

Welcoming Remarks to the Portraits of Resilience Exhibition Opening
By Gunn-Britt Retter, Member of Norwegian Saami Parliament
Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, 10 December 2009

Dear Ambassadors, Students, Arctic Colleagues, and friends:

It is a great honour to me on behalf of the Saami Parliament in Norway to be here at the opening of the Portraits of Resilience exhibition. As a member of Saami Parliament living in Unjárga / Nesseby, I am also especially pleased that the project leads chose to work with the youth in Unjárga. I believe it has been an extraordinary experience for the youth, both to approach the complex issue of climate change through a camera lens, to look at their own surroundings through a camera lens with the exceptional guidance from the professional photographer Christine Germano, and to share experiences other youth in the Arctic have with climate change. I think the project has succeeded in what it aimed for, to put faces to the climate change. In Unjárga/Nesseby we do not depend on ice, as you will see of the photos, but I'll ensure you that the climate change is still visible. I think the students have managed to show this through their photos and stories. I look forward to see the exhibition put together on the walls/stands here at the national museum. I am also very pleased that the exhibition will be set up also at the Varjjat Sámi museum, in my home village.

Last time I visited the National Museum here in Copenhagen, it was back in 2007 when the Várjjat Sámi museum travelling duodji / saami handicraft exhibition was here. It is a great collection of Saami handicraft from all over Sápmi, put together after a duodji competition in year 2000. So there has been exchange between Unjárga/Nesseby and the National museum also in modern time.

For the Saami Parliament in Norway, the culture policy has been the building block since the Saami Parliament was established in 1989 (20 years ago). Museum activities, including exhibitions and book production has been among the most important areas of work for the parliament during its 20 years. Therefore I am happy to be here at the national museum, among beautiful photographs from the Arctic, as well as from Unjárga, where I can feel kind of home, while being far away from home.

On a personal note, I hope the project will motivate the students to become Saami or Inuit scientists or politicians in the future.

I hope you will all enjoy the photographs, the stories and that you will get an idea about the culture's resilience to climate change, not only the impacts of it.

Congratulations to all the students with the great work you have done.

Thank you