

United Nations, General Assembly, 69th session, Third Committee
Agenda item 65 (a), Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Statement by

Finland on behalf of the Nordic countries
(Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)

Delivered by H.E. Mr. Kai Sauer
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations

New York, 20 October 2014

(check against delivery)

Chairperson,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark with Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Finland. Those Nordic countries that are members of the European Union (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) align themselves with the EU statement.

The promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples is a longstanding priority for the Nordic countries. The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was an important milestone in recognizing the status and rights of indigenous peoples. Fulfilling the objectives of the UN Declaration requires continuous and consistent work at the international, national and local levels. We therefore welcome that the UN Member States reaffirmed their support for the Declaration by consensus at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and undertook commitments to promote its realization.

The cooperation between the United Nations, its membership and Indigenous Peoples in the run-up to the World Conference paved good ground for translating the commitments in the Outcome Document into concrete measures. The Outcome document provides us with an important road-map for the realization of Indigenous Peoples rights for future years.

Chairperson,

International human rights law and the UN Declaration recognize Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves. The Nordic countries look forward to the Secretary-General's concrete proposals on Indigenous Peoples' participation at UN meetings in issues affecting them. As agreed at the World Conference, the Nordic countries stand ready to take actively part in the decision-making on Indigenous Peoples participation at the 70th session of the General Assembly.

The participation of Indigenous Peoples is a vital issue for us. Let me illustrate this concretely. Indigenous Peoples' representative organisations and institutions are not NGO's. Due to their status they cannot attend most UN meetings and make their voices heard independently. Examples of such institutions are the representative bodies of the Sámi – the Sámi Parliaments – in Finland, Norway and Sweden. In accordance with the Self-Government

arrangement, the Government of Greenland may speak on its own behalf in matters of interest to Greenland.

Chairperson,

The Nordic countries support the work of the three UN mechanisms for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples: The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We welcome the appointment of Vicky Tauli-Corpuz as the new Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

These mechanisms are complementary, and we appreciate the coordination that has been developed in order to avoid duplication of work and to create synergies. We will actively engage in the discussions on the review of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to ensure that it can more effectively promote respect for the Declaration.

Chairperson,

In the year ahead of us, the UN membership will take important decisions on the Post -2015 sustainable development agenda. It is crucial that the rights of Indigenous Peoples will be duly considered in the elaboration of this agenda and that Indigenous Peoples right to participate in matters concerning them is respected. The Human Rights Based Approach to development that we all are committed to in our development agendas, recognize and promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Through this approach we are able to pursue the agenda for realizing universal human rights to all by supporting equality and reduction of inequalities and by combatting marginalization and discrimination of all groups. The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has in her recent report raised important aspects in this regard.

It is important that the United Nations has a system-wide approach to Indigenous Peoples Rights, including in the Post 2015 context. The UN Declaration requires the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations to contribute to the full realization of the provisions of the Declaration through mobilization of financial and technical resources. We therefore encourage the Secretary-General in his work to develop a system-wide action plan to

achieving this end and delivering as "One-UN" for the realization of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.