

PF 16 July 135

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

Joint Statement on behalf of the Nordic countries on agenda **item 10**:

“Future Work of the Permanent Forum”

Delivered by Denmark

Thank you Madam Chair,

I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland Norway, Sweden and Denmark together with Greenland.

The Permanent Forum is a unique space for exchanging ideas and knowledge on issues related to Indigenous Peoples. With the broad participation of Indigenous Peoples, Member States and UN agencies, funds and programmes, the Forum becomes an ideal mechanism in the promotion of respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights. The Nordic countries' continuous and active participation is a sign of our full support to the Forum and its work.

The Forum's recent efforts to reform its annual sessions and working methods are encouraging and we call on the Forum to continue on this path. We welcome this opportunity to discuss the future work of the Forum in relation to which we would like to present both some more general comments and some specific recommendations:

The Permanent Forum has now become a teenager – a 15 year-old. The Millennium Development Goals also turned 15 recently and were followed by the Sustainable Development Goals. It is time to take stock and evaluate what the Permanent Forum has achieved so far, and to discuss and decide what we would like to achieve over the next 15 years – when the Forum will have become an adult.

We all agree on the uniqueness of the Forum as a mechanism to promote and visualise indigenous issues internationally. We should find ways to ensure implementation of all the valuable and still very relevant recommendations made by the Permanent Forum over the years. Recommendations have little or no value, if they do not become a reality on the ground and in fact change the lives of Indigenous Peoples. This is a task in which both Member States,

Indigenous Peoples, UN agencies, funds and programmes should be engaged. Ensuring appropriate follow-up to its recommendations is the role of the Permanent Forum, and we therefore encourage the Forum and its Secretariat to initiate this work, beginning with a compilation of recommendations and their implementation status. This will provide an overview that can serve as the basis for analysis of the more tricky recommendations and provide a point of departure for discussions on a future strategic focus.

We suggest that the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum to be held in 2017 includes space for reflection on past achievements and for discussion on how to ensure concrete actions are taken to follow up on recommendations. The before mentioned compilation of recommendations and their implementation status will be an important tool on which to base our discussions.

Madam Chair,

One of the very strong features of the Permanent Forum is the orientation towards dialogue which we should preserve at all costs. However, the Forum could benefit from enhanced *strategic* dialogue.

A way forward could be to prepare a 3-year strategic work plan of the Forum that includes strategic focus areas for each session and outlines the expected outcome of the strategic plan. Though the Forum has six mandated areas it is not always feasible to cover all six areas meaningfully during one session. Therefore a strategic focus on one or two main themes combined with one or two follow-up themes could be established for each session to ensure in-depth debate and the necessary emphasis on implementation.

This initiative could be supported by a prolongation of the presidential period from one to three years. The structure could be designed in a way that a 3-years strategy is first defined, and then the new President of the Forum is elected for a three-year term with the purpose of implementing the strategic plan of the Forum. This would also create more stability in the leadership of the Forum as well as strengthen the dialogue and collaboration between the Forum and its Secretariat.

Obviously, one of the strategic focus areas in the coming years is the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the inclusion and consultation of Indigenous Peoples in

this process. We know that many would have liked to see that the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples' priorities were more clearly reflected in the outcome document and in the formulation of the goals and targets. We should however acknowledge that contrary to the Millennium Development Goals, Indigenous Peoples are indeed mentioned several times in the 2030 Agenda, and the Agenda focusses on a substantial amount of the Indigenous Peoples' aspirations vis-à-vis human rights, human dignity, rule of law, equality and non-discrimination, respect for ethnicity and cultural diversity, and participatory decision-making.

As a subsidiary body to the Economic and Social Council, and with a base in New York, the Permanent Forum is perfectly located to advocate for issues that are priorities for Indigenous Peoples. The Forum and specifically the Forum's Secretariat have ample possibilities to engage in different meetings, deliberations and seminars where the SDG's are discussed and framed. This advantage should be fully exploited, and the Forum should be as active as possible in promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their concerns in the 2030 Agenda follow-up.

Madam Chair,

Allow me to sum up our main recommendations in closing:

- Develop a compilation of Permanent Forum recommendations and their implementation status.
- Establish ways to ensure follow-up of recommendations.
- Provide time during the 16<sup>th</sup> session to reflect on achievements during the past 15 years.
- Draft a 3-year strategic plan for the work of the Forum.
- Change the presidential period from one to three years, following the period of the strategic plan.
- Include the follow-up and implementation of the SDGs in the Forum's strategic plan.

Thank you for your attention.