

**Joint statement**  
**UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 13<sup>th</sup> session, Item 3**  
**Sexual health and reproductive rights**  
**Monday, 12 May 2014**

Joint Statement of behalf of Denmark, Finland and Sweden  
Delivered by Denmark

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to address the Permanent Forum on behalf of Finland, Sweden and my own country Denmark together with Greenland.

We warmly welcome the discussion on sexual health and reproductive rights of indigenous peoples at this year's session of the Permanent Forum.

The outcome of the UN Permanent Forum Expert Group Meeting will be a valuable input in guiding our future efforts to overcome the many impediments to ensuring that also indigenous peoples may enjoy full and equal access to their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As an initial comment, we would like to note, that Denmark appreciates the use in the report of the term “sexual and reproductive health and rights”. This term underlines more accurately the human rights aspect and should be used consistently.

Mr. Chairman,

All individuals have a right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Due to the importance of this, it is reflected in article 24 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Millennium Development Goals committed governments to reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio and achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Regrettably, this is the development goal which we are the furthest from achieving. As we

move forward in designing the Post-2015 development agenda we must ensure that the unfinished business of the MDG's is strongly reflected.

International surveys have found that despite progress over the last 20 years in regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights, there has been very little progress for the poorest and most marginalized persons in the world. Stark health inequalities of indigenous peoples continue to exist. Indigenous peoples continue to be disproportionately affected by lack of access to adequate health services, contraceptives and family planning and other sexual and reproductive health services for the reasons described in the Expert Group Meeting report.

It is crucial that these persistent inequalities are addressed in practice. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the application of the principle of free, prior and informed consent is fundamental in designing and implementing health policies and programmes that ensure access to adequate sexual and reproductive health services. Effective communication of information and access to education in general are also needed.

The rights of indigenous peoples, as articulated in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, should be integrated in the future development agenda. Indigenous peoples' rights are relevant in all development components of the future development agenda, not least health.

Mr. Chairman,

We note with appreciation that UNFPA's new strategic plan for the years 2014 to 2017 has a stronger focus on addressing inequalities affecting specific marginalized groups. It is highly commendable that UNFPA, given its focus on the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights, will prioritize developing a new corporate strategy on Indigenous Peoples Issues that will ensure implementation of articles 20 to 24 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We also warmly welcome the intention of the UNFPA to hold a side-event at the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of indigenous peoples to allow a continuation of the discussion on this important topic.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.