

Human Rights Council 18th Session

Half-day panel on the role of languages and cultures in the promotion and protection of the well-being and identity of indigenous peoples

Denmark

Madame President, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples, distinguished panelists,

My delegation welcomes the introduction of a half-day panel to be held annually in conjunction with the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to address issues related to the rights of indigenous peoples and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this regard, we propose that the selection of topics for future panels be based on the deliberations during sessions of the Expert Mechanism to ensure the full participation of indigenous peoples in this process.

Madame President,

The topic of this panel is an important one, and we are pleased to share some information in this regard.

In 2009, Greenland attained a new relationship with Denmark based on the Act on Greenland Self-Government, which very importantly recognises that the people of Greenland is a people pursuant to international law with the right to self-determination. The Act also recognises the Greenlandic language as the official language of Greenland.

While it is important to note that the Government of Greenland is a public government - rather than an indigenous self-government - it is equally important to point out that the indigenous people of Greenland, the Inuit, constitute a large majority. Presently, all members of both the Government and the Parliament of Greenland are of Inuit descent.

The Government of Greenland strongly endorses the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Declaration and its

implementation is continuously promoted by the Parliament of Greenland.

Madame President,

To give you a specific example of relevance to this discussion, one of the first actions of the Government of Greenland following the inauguration in 2009 was to introduce new legislation on language policy and integration aimed at strengthening the role and use of Greenlandic, which is the primary language and also the language of immersion in school. Companies, public authorities and institutions in Greenland are now required to adopt language policies, which promote, inter alia, Greenlandic language use and identity, integration and cultural understanding.

In a regional context, Denmark together with Greenland support the work of the Arctic Council to promote and protect Arctic indigenous languages and culture. In the Arctic Council, which is a high level consensus forum, indigenous peoples participate on an equal footing with governments.

Finally, in a broader international context, strengthening of indigenous peoples rights, including languages and cultures, through international processes is an important priority for Denmark. Consistent and firm political, diplomatic and financial support has paved the way for a number of results in recent years in collaboration with the Government of Greenland and international partners.

Thank you for your attention.