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PERMANENT MISSION OF DENMARK  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by  
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Member of the Danish Parliament



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**7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum on  
Indigenous Issues**

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Madam Chairperson, distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Greenland Home Rule Government is responsible for language development and preservation in Greenland. I therefore take the floor to speak on behalf of Greenland as a member of the Danish Parliament for Greenland. We welcome the initiative by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to present an overview of the issues on indigenous languages by the expert group. The group underlined the importance of the interconnection between language rights and all other fundamental rights, the importance of linguistic diversity.

We share the concern of the expert group for the lack of urgency for policy measures to reverse the threat for extinction of some indigenous languages and that there is need for revitalization, promotion and protection of indigenous languages.

At this time there is also a need to highlight some best practiced on the work on the indigenous languages.

Language rights are also human rights and these are also connected to right to self-determination. Saying it also follows that indigenous peoples have an obligation to make efforts to stabilize and keep their languages alive.

I would like mention some examples from Greenland.

We have a developed a tradition of literacy in our own language during the period of 150 years. We have our tales and traditions in writing. In developing the literature we also developed awareness of other cultures and traditions to strengthen our identity as a people. We have also developed a tradition to translate world literature into Greenlandic, the latest being *Harry Potter*.

The Greenland Home Rule Government appoints language committees, which are tasked with developing normative standardized usage of the language in script while at the same time there are no limitations in using dialectal differentiations in the spoken language.

The Greenland Language Secretariat follows the dynamics of the language and reviews the language policy adopted by the parliament and the government in 2001. The language committees and the secretariat have working relationships with the Nordic Language Council and with Inuit bodies dealing with Inuit language in Canada, Alaska and Chukotka.

Greenland Parliament is now in process of preparing legislation on language integration where Greenlandic Inuit Language will be the main language while Danish will continue to be taught in school and used public affairs.

It is necessary that indigenous language make use of the new technological advances for the development of their materials to support the languages.

For us in Greenland it is a strength that the language and the knowledge of the youth work together with the language and the knowledge of the elders.