

Statement by
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**7th Session of the Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues**

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Madame Chairperson, distinguished members of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Speaking on behalf of Denmark and my own country Greenland, I would like to welcome the new members of the Permanent Forum and wish them the best of success in their work. I would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to the outgoing members of the Permanent Forum for their valuable contribution to the achievements of the Forum. Through their dedicated work and with the diligent support of the Secretariat, the Forum has truly established itself as an authority on indigenous issues within the UN system.

My delegation would once again like to express our support for the practice to give particular attention to a special theme during each session of the Forum. We are also grateful that our recommendation from last year to dedicate the 7th Session of the Permanent Forum to climate change gained support from many delegations and members and resulted in this year's theme on "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges."

The Permanent Forum has an important role to play in disseminating information on the impacts of climate change and transmitting the concerns of indigenous peoples in this regard to the relevant bodies of the United Nations system as well as to the public in general. My delegation is pleased, that the status and the implementation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be a priority issue in the work of the Forum.

Even though the affects of climate changes may vary from place to place, they pose significant challenges for indigenous peoples and their rights all over the world. Climate change threatens the traditional lifestyles and culture, and puts pressure on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. My delegation knows that very well from our hunters who are heavily dependent on the fragile Arctic flora and fauna. Indeed, the Arctic Region serves very much as an indicator of climate change, as it has many times been stated. Here climate impact assessments and observations at the community level, points to the urgent need for capacity building with regard to making strategies for adaptation. In this regard, the sharing of experiences and best practices is a key issue.

As many of you will know, we engage, together with the Arctic indigenous peoples, Arctic states and relevant observers in the Arctic Council where monitoring and assessment of the impacts of climate change on the peoples, the environment, flora and fauna has been the focus for some years.

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment of the Arctic Council is a milestone in this cooperation and the results of this and other important assessments are shared with interested international organisations and agencies, such as the International Panel on Climate Change, IPCC.

In 2009, Denmark - together with Greenland and the Faroe Islands - will take over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council. With Greenland being the centre stage of climate change and very much the focus of international climate research, we expect to continue to focus on climate change and related issues and to do our best to give it a human dimension and a human face.

In relation to climate change and biodiversity, Greenland is currently also chairing the Arctic Council working group on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, which is providing input into the CBD process. It is already in the cards that issues concerning climate change mitigation and adaptation, and to monitoring, assessment and conservation of Arctic biodiversity will form part of both new and continued programs of the Arctic Council, which may become an even more significant body in the coming years.

Other activities revolving around climate change in our area include the upcoming Arctic Conference in Ilulissat, Greenland. The melting of sea ice and the opening of the Arctic Ocean has a potential impact on vulnerable ecosystems, livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities as well as on the potential exploitation of natural resources.

The Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Premier of Greenland has therefore invited representatives of the other four coastal States bordering on the Arctic Ocean, namely, Canada, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America to meet in Greenland from May 27-29 to hold discussions on the stewardship of the Arctic Ocean.

The Nordic Council of Ministers, also an observer to the Arctic Council, will host an Arctic Conference on climate issues in Greenland. The conference entitled "The Cool Part of Europe – Common Concerns for the Arctic" – which is a follow up to The Northern Dimension and the Arctic Window conference in Greenland during Danish Presidency of the European Union in 2002.

In relation to the EU, Greenland is also working closely with the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT's), which have called for a global regime to combat climate change, preserve biodiversity and generally pay urgent attention to the special needs of the OCTs and the many diverse ecosystems. Greenland will be participating in the upcoming international conference on climate change and biodiversity in Reunion together with the UN Small Island States to facilitate the creation of alliances between OCT's and the EU.

Greenland has, for some time, been the focus of many international climate research activities. The climate research will be further intensified during the current International Polar Year (2007-2009) and will - together with Denmark's hosting of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC) in 2009 – provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the urgent need

for action to slow down climate change - and to speed up the development of adaptation strategies as well as concrete measures to mitigate any negative impacts.

To assist in the collection of data and the development of adaptation strategies the Danish government and the Greenland Home Rule Government recently agreed to set up a Centre for Climate research in Greenland, which will draw on both Greenlandic, Danish and foreign institutions and research. The main task will be to document climate changes and to evaluate what impact they will have on Arctic society and natural life. Placing the Centre in Greenland is to help build local capacity and to ensure that research results are transmitted in Greenland.

As a final note on this topic, it is no secret that Denmark is actively preparing for the United Nation's Climate Change Conference, COP15, to be held in Copenhagen in 2009. We are in Greenland of course also participating actively in the COP15 process, which has already involved several high level visits to the Greenland Icecap.

Madame Chairperson,

In regard to the COP15, and with reference to the excellent report on "Impact of Climate Change Mitigation Measures on Indigenous Peoples and on their Territories and Lands reported by Mr Aqqaluk Lynge and yourself/Mrs Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, let me just reiterate the clarification concerning the last recommendation of the report. The Greenland Home Rule Government supports indigenous peoples' involvement in the COP15 process and will promote a meaningful participation.

Qujanaq - Thank you for your attention.