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## **STATEMENT**

**On behalf of the European Union**

**by**

**Ms. Charlotta Schlyter**

**Counsellor**

**Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations**

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Third Committee**

**Item 66: Indigenous issues**

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**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

During the past two decades, the international community has gradually taken concrete steps to bring attention to the situation of the worlds indigenous peoples.

Lengthy negotiations among States and representatives of indigenous peoples have borne fruit in the form of a number of outcomes we can all be proud of. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has been operational since 2002. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted just over two years ago in this room. The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has started its work in the framework of the Human Rights Council, aimed at providing concrete advise to the Council on ways and means of better promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Finally, the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people has continued to be renewed. Earlier today we had the privilege of hearing from the current mandate holder, Professor James Anaya.

However, much as this progress is welcome, there is little reason for complacency. The situation of indigenous peoples is dire in a number of countries in the world. Many indigenous peoples live in poverty. Indigenous peoples are often marginalized. They are often victims of discrimination, as well as racism and related intolerance.

As we approach the Copenhagen summit on climate change, we must recall that many indigenous peoples are severely affected by such changes. Climate change is affecting traditional lifestyles and cultures of indigenous peoples, making it one of many factors which threaten the very survival of many indigenous peoples.

Many steps still need to be taken by States in order to improve the situation of indigenous peoples in their respective countries. This is the case also with regard to the indigenous peoples in the Northern part of Europe. The aforementioned Declaration has important potential to influence national policy related to indigenous peoples by serving as a tool for dialogue. However, in order for it to do so, it must reach the communities concerned. As noted by Professor Anaya in his report, Governments play a key role in ensuring that different actors are aware of the Declaration and understand its provisions. The European Union encourages all States to facilitate the implementation of the Declaration, inter alia by translating it into the languages of indigenous peoples in their respective countries.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.