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Statement

by

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President of the Swedish Sami Assembly

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr. Chairman,

Sweden gives the highest priority to the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. Sweden firmly believes that the full realisation by indigenous peoples of human rights and fundamental freedoms is indispensable for eliminating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The rights of indigenous women and children demands special attention since they are often subjected to multiple discrimination. Sweden also believes that the value and diversity of cultures and the heritage of indigenous peoples, whose contribution to the development and cultural pluralism of society and full participation in all aspects of society, are fundamental for political and social stability, and for development in the states they live. One of the goals of the International Decade for Indigenous People is to strengthen the area of human rights. Becoming aware of and recognising the problems is a basic point of departure towards finding solutions.

To this end, in the year of 2000 Sweden initiated an information campaign aiming at preventing discrimination and racism against the Sami. The main aim is to spread information about the Sami and the Sami culture amongst the Swedes in general. The information campaign also has a component of conflict resolution between the Sami reindeer herders and landowners in northern Sweden where conflicts have emerged. The campaign intends to continue for 5 years and amounts to 3 milj Euro.

Sweden is also planning to launch a reconciliation process between the Sami and the State. The process is basically a follow-up to the apology made by the Swedish Government to the Samis for former injustices. This apology was made on the International Day of Indigenous Peoples on 9 August 1998. The reconciliation process initiates a landmark in a new policy aiming at promoting a closer dialogue between the Government and the Samis.

Mr. Chairman,

In the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, the need for effective international mechanisms for protection of human rights, is underlined. Sweden believes that a cornerstone in the work of The Permanent Forum should be the field of human rights and encourages the Forum to apply a rights based approach in all their activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman