Opening statement of youth in CDB WG8j 8. meeting

Montréal 7.10.2013

Buorre beavvi buohkaide. Giittán ahte beasan leat dápple ja geavahit dán sáhkavuoru.

Co Chairs,

The indigenous youth wants to recognize the traditional territories of the Mohawk Nation and thank them for receiving us.

It is interesting to participate on this meeting. Indigenous youth from the Arctic and Australia has met here, and I am grateful that I have the opportunity to give this opening statement on behalf of indigenous youth. We, the indigenous youth, are very few in numbers here, and we do wish that more indigenous youth would have the opportunity to participate. We want to remind about the decision XI/8 B and XI/14, acknowledging the importance of youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels, and we wish financial support that would make this possible.

For indigenous peoples nature is the basis of life. It is the basis of our livelihoods, cultures, languages and identities. We follow this meeting with great interest, knowing that the decisions made now towards biodiversity, towards our earth, will impact the future of us and the following generations.

When talking about sustainable use of biological resources, indigenous peoples can be considered to be experts – having a long history of living from the nature, and with nature. Basis of that is to leave enough for the future. Here, today, and this week, I hope that our interests meet, in preserving biological diversity.

I want to share with you a brief thought, which always gets me to think more about nature, about food security, and traditional knowledge: What if the grocery-stores wouldn't open tomorrow? What would I eat? Going to the store, buying a pack of rice in a card-board box, and some chicken wrapped neatly in plastic, it can be forgotten, that all food comes from the nature, and that diverse use of natural resources is vital for us.

Indigenous peoples bear information, traditional knowledge, that has built up during centuries and milleniums. Knowledge on how to live sustainably and how to preserve our resources. It is impossible to measure the value of it. Not all of this knowledge is passed to the next generation, some of it is held only by our elders. It could be said that they speak the language of nature.

That is a language we should try to understand, even speak. With these words we, the indigenous youth, wish that all of us will have a common language in this meeting, a common understanding.