

15<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Statement on agenda **item 5**:

“Indigenous Peoples: conflict, peace and resolution”

Delivered by Denmark

Thank you Mr. Chair,

We highly welcome this opportunity to address the 15<sup>th</sup> session’s highly relevant main theme on Indigenous Peoples’ and conflict, peace and resolution. Indigenous Peoples have local knowledge which can be crucial for building trust in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding. The UN should seize the opportunity to cooperate with Indigenous Peoples to promote peace. We therefore welcome that the recent UN General Assembly high-level thematic debate on UN, Peace and Security also included an indigenous panellist. We hope that this space of discussion will focus mainly on the best practises of how to prevent and solve conflicts, bearing in mind two facts: 1) the collective right of Indigenous Peoples to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples, and 2) the richness of Indigenous Peoples’ contributions when involved, in all stages of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and transitional justice processes.

Inclusion of all stakeholders in a peace process, including Indigenous Peoples, is key to ensure the legitimacy of the process, and to create sustainable peace. At the same time, we know that it is often difficult for Indigenous Peoples to gain access to political processes. Too often, we see that vulnerable groups, including Indigenous Peoples, are not given the necessary opportunity to participate in or shape the process, which might compromise the sustainability of the outcome.

We therefore call on all actors and agents engaged in peacebuilding efforts to give priority to the inclusion of local communities and civil society in the process, recognizing their critical role for ensuring sustainable peace.

We would also like to highlight some concerns in terms of situations not yet resolved and situations where we as part of the international community have a responsibility to ensure continuous follow-up and ensure that conflicts or situations where there is risk of escalation are not forgotten.

This is the case with the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area in Bangladesh where disputes over land rights are frequent and as a consequence Indigenous Peoples suffer attacks. We would therefore – as during previous sessions of the Permanent Forum – like to reiterate our appeal to the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Commission can operate fully without any delay.

We welcome the efforts made by the Government of Bangladesh to advance the implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, including the latest developments last week where the foundation stone of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Complex was unveiled.

Regrettably, the full implementation of the Accord is still pending and the situation gives rise to concern as reports of attacks – often with impunity - on Indigenous Peoples are not uncommon. This causes instability, insecurity and uncertainty. Therefore we encourage the Government of Bangladesh to continue to take firm steps towards the full implementation of the Peace Accord. We will continue to follow the developments closely and remain hopeful that peace and security will become a reality in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Another case of concern is the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Honduras. The rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrined in the UNDRIP and in the ILO Convention 169 on free, prior and informed consent are under pressure. We mourn the loss of Berta Cáceres who was fighting for the rights of Indigenous Peoples of her community, and she and her family paid the highest possible price. We note the recent arrests made in connection with this offence, and urge the Government of Honduras to ensure that this serious criminal offence is duly investigated and that the perpetrators are held responsible. Furthermore, we call on the Government of Honduras to take all possible steps to ensure that human rights defenders, including indigenous peoples' rights defenders, enjoy security and freedom to conduct their very important work.

We hope that this session can contribute to identify concrete measures for the prevention of violent conflicts with fatal consequences for Indigenous Peoples.

We believe in strengthening the UN structures on mediation and wish to ensure that mediation and dialogue are at the forefront of the UN's work with conflict prevention and resolution. Principles to be applied in this context are inclusiveness, local ownership, women's full and equal participation and the role of civil society in peace processes.

We hope that this space will allow for broad participation of Indigenous Peoples who can share positive experiences for us to be inspired by and take action on.

Thank you for your attention.