

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 4th Session July 11-15, 2011

Item 5: Intervention by the Danish Delegation

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Expert Mechanism, Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and organizations and State Delegates.

It is a great pleasure to report to you on some developments under this agenda item, which also relate to the previous agenda items discussed during the last couple of days.

Firstly, Denmark and Greenland are very encouraged by the fact that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples now enjoys universal support. We are confident that this will pave the way for increased international commitment to ensure the implementation of the provisions set out in the Declaration. The challenge ahead is how to translate it into practical results on the ground.

We all share a responsibility to promote respect for and full application of the provisions of the UN Declaration in accordance with article 42 of the Declaration. Denmark attaches high importance to the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and the international level. It is a priority in our foreign policy and is identified as a thematic key priority in the Danish Government's strategy for its international human rights cooperation. Moreover, indigenous peoples' rights are integrated in Danish development policy with regard to the implementation of human rights in developing countries.

Denmark and Greenland will continue to speak out for the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights in relevant international fora where indigenous issues are discussed, including the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues and elsewhere. Furthermore, we continue to participate actively in international negotiations on indigenous issues - including on resolutions in the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly - that will help advance the implementation of the UN Declaration. Denmark also works to protect the rights of indigenous peoples in ongoing and emerging climate negotiations and related funding mechanisms. With regard to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to be held in 2014, it is important to work for the full inclusion and effective participation of indigenous peoples at all stages.

Mr. Chairperson,

Denmark and Greenland welcome the inclusion in the *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* of guidance to business enterprises on respecting human rights with reference to the specific challenges often faced by indigenous peoples. The *Guiding Principles* were endorsed by

the Human Rights Council at its most recent session, which in practice means that the focus of the important Business and Human Rights mandate will now move towards implementation. In this context, we look forward to the results of the study that the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is currently undertaking on the impact of extractive industries on the rights and situations of indigenous peoples. We hope that the results will further build on the *Guiding Principles* and provide a more detailed understanding of the nature of the specific challenges faced by indigenous peoples in the context of business and human rights and how the rights of indigenous peoples can best be protected in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

In cooperation with the Government of Greenland, Denmark has recently completed a review of "Denmark's 2004 strategy for support to indigenous peoples". The Review was officially launched on April 8 2011 at an event co-hosted by the Danish Minister for Development and the Government of Greenland. The Review points to very significant results stemming from the Danish and Greenlandic efforts - both with regard to international and normative processes as well as improvements on the ground for indigenous peoples through implementation of the principles set forth in the UN Declaration for example in relation to land rights. The recommendations and conclusions listed in the review will feed into the elaboration of our future efforts to promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Indigenous Peoples' Partnership (UNIPP), which Denmark supports financially. UNIPP represents an innovative alliance seeking to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions set out in the UN Declaration. In this context, Denmark is very supportive of UNIPP's ambition to focus on country level implementation through Joint Country Programmes as well as capacity-building of UN Country Teams. Such efforts will hopefully help transform principles and standards into results on the ground for the benefit of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairperson,

I am pleased to report that on May 16th of this year Greenland together with Denmark hosted the 7th Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland. As expressed under agenda item 4 on the report of the final study on Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Participate in Decision-Making, the Arctic Council is a high-level inter-governmental forum in which indigenous peoples as permanent participants sit at the table and play a major role in agenda-setting and decision-making processes, which are based on consensus. The important role of the permanent participants was underscored by all the foreign ministers of the Arctic during what – given the high-level representation and treaty signing - has been called the most successful ministerial meeting to date.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson, on May 2, 2011 Denmark together with Greenland and the Faroe Islands was considered under the Universal Periodic Review. In connection with the elaboration of Denmark's national UPR report and preparation for the subsequent examination, public hearings were held in all three jurisdictions. In Greenland, the UN Declaration in particular played an important role as the overall framework for the concerns expressed by a broad cross-section of interested parties, including indigenous peoples' organizations, NGOs and civil society in general. The final outcome of Denmark's UPR will be presented at the upcoming 18th session of the Human Rights Council.

It is our firm belief, that the Universal Periodic Review process is an important venue for the promotion and protection of the rights indigenous peoples and the implementation of the UN Declaration. In line with the Expert Mechanism and others, we encourage indigenous peoples to engage in and to further explore the potential of the Universal Periodic Review along with the United Nations Treaty Bodies in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. National human rights institutions may also be approached for support in such endeavors.

Thank you for your attention.