



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

**15th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 5 – Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms**

Statement of the Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden)

Mr. President,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The Nordic countries are firm supporters of the rights of indigenous peoples. We welcome the work of the three UN mechanisms for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples: the Special Rapporteur, the Expert Mechanism and The Permanent Forum. The three mechanisms are complementary, and we appreciate the coordination that has been developed in order to avoid duplication of work and create synergies.

Mr. President,

We thank the Expert Mechanism for the report on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making. Participation in decision-making processes is of fundamental importance for the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples. Thus, the right of indigenous peoples to participation and the States' duty to consult are core elements in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The objective of consultations should be to obtain the consent of the indigenous people concerned. Although the consultation requirement does not provide indigenous peoples with a "veto power", there is a need to frame consultation procedures so that consensus can be built.

Representatives of indigenous peoples ought to be invited to participate also in international processes on matters that concern them directly. To give an example, the representatives from the Sámi Parliaments in the Nordic countries are formally part of the national delegations to UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. However, when these representatives address the Forum, they speak on behalf of their own indigenous political bodies, and not on behalf of their respective Governments.

As we have stated also in earlier occasions, it is relevant to pay attention to the follow up of the studies conducted by the Expert Mechanism on national level and in the Council. Further guidance and views by the Expert Mechanism on how to improve the follow up processes would be welcomed.

Mr. President,

the Nordic countries appreciate the work and the proactive approach of the Special Rapporteur. We thank the Special Rapporteur for visiting the Sámi region in April this year and look forward to his report and the interactive dialogue next year.

Mr. President,

The Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples contextualizes all existing rights for Indigenous Peoples and provides therefore the natural frame of reference for the promotion of indigenous peoples' rights. The Nordic countries express their appreciation that an increasing number of states are endorsing the Declaration.

In conclusion, the Nordic countries reiterate our support for the work on the right of indigenous peoples done by the Expert Mechanism and by the Special Rapporteur, and by the Office of the High Commissioner, and look forward to future collaboration.

I thank you, Mr. President.
