

Agenda item 5

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Statement by the Nordic countries**

Mr. President,

I have the pleasure of speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

We wish to congratulate the experts on a successful first session of the Mechanism and your report on it. We look forward to fruitful discussions with you also in the future.

In this statement, we focus on the study on the right of indigenous peoples to education.

Indigenous children often face significant challenges in exercising their rights in a range of areas, including in their access to education. Aims of education for all children should be directed also to the development of and respect for the child's cultural identity and language. The education of indigenous children contributes both to their individual and community development as well as to their participation in the wider society. We all still have a lot to do in this regard.

We very much welcome the dedicated work on this important study. We look forward to its finalization and wish to raise the following three points on cooperation, focus and follow up.

First on cooperation:

Important work has already been carried out on education, for example by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Special Rapporteur. Right to education has often been raised by the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Only a few months ago the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted a General Comment on indigenous children,¹ which also addresses education. It is important that the study builds on these existing recommendations, with the focus on how to ensure the implementation of the right to education, and the Expert Mechanism should cooperate closely with the Permanent Forum, UN agencies, relevant special procedures and the treaty bodies on this issue. We support the proposal to have a two-day technical workshop to facilitate the finalization of the study.

The second point is on the focus of the study:

The right to education covers several aspects, as recognized in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to establish and control own educational systems and institutions, the right to education in one's own language, and the right to all levels and forms of education without discrimination. Lack of equal access to education is part of the multidimensional character of poverty also among indigenous peoples. Further, indigenous peoples have the right to have their cultures appropriately reflected in the overall education system.

In order to focus the study, we find the broad elements laid out in the report of the Expert Mechanism to be a good basis. Indigenous children may face multiple facets of discrimination and attention should be given to the different situation of indigenous children in rural and urban settings. Attention should also be given on how to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to education and specific issues come up in relation to addressing the rights of person with disabilities in this connection.

¹ General Comment No.11, Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention, 2009

The third, and final, point is on follow up:

It is crucial that attention is paid to the follow up of the study. We therefore invite the members of the Expert Mechanism to give guidance to the Council on how member states, agencies and other mandates may assist in keeping implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples high on the agenda. Also, the Expert Mechanism might wish to give recommendations on how it could continue to contribute to the follow up of the study in the future. While we move on to consider other issues, it would be important to ensure that the results of the work done will be carried over.

Thank you Mr. President.