

# SWEDEN



## STATEMENT

by

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**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Chair,

Sweden is grateful for the opportunity to again address the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – the truly global forum for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

While delivering this statement in national capacity, I would like to expand on the Arctic Council, which Sweden is privileged to chair between 2011 and 2013.

Chair,

The Arctic is unique. Its environment is – apart from breath-taking – highly sensitive to disturbances. The region is heavily affected by on-going climate change, technological development and increasing commercial activities. Temperatures are rising twice as quickly in the Arctic as elsewhere on Earth.

Cooperation and life in the Arctic is also unique. The peoples living in the region have developed unrivalled coping and resilience skills.

The Council itself is a good example on how indigenous peoples effectively participate in an intergovernmental structure. The six permanent participants organisations – the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Aleut International Association, the Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Arctic Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Saami Council – are an integral part of the Council's work.

The Arctic Council, with its indigenous people's representation, makes decisions on programmes and projects not only legitimate, but also effective and relevant for a sustainable development. The participation mechanism is perhaps the most distinct and cherished feature of the Arctic Council.

Chair,

The Swedish chairmanship of the Arctic Council prioritizes issues that will promote environmentally sustainable development, while consolidating the positive cooperation between the Arctic states and indigenous peoples of the region. Let me highlight some of these initiatives.

The profile of Arctic issues in relevant international forums on climate change has been raised. The most important measure for limiting Arctic warming is to reduce emissions of long-lived greenhouse gases, above all carbon dioxide. In the short-term, however, measures that reduce the presence of short-lived climate forcers, such as black carbon, tropospheric ozone and methane, can play a significant role in limiting climate change, particularly at regional level.

Environmental and societal tipping points and resistance will be scrutinized in the *Arctic Resilience Report*. A mid-term report will be published in 2013 and the final report in 2015.

With Rio+20 just a month away, it is worth underscoring that efforts have been made to involve the Council in the continued work on the Convention on Biological Diversity. A key contribution will be the Council's *Arctic Biodiversity Assessment*, due in 2013. Knowledge about existing species and ecosystems, including their management, needs to be enhanced.

Further environmental protection measures are under way. One aims at increased use of environmental impact assessments in the Arctic, for example in association with mining, shipping and oil extraction. Work has intensified to develop recommendations on preparedness for and prevention of oil emissions, a real risk associated with transportation and oil extraction. The review of the legal framework for the Arctic marine environment, the *Arctic Ocean Review*, will soon be concluded. So will a report on the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on the acidification of the Arctic Ocean.

The second, interrelated focus is on the human dimension: the people of the Arctic. The Council's Sustainable Development Working Group has been strengthened. Among the priority issues are food and water security, as well as preserving language – and through it, culture and knowledge.

The project on a *Second Arctic Human Development Report: Regional Processes and Global Linkages*, has recently been launched. It aims to increase knowledge and understanding about the interaction between processes of physical and social change, and how they affect people's living conditions and adaptability in the Arctic.

Furthermore, Sweden is also about to launch a project on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Arctic. This is of particular importance to extractive but also tourism industries.

Chair,

The Arctic Council is a tangible expression of how the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can be implemented, in spirit and letter. There is always room for improvements. Nevertheless, Sweden believes that work in the Arctic Council is one of the many ways in which the Declaration – which marks five years next week – is constantly celebrated.

Thank you.