

Statement by

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Issues**

**Statement by Denmark-Greenland on agenda item 3 (c):**

**“Follow-Up on the recommendations of the  
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Thank you Mr. Chair,

Since this is the first time my delegation representing Denmark and Greenland takes the floor, allow me to thank the outgoing chair and rapporteur for their guidance and hard work and to congratulate you Mr. Chair and Ms. Eva Biaudet upon your election to chair and rapport from this meeting.

*Before I begin my statement I just want to make a clarification to a statement made earlier by the Disability Caucus: Greenland in fact has had a school for deaf children since the introduction of Home Rule in 1979. It was established in order to avoid having to send children 4.000 km to Denmark. The school has evolved over time. Nonetheless, it is recognized that being deaf can be a very challenging and lonely situation.*

Culture and language are indeed important issues with regards to indigenous peoples' self-determination. We have earlier reported that the Act on Greenland Self-Government from 2008, which was implemented in 2009 by the establishment of the current governance system, recognizes the Greenlandic language as the official language in Greenland.

Mr. Chair,

(It is important to point out that the Government of Greenland is a public government defined by territory, rather than ethnicity. However, with the majority of the population being of Inuit descent and all the members of the Government and the Parliament of Greenland being Inuit, it is only natural that great emphasis continues to be placed on the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples. The Government of Greenland strongly endorses the UNDRIP and is making efforts to ensure the implementation of relevant provisions in its everyday work. By the same token, it was at the request by Greenland that Denmark ratified ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries in 1996.)

One of the first actions of the Government of Greenland following the inauguration of the Self-Government was to introduce new legislation on language policy and integration aimed at strengthening the role and use of Greenlandic. Private companies, public authorities and institutions are now required to adopt language policies, which promote, inter alia, Greenlandic language use and identity, integration and cultural understanding.

In February, the 5<sup>th</sup> Youth Parliament held its session in the Parliament of Greenland under the theme: "Do we have the right focus on which language qualifications we need?" For 3 full days 35 young people from all of Greenland participated in the session dealing with 5 thematic issues concerning the strengthening and use of primarily the Greenlandic language. During the session, the youth had the opportunity to draw on Greenland's political, academic and business leadership for input into the discussions and proposals for legislative measures, for example in support of initiatives in language development and retention.

There are an estimated 50.000 speakers of Greenlandic in Greenland. Greenlandic is the primary language of the parliament with simultaneous interpretation to or from Danish. There is one written Greenlandic language, derived from the Central West Greenlandic dialect, which has become the standard language and three major Inuit dialects spoken in North Greenland (Avanersuaq), East Greenland (Tunu) and West Greenland (Kitaa).

Given the relatively small size of the population (57.000) and in order to be able to retain the language and to ensure its continued role and use in all spheres of the society, the focus of the

educational system and curriculum development has been on the Central West Greenlandic dialect and standard written language.

The literacy rate in Greenland is close to 100 %, though, the level of education is unevenly distributed between towns and settlements. Two nationwide newspapers, one dating back to 1861, cover the news in Greenlandic and Danish. In addition, Greenland is served by public service TV and radio broadcasting through Greenland Broadcasting Corporation, which is governed by an independent board.

Mr. Chair,

As recent as the beginning of March of this year, we had general elections to the Parliament of Greenland. This meant a change of government, which nonetheless has clearly stated its continued focus on language and culture as well as strong support for indigenous rights. The new government is, for the first time in the history of the Home Rule and Self-Government, headed by a woman Premier. In its government declaration, has stated its commitment to strengthen the Greenlandic language in all regards and its commitment to protect the traditional Greenlandic knowledge and cultural heritage.

In addition, it is our understanding that the newly established independent Greenland Human Rights Council has also selected the language situation in Greenland as one of its first topics for examination. Despite the high retention rate of Greenlandic language use in Greenland remains a very important, sensitive and challenging issue.

Finally, Mr. Chair,

Allow me to briefly inform you of the International Expert Workshop on the World Heritage Convention and Indigenous Peoples co-hosted by the Government of Greenland and the Danish Agency for Culture together with IWGIA in Copenhagen in September of 2012 in celebration of the convention's 40th anniversary.

The workshop was held under the theme: "How to ensure that the implementation of the World Heritage Convention is consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

The Experts of the workshop were presented with a number of cases on how the convention has been implemented in a number of countries. Though there are a number of good practice cases where the convention has been implemented while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples, including the principle of the right to free, prior and informed consent, indigenous peoples' rights were not universally applied. As a result, the Expert Meeting agreed on Call to Action whose observations and recommendations, in our view, offer a robust blueprint for a pertinent reviewing of the existing procedures for the World Heritage nominations.

We would therefore like to express our support in recommending that the World Heritage Committee establish a process to elaborate, with the direct, full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples, changes to the current procedures and operational guidelines to ensure that the future implementation of the World Heritage Convention is consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you for your attention.