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STATEMENT BY

**H.E. Jarmo Viinanen
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations**

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Item 4 (a) Human Rights: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

United Nations, New York

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Madam Chair, respected members of the Permanent Forum, honourable delegates and participants of the Eighth Session,

the Delegation of Finland is pleased to address the issue of the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Madam Chair,

in cooperation with its indigenous people, the Sami, Finland participated actively in the drafting process of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration encompasses a wide array of topics that are essential for promoting indigenous peoples' status, as well as provides states and other actors with a significant tool for strengthening the protection and promotion of indigenous rights worldwide. In this connection, Finland is pleased to note that the message of the Declaration has been adopted by a growing number of states.

Furthermore, the Declaration is an important tool for a better realization of the principle of full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in such decision-making processes that affect them. In order for the Declaration to have as positive an effect as intended, however, Governments, NGOs and UN institutions should take measures to raise awareness of the Declaration among indigenous peoples and other relevant actors.

The Declaration sets a standard of achievement on the political level. Instead of creating new international obligations, it pursues the important message of the full entitlement by indigenous peoples to the rights guaranteed in existing international agreements. In line with this standard-setting role, states are encouraged to take such measures as they deem appropriate for the achievement of the ends pursued by the Declaration. States are thus encouraged to promote respect for the Declaration by enhancing the implementation of any human rights instruments to which they are parties.

The adoption of the Declaration also created the framework for the work of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. In terms of the role of the distinguished Forum under Article 42 of the Declaration, Finland wishes to express its support for the Permanent Forum as the important global arena for addressing questions on indigenous issues, in cooperation between indigenous representatives and states, as well as on the basis of mutual respect and partnership. The Forum has a notable role under its mandated areas of work, in particular in the possible issuing of interpretative statements on the Declaration, dissemination of good practices on its implementation, any awareness-raising efforts and capacity building and, also, with regard to its efforts under the special themes adopted for the sessions,

The spirit of the Declaration is not necessarily enhanced in the most effective manner by introducing new reporting obligations to states, as the fulfilment of indigenous peoples' rights is at present periodically monitored by the established human rights treaty bodies. In addressing the implementation of the various human rights obligations, the human rights treaty bodies survey the implementation of indigenous peoples' rights by issuing concrete recommendations to states for the realization of these rights.

In terms of human rights treaties that concern specifically the rights of indigenous peoples, Finland lastly wishes to address the issue of the Draft Nordic Sami Convention. At present, an analysis of the Draft Convention's provisions in the light of Finland's domestic legislation and international obligations is at present under way. The relevant working group hopes to be able to submit its memorandum before fall this year, with the aim of enabling the drafting process of the Convention to be continued. A possible Nordic Sami Convention would in a significant manner enable a closer cross-border cooperation in matters concerning the Sami indigenous people.

Thank you, Madam Chair.