

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Ms. Helene Öberg

State Secretary for Culture and Democracy of Sweden

at the

**General Assembly
For Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

United Nations

New York

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-Check against delivery-

We believe that the developing established procedures that give indigenous peoples the opportunity to properly participate and influence decision-making in issues that concern them is critical. We remain staunch advocates here at the UN of the need to ensure that indigenous peoples are included and that their voices are heard in the global dialogue.

The Swedish government warmly welcomes the United Nations initiative to proclaim 2019 the Year of Indigenous Languages. A person's language carries her identity, history and traditions. Against this backdrop, it is alarming that so many languages around the world continue to disappear. I understand that the Permanent Forum has previously expressed concern that 40 per cent of the world's estimated 6,700 languages are in danger of disappearing - the majority belonging to indigenous peoples. These are very troubling numbers. We must work together to protect the wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity!

In Sweden, our focus nationally lies on the protection of the Sami languages. To highlight the Year of Indigenous Languages in our country, the government has recently assigned the Sami Parliament to carry out targeted efforts to promote the Sami language during this important year.

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Agenda item 5: Discussion on the 2019 International Year of Indigenous
Languages
Monday April 22nd, 2019
Swedish Statement

Delivered by:

Helene Öberg

State Secretary for Culture and Democracy of Sweden

Thank you, Chairperson,

Indigenous peoples all over the world including – I regret to say – in my own country continue to be exposed to discrimination, human rights violations and abuses. As leaders we must not only listen but also engage and act. We must learn from the mistakes of the past and cooperate nationally, regionally and globally for a better future.

For my government – Sweden – the protection of our own indigenous people, the Sami people, is an essential priority. In this endeavor, we work closely with the democratically elected members of the Sami Parliament as well as the Sami civil society and other actors. I am therefore pleased to have representatives of the Sami Parliament joining the delegation from Sweden also this year.

We have also recently tasked the Sami Parliament to analyze the possibilities to developing the activities of the Sami Language Centre in Sweden as a means of reinforcing indigenous languages. To coordinate our effort with others, we have recently applied to become an official UNESCO partner in the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

In December 2016 the Swedish Government launched a national inquiry to map out the need for measures to safeguard and revitalize the five national minority languages. The inquiry submitted its report in 2017. The study suggests that the five national minority languages should be regulated separately and a new subject - national minority language – should be introduced. The proposals are currently being prepared by the Government Offices.

Chairperson,

Indigenous languages - like all languages - are channels of human legacy; windows into unique knowledge systems and pathways to understand our diverse world. Let's work together to protect this treasure!

Thank you!