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**FIRST SESSION OF  
THE PERMANENT FORUM ON  
INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

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Statement by  
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Cabinet Minister  
Greenland Home Rule Government

on behalf of  
Denmark and Greenland

NEW YORK  
13 MAY 2002

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

May I first of all congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, upon your election to preside over *this historic meeting marking a new partnership between Governments and Indigenous Peoples*. My congratulation also goes to the other Members of the Bureau and the Forum.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to this delegation to see the realization of a project for which the seeds were sown at the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, when the then Minister for Social Affairs in Greenland, Mrs. Henriette Rasmussen launched the idea. I am glad to announce that Mrs. Rasmussen is with us today as an honorary member of the Danish-Greenlandic delegation.

Within seven years the idea of creating the Forum came to fruition through the adoption by consensus of ECOSOC resolution 2000/22 in July 2000. Certainly not a bad accomplishment seen in a UN context. And an accomplishment which is not least due to the constructive diplomatic efforts of Indigenous Peoples and their interaction with governments and the United Nations.

It is our hope - and expectation – that the Permanent Forum will soon establish its authority within the UN-system on matters affecting Indigenous Peoples. Without commenting at this stage on the more detailed programme of work for the Forum, I wish to underline that it is our ambition to see the Permanent Forum adopt a concrete and action-oriented programme focusing on core issues affecting the daily lives of Indigenous Peoples, individually and collectively. It is equally important that the Forum succeeds in influencing the broader development agenda of the UN, securing for the millions of indigenous peoples their part in the world's prosperity, especially those enduring extreme poverty.

It is hardly possible to overstress the importance of the work ahead of us. All of us gathered here today – representatives of Indigenous Peoples, governments, international organisations and civil society – have a common obligation to join forces in a spirit of mutual understanding, respect and cooperation to ensure that the Forum will rise to become the focal point in the United Nations for the aspirations of the world's Indigenous Peoples.

As a representative of an indigenous people, the Inuit of Greenland, I believe that I can testify to the possibility and reality of developing a partnership in action with nation-states in meeting the challenges of a rapidly globalising world while safeguarding the political, cultural, social, environmental and economic values we hold as a small Arctic indigenous people. These values include the right to self-determination. And in this context it is important to understand that these issues are so inter-connected that you can not discuss one without carefully considering the other. This is why I think it will be important for the Forum to wisely chose its core issues, and I am very confident that under your wise leadership, Mr. Chairman, the Forum will be able to do so.

On behalf of the Greenlandic and the Danish peoples I wish the Forum all the best in its future endeavours and I can assure its members of our full support.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Forum, for your attention.