

Statement by the Nordic Countries

by Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland

21st Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Item 5 (f): Thematic dialogues: International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–  
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Statement by

H.E. Ms. Miia Rainne

Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland

to the United Nations

New York, 25 April 2022

Thank you Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of Denmark together with Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland.

The issue at stake – preservation of indigenous languages - could not be more pressing.

Most of the world's languages may become extinct or seriously endangered by the end of this century.

A cold fact is that the majority of the languages that are under threat are indigenous languages.

At the same time, we know that our mother tongue and the language we speak and use in our everyday lives is what - in many ways – defines us as human beings. For indigenous peoples, languages also carry the ethical values of their ancestors and the indigenous knowledge systems of their land and culture.

Language is also vital in ensuring full participation, non-discrimination, equality and active engagement in public life. Everyone should be able to use their own language in a society without fear of discrimination.

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) highlights the important contribution made by indigenous peoples through their languages towards peace, sustainable development and human rights.

We must use this opportunity to save and strengthen indigenous peoples' languages. The Global Action Plan gives great guidance on how to do this. We hope that states and other stakeholders develop regional and national action plans. We should also take full use of modern language technology to increase language fluency, vitality and the growth of new language users. Partnerships between language users, technologists as well as policy makers will be needed in order to obtain sustainable results.

The five Nordic countries are committed to ensuring that the indigenous languages spoken in our own countries are preserved. We have and must continue to learn from the mistakes made in the past.

We must jointly ensure that future generations of indigenous peoples in all countries, including our own, are able to use their rich languages in the years to come.

It's time to act now.

Thank you.