

Human Rights Council
Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples
Item 6 United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Issues
Intervention by the Danish Delegation

Mr. Chair,

Let me start by joining those delegations who have recognized and congratulated us all on some of the very important results from the Rio+20 meeting in Rio de Janeiro. I am thinking, in particular, of the explicit recognition of the "importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development," and not least the recognition of "the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of global, regional, national and subnational implementation of sustainable development strategies."

The Government of Greenland at an early stage decided to build their governance on sustainability and is trying to implement this strategy in their daily work. It was therefore a valuable experience for two of our cabinet ministers to participate at Rio and to be able to share information and good practices with other delegations on the challenges faced - all over the world - in the implementation of sustainable development.

Mr. Chair,

Turning to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in our own realm, my delegation sees the establishment of the self-government arrangement as an illustration of Denmark's de facto implementation of the Declaration vis-à-vis Greenland. At the same time it is up to the Government of Greenland to embrace the Declaration in its daily work.

Many delegations here have already heard us make interventions explaining the transition of our governance from a 30 year period with a so-called home rule government to self-government, with an additional transfer of powers from Denmark to Greenland taking place in 2009.

More details on this can be obtained from the notification on the Act submitted to the Secretary-General included in a report contained in document A/64/676 to the General Assembly under agenda item 39 Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples during its sixty-fourth session.

My delegation, however, thinks it appropriate to reiterate some of the main features of the Act on Greenland Self-Government.

- The preamble of the Act recognizes that the people of Greenland is a people pursuant to international law with the right to self-determination.

- The Act *provides* for Greenland to assume a number of new fields of responsibility and thus opens for expansion of further competencies and responsibilities to Greenland

- It *introduces* new arrangements regarding respectively mineral resource activities in Greenland and the economic relations between Denmark and Greenland;
- It *describes* the cooperation between Denmark and Greenland regarding foreign policy and incorporates the authorization arrangement from 2005;
- It *recognizes* the Greenlandic language as the official language in Greenland; and finally,
- It *describes* Greenland's access to independence.

In earlier submissions to the Expert Mechanism, notably with regard to the progress report on the study on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making, we explained that the Government of Greenland is a democratically elected public government where all members of the Parliament of Greenland and Government of Greenland currently are of Inuit descent. This requires a balanced approach by the Government and Parliament where consideration is given to all parties, without compromising the fact that Inuit, the indigenous people of Greenland, constitutes a majority of 88 percent and Danish and others make up only 12 percent of the total population.

The Government of Greenland strongly endorses the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration often forms the basis for debates in the public and media as well as in the Parliament of Greenland, which endorsed the Declaration at an early stage. At its latest session the Parliament of Greenland called for enhanced efforts in the dissemination of the Declaration to the public and in educational facilities throughout Greenland. It was early on translated into Greenlandic and Danish and published booklets and among others at the Permanent Forum website.

At virtually all session of the Parliament of Greenland requests for information on the status of implementation of the Declaration as well as questions on applicability of different articles to ongoing legislative measures have been made by the members. In general, our experience is that more and more people pick up on the Declaration and find it very useful as a tool to help them determine their rights.

We are very confident that the Declaration will continue to provide inspiration for us all in our continued efforts to secure the rights and to improve the lives and livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

Thank you for your attention.