

Human Rights Council

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Item 5: Study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples.

Intervention by the Danish delegation

Mr. Chairperson,

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

When preparing the response from the Government of Greenland to the request by the Expert Mechanism for submissions to the study on indigenous peoples' languages and cultures we thought it valuable to illustrate that we are in fact making submissions to processes and bodies in the UN system other than mandates strictly on the rights of indigenous peoples and wish for other delegations to be aware of this opportunity. We also felt the need to create some synergy to the many requests for information that we are facing on a daily basis.

For many years, we have through Denmark been reporting on Greenland to a number of treaty bodies and have participated actively in the committee examinations. We note with appreciation that the CERD Committee is represented at this meeting.

In Spring of 2011, we participated in the Universal Periodic Review of Denmark to which report Greenland made an independent contribution - both written and orally - based, inter alia, on a public hearing in Greenland in the fall of 2009.

Our submission to this EMRIP study - which, I am sorry to say, somehow got "lost in translation" - was therefore to make reference to the relevant sections of the UPR documents (A/HRC/WG.6/11/DNK/1 and A/HRC/18/4) containing specific information concerning language and cultural identity - however constrained by the limited pages available for the reporting. My delegation hopes that our intended contributions to the studies of the Expert Mechanism, even if currently not referenced, can still be included in the web site listing.

To give you examples of the informations contained in the above reports we clearly stated both orally and in writing that one of the first actions of the Government of Greenland pursuant to the recognition of Greenlandic as the official language in Greenland in the Act on Greenland Self-Government in 2009 was to pass legislation on language policy and integration that aimed at strengthening the role of and use of Greenlandic. Private companies, public authorities and institutions are now required to adopt language policies, which promote, inter alia, Greenlandic language use and identity, integration and cultural understanding.

Currently, amendments to the Act, passed by the Parliament of Greenland in May of 2010, which is aimed at further strengthening and reinforcing the use of Greenlandic in the private and public sectors is being reviewed.

Finally, I just wanted to mention the strong promotion and continued support for indigenous languages in the Arctic Council context. I have noted ICC's submission to the report, and I am sure the Arctic Caucus will also reflect on the Arctic Council's approval in 2011 of the Permanent Participant coordinated "Assessing, Monitoring and Promoting Arctic Indigenous Languages" project under the Sustainable Development Working Group, which is follow-up to earlier language projects under changing chairmanships.

Thank you for your attention.