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Statement by
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Madame Chairperson, distinguished members of the Permanent Forum,

Speaking on behalf of Denmark and my own country Greenland, I wish to express our great satisfaction with the manner in which the members of the Permanent Forum are carrying out their task – with competence and devotion. We also salute the highly competent way in which the Secretariat services the work of the Forum, which by now has become the authority on indigenous issues within the UN system.

I should also like to express our support of the practice to select a specific theme to be given particular attention during each session of the Forum. This year's theme on territories, lands and natural resources lies at the heart of Indigenous Peoples in so far as their cultural and material survival depends on these basic components.

Allow me, Madame Chairperson, to refer to the Arctic Regional Workshop held in Copenhagen in March this year that dealt with this theme. The report of the workshop was introduced this morning by the President of the Saami Parliament of Norway. The Workshop recommends, inter alia, the speediest adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples now pending before the 61st Session of the General Assembly. The Declaration represents a milestone in furthering the rights and aspirations of the world's Indigenous Peoples, and establishes a most useful framework for the UN activities regarding indigenous peoples.

Another major concern related to the special theme is climate change and global warming. Impact of climate change poses significant challenges for indigenous communities all over the world, as it threatens traditional lifestyles and culture, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

In the Arctic Region, climate impact assessments and observations at the community level, points to the urgent need for adaptation strategies and the sharing of best practices. The Arctic is extremely vulnerable, and according to experts climate changes in the region are expected to accelerate over the next 100 years resulting in major physical, ecological, social, economic changes. The changes will also affect the rest of the world through increased global warming and rising sea levels.

In order to meet this tremendous challenge, it is important that we join forces in taking immediate action to counter the negative effects of these changes. My delegation believes that the Permanent Forum has an important role in facilitating the concerns of indigenous peoples in this regard to the relevant bodies of the United Nations system as well as to the public in general.

The topic of Climate Change may indeed be relevant as a specific theme for the Permanent Forum at an appropriate time.

On our part, we intend to take advantage of the fact that Greenland, for some time, has been the focus of many international climate research activities. The climate research will be further intensified during the current International Polar Year (2007-2009) and will - together with Denmark's hosting of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in 2009 - provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the urgent need for action to slow down climate change - and to speed up the development of adaptation strategies as well as concrete measures to mitigate any negative impacts.

Let me briefly mention the ongoing negotiations between Greenland and Denmark with regard to the establishment of a self-government system in Greenland replacing and developing the existing Home Rule Government. The negotiations are centred around matters relating to exploitation of natural resources, to further delegation of exclusive competence in a number of fields, domestic as well as foreign, and to financial assistance. We see these negotiations as a further step in the process of realizing peoples right to self-determination. The negotiations are based upon partnership in action and mutual respect. When the new Act on Self-Government for Greenland has been passed by the Danish Parliament and approved by a referendum in Greenland, we shall be happy to share this experience with the Permanent Forum. The joint Greenlandic-Danish Commission on Self-Governance, within which the negotiations have taken place, may serve as a valuable precedent for other indigenous peoples when asserting and developing their rights.

Finally, Madame Chairperson, I wish to announce that the Danish Government will continue to provide financial support to the UN activities in favour of Indigenous Peoples. The grant for the year 2007 is 750,000 DKK equalling well over 100,000 US dollars.

I thank you all for your attention.