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On behalf of Denmark and Greenland



**THIRD SESSION OF
THE PERMANENT FORUM ON
INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

Agenda Item 3

Special Theme: "Indigenous Women"

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Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Distinguished Members of the Panel on Indigenous Women:

On behalf of the Danish Government and the Greenland Home Rule Government, I would first of all like to thank the Members of the Permanent Forum for incorporating Indigenous Women as a Special Theme of the 3rd Session of the Permanent Forum and for giving us this opportunity to briefly introduce you to the situation in Greenland with respect to gender equality as well as to comment briefly on the "Strategy for Danish Support to Indigenous Peoples".

The Greenland society has developed rapidly over the past fifty years and is today a modern democratic society. In this context, the Home Rule Government, established in 1979, continues to improve the framework and conditions for equality among men and women through legislation that reflect changes in society.

Celebrating these days the 25th anniversary of Home Rule in Greenland, we are also able to celebrate the beginning effects of new legislation promoting equality of men and women in private and public life. In 2003, the Greenland Parliament adopted a bill on gender equality, which highlights two themes: The responsibilities and obligations of public services with respect to equal treatment of men and women; and the equal treatment of men and women with respect to employment.

The new legislation includes elements of mainstreaming and affirmative action and emphasizes the commitment of the Greenland Parliament to promote gender equality throughout the society. One very concrete measure is the government's employment of the principle of gender parity when promoting candidates for public agencies and board of directors of institutions and corporate companies in Greenland. This measure has shown immediate effect on the composition of councils and boards.

The Equal Status Council, established in 1998 replacing a former Committee of 1985, provided major input to the above new legislation, among other things on the basis of survey on gender equality within the home, in the workplace and in public life commissioned in 1998. The survey revealed a generally positive trend in all areas.

even though women are still found to be overall responsible for the home and children, which continues to affect their ability to fully participate in public life and professional career development.

The Greenland Home Rule Government is sensitive to the fact that there needs to be a balance between family and working life. Greenland has passed legislation on maternity leave and pay to mothers and fathers to give both parents an opportunity to spend time with the child in the first period of its life. At the same time, the Home Rule Government in cooperation with the municipalities continue to establish public day care and child care facilities to ensure flexibility for parents to participate in the labour market.

Mr. Chairperson,

To give you an example of the employment situation for women in Greenland, 2/3 of the employees in two major workplaces - the government and the municipalities - are women, who dominate in the areas of health, education and social affairs of the service and public sectors. Men are still a majority in higher paying jobs and in the corporate sector, however, they are more affected by unemployment, which can be explained by their dominance in seasonal occupations such as fisheries and construction.

The Greenland Home Rule Government sees education and capacity building as important means of ensuring equal opportunity in the labour market. According to our statistics more and more women are entering the educational system, suggesting that women's participation in the labour market will be further strengthened.

The representation of women in public office is gradually improving, although still not at the level of the men. At the parliamentary election in 2002, 35% of the members elected were women who currently hold 2 out of 8 seats in the cabinet. The representation of women in municipal politics has traditionally been high:

Overall, women in Greenland have opted to promote self-determination jointly with the men even if this *has not* necessarily led to a higher representation in positions of political power. This trend has persisted since the run-up to Home Rule, even though in 1999, in response to the still much lower representation of women in politics, a group of women formed an all women's party to encourage and support women political candidates. Several women ran for this party in the latest parliamentary election in 2002, however, with little success.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, women were very actively promoting women's rights and issues through various groups and networks across Greenland. Some of the women's activism resulted in the creation of shelters for women locally, whereas other activities were aimed at promoting indigenous women's issues in regional and international forums such as Inuit Circumpolar Conference. In its "Arctic Policy" (1992, 2002), the ICC specifically emphasises the importance of gender equality and compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Greenland Home Rule Government participates jointly with Denmark in obligations related to the CEDAW Convention.

The Greenland Home Rule Government is also actively participating in the Nordic cooperation on gender issues through the Equal Status Council, which is currently part of a working group dealing with violence against women as recommended by the West Nordic Council in 1999.

Violence is but one of the tensions resulting from rapid social and cultural changes in the society. In Greenland, the government has decided to address this problem in a holistic manner by focusing on the development and healing of the family. For this purpose and inspired by the United Nations, 2004 has been declared "Family Year" and will be spent preparing new and more action oriented family policies.

The Arctic Council is another body, which seeks to promote mainstreaming of gender in its work. One outcome of the Taking Wings - Conference on Gender

Equality and Women in the Arctic held under the auspices of Arctic Council in 2002 was the decision to include a comparative study of Arctic and indigenous women's participation in decision-making in fisheries as a project under sustainable development. Fisheries remain one of the major industries in the Arctic and employs a great number of women particularly in the processing industry. At the same time, fishing by both men and women are an integral and important part of the subsistence lifestyles of indigenous peoples across the Arctic. It will therefore be interesting to see the results of the study, which will be presented at the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Iceland this fall. I am pleased to share with you, that the woman conducting the Greenlandic component of the study has just been granted largest share of this year's research money allocated by the Home Rule Government.

Mr. Chairperson,

As I am speaking on behalf of the Danish delegation, I would also like to stress the close cooperation between Greenland and Denmark with regards to the development and implementation and review of the Strategy for Danish Support to Indigenous Peoples.

Very importantly, the Strategy takes a rights based approach to indigenous peoples, including the right to self-determination. The consistent political support to indigenous peoples has provided a platform for successful cooperation not least between Greenland and Denmark in these matters.

The constructive dialogue also provides for a fruitful cooperation with IPO's and NGO's internationally. In this regard, I would like to thank IWGIA for organizing the recent seminar on Indigenous Women and Gender Relation held in Denmark in preparation for this session of the Permanent Forum and for inviting us to participate. Many of the participants have contributed articles to the latest edition of *Indigenous Affairs* (1-2/04) by IWGIA including one of our women scholars from Ilisimatusarfik/University of Greenland, who unfortunately could not participate here today.