

Statement by

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Issues**

Statement by Denmark and Greenland on agenda item 9:

**“High-level event to commemorate the fifth anniversary
of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples”**

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The Commemoration of the 5th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for being invited to speak at this commemorative occasion. It is indeed important that Member States of the United Nations and indigenous peoples celebrate the 5-year anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – and that we do it together.

Time flies – and it flies quickly. As State Secretary at the time, it was my privilege to follow the negotiations on the Declaration – and the difficult and almost endless drafting process. The authorities of Denmark and Greenland played an important role in these events: by supporting indigenous organizations and NGOs in raising awareness internationally on the importance of supporting indigenous peoples rights; by organizing seminars on issues key to central paragraphs in the draft declaration; and by facilitating indigenous peoples' travels and capacity building so that they could participate in the drafting.

Literally, word by word, it was brought together. Compromises were struck. Consensus was found. And the result would be one that could be shared universally by indigenous peoples and all Member States of the UN.

On this commemorative occasion we thank and we commend all of those who contributed: The negotiators, the activists, the legal experts, the political decision-makers. Only a joint effort made it possible.

Denmark's participation in international cooperation on the rights of indigenous peoples, at the UN and in other international fora, is conducted in close cooperation with Greenland. In the Kingdom of Denmark there is only one indigenous people. And that is the Kalaallit of Greenland – the Inuit of Greenland.

The Kalaallit have a history of close cooperation with not only their Inuit kin in Canada, Alaska and Russia, but also with indigenous peoples from other parts of the world. The Danish-Greenlandic political process – first towards the establishment of Home Rule and later, as an extension of Home Rule, to Self-Government in 2008 – has been greatly inspired by the global indigenous rights’ movement. At the same time, our history and our solutions have undoubtedly also inspired others. Being inspired by others, learning from others, is essential in international cooperation.

For us, Denmark and Greenland, it is only natural that the preamble to the Act on Self-Government in Greenland affirms the right of the Greenland people to self-determination in accordance with international law. We share the view that the establishment of Self-Government in Greenland 2008 was a de facto implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Act on Self-Government in Greenland is based on mutual respect and good will – and it is a true testament of the faith, which the people of Greenland and the people of Denmark have in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Declaration has also been very important for Denmark’s development policy and our work on human rights. Denmark has supported indigenous peoples for many years, but the adoption of the Declaration gave our policy in this area an even stronger impetus.

Our development cooperation in support of indigenous peoples has brought us closer to the very diverse situations of indigenous peoples in different parts of the world. We have seen the many challenges which indigenous peoples face. We have learned that there is not just one formula for realizing the rights of indigenous peoples.

We have seen, first hand, that other players than States are affecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Actors from the private sector, and from business, are playing an increasingly important role. We welcome the many encouraging initiatives that have been taken in the recent years, by UN bodies, states, and indigenous peoples, as well as by the business sector itself, in developing guidelines on good conduct in indigenous lands and territories and in engagement with indigenous peoples. Still, much more work needs to be done before the normative standards of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples are being implemented in this area.

Today's commemoration – and today's celebration – takes place at a time where the world is preparing for the Rio+20 conference next month. It is important for us that the outcome of Rio+20 reflects the giant steps taken over the last 20 years. Simply repeating Agenda 21 will not suffice. We will all need to follow negotiations closely to ensure that.

As we celebrate the Declaration, we also look forward to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014. We know that this will be a huge challenge – but also a great opportunity to advance the agenda.

For now, today, we shall congratulate each other with the 5 year anniversary of the Declaration. We have a lot to celebrate, and a lot to be proud of. We are cognizant of the challenges before us, but convinced that we will be able to deal with them in due course. And that, my friends, is a fairly good background for a party!