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## United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Sixteenth Session

1 May 2017

### Item 10:

Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with regard to indigenous human rights defenders

Joint statement on behalf of Denmark (together with Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

Delivered by Ambassador Ms. May-Elin Stener  
Deputy Permanent Representative, Norway

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Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, Denmark together with Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country Norway

As reported by Front Line Defenders, and similarly was also highlighted by several speakers during last week's High Level event to mark the 10th Anniversary of UNDRIP, 281 human rights defenders were killed or died in detention in 2016. Half of these killings were linked to the defense of environmental, land and indigenous peoples' rights. Many more faced threats of violence, harassment and other measures aimed at creating obstacles for their work.

(Check against delivery)

This is taking place despite there being a clear obligation on all states to uphold fundamental freedoms and human rights for all. This does not just mean respecting the rights of every individual, but also protecting those who are promoting human rights, and ensuring that they can carry out this work safely. Regrettably, many states fail to take this obligation seriously.

Women indigenous human rights defenders face particular challenges, often having to overcome multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination linked to both their gender and their identity as indigenous peoples. Still, women indigenous human rights defenders are at the forefront, not only in the fight for protection of land and natural resources, but also in promoting health and education services.

Ensuring the effective protection for human rights defenders is a human rights imperative, and of key importance for Agenda 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved unless indigenous peoples are allowed to assume their rightful place in society, without discrimination or fear of violence or reprisals.

In 1998, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. We would strongly encourage that the Special Rapporteur and EMRIP use the occasion of its 20th Anniversary to address the particular challenges facing indigenous human rights defenders. Furthermore, and bearing in mind the revised mandate of the EMRIP, we emphasise the need for concrete action to provide effective protection of indigenous human rights defenders, including women indigenous human rights defenders and the particular challenges they face.

Thank you.