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Third Committee  
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H.E. Mrs. Tine Mørch Smith  
Ambassador  
Deputy Permanent Representative

Joint Statement of behalf of the Nordic countries

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Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark with Greenland and my own country Norway.

The Nordic countries are firm supporters of the rights of indigenous peoples as an integral part of our efforts to promote free, democratic societies based on the rule of law and equal rights for all. We welcome 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. These mechanisms are complementary, and we find it crucial that coordination is ensured to create synergies and that duplication of work is avoided.

As this is the last opportunity to interact with the Special Rapporteur Professor James Anaya in the General Assembly, the Nordic countries wish to express their sincere gratitude to Professor Anaya for his exceptionally good work during his period as a mandate holder. We thank him for his efficient and constructive approach, personal commitment and valuable contributions. We note with appreciation the focus the Special Rapporteur has held on promoting and sharing of good practices as examples of inspiration for States, and his support to legislative work at country level.

(Check against delivery)

In this year's report to the General Assembly (A/68/317) a general overview lists several thematic and country specific reports as well as communications that have been presented during his term as the Special Rapporteur.

The list is indeed impressive. This is at the same time an important reminder that over the years a large number of important studies and reports have been produced not only by the Special Rapporteur, but also by the expert members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These studies and reports, which together constitute a substantial body of relevant topics regarding different aspects of promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, contain relevant recommendations to States and other stakeholders. They must not be forgotten but should be used for the benefit of all stakeholders.

To mention but a few relevant topics: The duty of States to consult with and obtain the consent of indigenous peoples before adopting measures that affect them; the responsibility of corporations to respect the rights of indigenous peoples; violence against indigenous women and girls; and the rights of indigenous peoples to education; language and culture; the indigenous peoples rights to participate in decision-making; aspects on the implementation of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and indigenous peoples' access to justice.

We have also followed with great interest, and welcomed the last three annual reports by the Special Rapporteur dedicated to the study on aspects of extractive industries and indigenous peoples. We want to express our appreciation for the good example the Special Rapporteur has shown in building his thematic work in a logical and consequent way. By focusing on this important and complicated topic over several years he has brought in new aspects and given us important recommendations.

Mr Chairperson,

The Nordic countries welcome the preparatory process for the upcoming World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, and note with appreciation the work by the indigenous peoples in this process so far. We believe that the World Conference presents an important opportunity to bring indigenous peoples' rights to the attention of the international community and to generate the needed political will. It is our hope that the World Conference will result in an ambitious outcome document that would translate the international commitment to respect, promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples into substantive and concrete action, in accordance with the Declaration.

In the first phase of the preparatory process, leading up to the modality resolution last September, we benefitted from the competence and experience of an indigenous representative to assist in and facilitate the process, Mr John Henriksen from the Norwegian Sami Parliament, together with a government representative, Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba from Mexico. We valued this innovative approach and strongly encourage the continuation of the preparatory process the coming year along this constructive path.

We would like to stress that the full and effective participation and consultation of indigenous peoples through all stages of the World Conference including in the development of the outcome document is imperative to the success of the conference.

We thus welcome the indigenous peoples' active contribution to the preparation process of the World Conference, and the Alta outcome document as an important input into this. For this reason we have been supportive to the process of giving the Alta outcome document a formal UN status. The Alta outcome document is also an important document when considering the specific themes for the round tables and interactive panel for the World Conference. Generally, we are supportive that the Alta outcome document be taken into account in the preparation of the outcome document of the World Conference.

As regards the development theme in the Alta outcome document, both States and indigenous peoples will have to engage with the sustainable development goals and the Post 2015 development agenda processes in order to improve the situation for indigenous peoples globally.

To achieve results we need to work side by side with indigenous peoples. The Nordic countries remain strongly committed to improving the lives and enhancing the rights of indigenous peoples not only in our own countries, but world-wide by promoting the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and by continuing our support to the mandates and mechanisms set in place in the UN system to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Mr Chairperson,

Looking beyond the modalities for the World Conference, we find it important that appropriate permanent measures are adopted to ensure that indigenous peoples' representatives are able to participate at the United Nations as observers on issues that affect them.

On behalf of the Nordic countries, I would therefore again like to express our appreciation of the report prepared by the Secretary General last year on ways and means of promoting participation at the United Nations of indigenous peoples' representatives on issues affecting them (A/HRC/21/24).

Last year, the General Assembly agreed to continue at its 69th session its consideration of the ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations based on this report. We reiterate our commitment to seek appropriate measures to meet this goal. In this regard we also take note of the indigenous peoples' recommendation in the Alta outcome document, which refers to the issue of observer status.

Mr Chairperson,

The Nordic countries are among the most active donors to the UN-system regarding support to indigenous peoples' issues. Our contributions choose several channels like earmarking funds through the OHCHR, the UN Trust Fund, the UNIPP, the UN voluntary fund for indigenous peoples, and through various civil society organizations to mention but a few. We encourage other Member States to also increase their financial support to the different initiatives to improve the situation for the indigenous peoples world-wide, and empower indigenous peoples' to take part in UN processes that affect them. This includes participation in the preparatory process for, and the possibility to attend, the World Conference next year.

In conclusion, the Nordic countries reiterate our appreciation and support for the work done by States, regional organizations and the different UN Mechanisms in advancing indigenous peoples' rights, and look forward to participate in the process the coming year leading up to a successful World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.