traditional territory covering the northern parts of the three Nordic countries and Kola Peninsula in Russia. Our main purpose as an NGO is to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples in general and the Saami people in particular. The Saami Council has consultative status within the UN-system and is also part of a global network of indigenous peoples now recognized as one of the Major Groups within the UN framework.

In the attached documentation of our conversation with Stora Enso, we highlight the continues violations of the Saami people's rights caused by extensive logging in Saami areas. We also question the consistency in the certification policy of the company in various countries, as Stora Enso use the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) certification scheme in almost all other countries than Finland, where the preference seem to be FFCS. In our case the difference between the two certifications is that the FSC's requires a developed relationship with indigenous peoples in the area in question.

The Saami Council would like to highlight that the FFCS has not been supported by the Saami people in Finland through their representative body – the Saami Parliament.

Consequently the FFCS runs the risk of legitimizing gross violations on human rights when used on indigenous peoples' territories, as is the case in Finland in the Saami areas. To our understanding it is hard to argue that FFCS is any guarantee for legal and sustainable forestry. The only worldwide certification scheme that to our knowledge captures the indigenous peoples' aspect of forestry is the FSC certification, because – where applicable – an explicit consent from indigenous peoples concerned has to be obtained.

We sincerely hope that these comments are accepted and appreciated and that they can serve as helpful in your important work in the committee. If needed we are willing to elaborate on our views on the FFCS as the commission finds necessary, including attending any upcoming hearings.

Best regards

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President
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