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**WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
FOURTEENTH SESSION**

29 JULY - 2 AUGUST 1996

**AGENDA ITEM 6
CONSIDERATION OF A PERMANENT FORUM**

**STATEMENT BY MRS. TOVE SØVND AHL PETERSEN
GREENLAND HOME RULE GOVERNMENT
ON BEHALF OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES**

GENEVA, 2 AUGUST 1996

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Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

1. Speaking on behalf of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Greenland Home Rule Government I am pleased to take the floor on agenda item 6, entitled "Consideration of a permanent forum for indigenous people".

2. It has now been more than a year since the first UN workshop on a permanent forum was held in Copenhagen, where representatives of indigenous peoples from all regions of the world and some 20 government and independent experts including our chairperson today Mrs. Erica-Irene Daes participated.

As stated in the Report of the workshop, progress was achieved in the discussions on a range of issues relating to the establishment of a permanent forum. Many governments and all indigenous representatives supported the idea that the permanent forum should have a broad mandate as well as a broad scope covering such issues as development, the environment, culture and human rights. Due to its broad mandate the forum should be placed at a high level within ECOSOC. As far as the membership of the forum was concerned most participants were in favour of a permanent forum consisting of both governments and representatives of indigenous peoples, reflecting the idea of a partnership.

During the workshop a consensus was achieved on one important issue, which was also recommended by the Working Group at its thirteenth session - that the Secretary-General should review existing procedures and programmes within the United Nations relating to indigenous peoples.

3. This consensus was confirmed by the fiftieth General Assembly in its resolution 50/157, where it was recommended that: "the Secretary General, drawing on the expertise of the Commission on Human Rights, as well as the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies, undertake a review, in close consultation with Governments and taking into account the views of indigenous people and of the existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the UN concerning indigenous people, and report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session".

4. At its fifty-second session the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 41 of 19 April 1996 adopted by consensus, urged the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and financial institutions responsible for the existing relevant mechanisms, procedures and programmes to facilitate the review.

The Nordic Countries would like to stress the importance of the active involvement of the relevant United Nations agencies by responding to the questionnaire on existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous peoples. We urge the UN agencies to facilitate the completion of the review in full and on time.

5. As we see it, the review should be carried out in close consultation with indigenous peoples from all regions. We regard this consultative process as being of the utmost importance for the future elaborations on the permanent forum. Therefore, we would like to draw attention to the ongoing consultations which are being carried out in connection with this meeting by the International Alliance of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Rainforest and the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, IWGIA. The indigenous peoples unit of the Centre for Human Rights has been very supportive in this consultative process.

A consolidated review report, representing positions from all parties involved and giving a full picture of the actual situation of the existing mechanisms and programmes, will make a substantial contribution to the further discussion and consideration of the mandate for the permanent forum.

6. The review should be completed and circulated to Governments, relevant intergovernmental organizations and indigenous organizations for their comments well in advance of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

7. Drawing on the results of the review, a second workshop on the establishment of a permanent forum should be convened. The Nordic Countries look forward to the next opportunity to discuss the modalities and the mandate of a permanent forum in more thorough terms.

8. In closing I wish to stress that the fact that a review is now being undertaken does not mean that the discussions on the modalities for a permanent forum should cease. On the contrary, there is a strong need for continuous discussions.

It is our hope that indigenous societies will use the coming year to endeavour to hold consultations and co-ordinate among themselves in preparation for the second workshop in 1997. A constant exchange of views on the blue print and shape of a permanent forum is a necessity if we wish to ensure that the mandate of the permanent forum contains all issues of importance to indigenous peoples.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson