



Statement of behalf of the Greenland Home Rule Government
and the Government of Denmark
at the Working Group on Indigenous Populations

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Madame Chairman,

On behalf of the Greenland Home Rule Government and the Government of Denmark I first of all congratulate you warmly on your reelection to the post as the Chairman of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples.

This morning you used the phrase community in reference to this meeting and all its participants and observers, be they indigenous organisations and representatives, individuals or government representatives or your distinguished colleagues on the Working Group. And with you we feel that community is the word which describes the common dedication and plight of this Working Group which have managed to go beyond the Working Group itself and become a global quest to end the subjugation of indigenous peoples.

Madame Daes, it is with this spirit that we are gathered to comment on the draft declaration for indigenous peoples' rights.

The Greenland Home Rule Government and Denmark feel that the draft declaration have improved considerably over the years.

We are pleased to see that article 3, which refers to Indigenous Peoples right of self-determination, has not been qualified to weaken it and that it specifically refers to the fact that indigenous peoples like any other peoples have the right of self-determination.

The Greenlandic experience of exercising self-determination is a situation of Home Rule where we govern almost all our internal affairs. Since Home Rule was introduced in 1979 the relationship between Denmark and Greenland has changed from that of master and dependant to one of partnership. A situation which in human terms have brought dignity to the relationship between our two peoples.

Many indigenous peoples suffer from the fact that their immediate surroundings do not allow them the most basic elements of human dignity. Thus their lives and their cultures are threatened. To those people, but also to the entire human race, it is important that the United Nations together with governments start paying proper attention to the needs and the rights of indigenous peoples. For that the declaration on indigenous peoples' rights will be much needed for guidance.

After more than 10 years of thorough and lengthy drafting it is now high time that the declaration is moved on.

My delegation feels strongly that the next steps in the process should be much swifter. Therefore the draft declaration should be submitted to the parent-UN bodies for approval and adoption as a matter of urgency.

As the draft declaration moves on to higher bodies in the UN my delegation would like to appeal to governments that they work constructively towards this end for the benefit of indigenous peoples in the same spirit of community which has characterized the work done in this working group.

Finally, we would like to urge other governments and the United Nations to allow indigenous organizations and representatives to take part in the process in the same ^{spirit} manner as in this forum when the draft declaration moves through the UN-bodies.

Thank you, Madame Chairman