**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee)
Virtual day of general discussion**

**Human Rights Council of Greenland**

**Intervention for Part 2: “Effective participation, consultation and consent of indigenous women and girls in political and public life”**

Honorable members of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, honorable keynote speakers, state representatives, NGO and NHRI representatives and others.

Thank you for this opportunity to give an intervention on this important topic. My name is Sara Olsvig and I represent the Human Rights Council of Greenland, of which I am the chairperson until November this year.

The Human Rights Council of Greenland was established by law in 2012. Our main task is to guide and advise the NHRI of Denmark, which also covers Greenland, and to develop and strengthen the Human Rights work in Greenland by ensuring capacity building and information. We are also mandated to provide guidance to the Government and Parliament of Greenland, and we do so by publishing status reports and fact sheets on issues we find important, most often together with the NHRI of Denmark. Our latest reports are on the right to housing and the right to education, while we are currently working on a status report on health, including mental health.

We seek to directly take part in the UN human rights review processes, and for the Ninth periodic review of Denmark, Greenland, Faroe Islands of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, we together with the NHRI of Denmark submitted a parallel report and independently presented an oral intervention at the virtual session.

I am informing you of this to give insight to how we, as a Human Rights Council in an autonomous nation, strive to give Greenland a human rights voice directly in the UN.

We work closely with the NHRI of Denmark, but we also wish for the Greenlandic institutions, including our Council and secretariat, to be strengthened, as we see an important and big task in promoting and protecting human rights nationally in Greenland, in our indigenous language Kalaallisut and in a manner, that is culturally and practically appropriate for our nation. Unfortunately, the Council and its secretariat is underfunded, and we as members work voluntarily.

We have chosen to focus this intervention on Part 2: “Effective participation, consultation and consent of indigenous women and girls in political and public life”. In Greenland, general and municipal elections were held on April 6 this year, and from the Human Rights Council of Greenland we raised our concern of the low number of women running for public offices. Both for the municipal councils and for the parliament, only approximately 30 % of the candidates were women, which was also reflected in the election results.

We note that women’s participation in politics and public offices internationally lies within those numbers, as 25 % is the global average in national assemblies and 36 % in local governing bodies are women. Still, we wish to see further gender equality in Greenland politics, not only for the gender equality itself, but to ensure diversity in leadership, which we believe can lead to more inclusive decision-making processes and thereby sound decisions for the benefit of the people and society as a collective.

In our intervention for the periodic review, we mentioned a case from 2020, when #metoo reached Greenland, and 10 women working within politics reported sexual harassment and sexism on the workplace. We find this case is an extremely important example of how conditions can be for women in leadership and in politics. We are worried, that the case is unfortunately not the only case. There is a need for further focus on gender equality, prevention of sexism and harassment in public offices, and the environment around politics. We recommended, that the Government of Greenland provide analyses and funding for research studies on discrimination against women in politics and other decision-making positions, and we are pleased to see, that this is mentioned in the concluding observations of the CEDAW.

We also note, that within the business sector in Greenland, cases of sexual harassment of women have been exposed. We again wish to praise the women, who step forward and speak up about this discrimination. We are convinced, that parts of the gender inequality we see in, for example, political leadership and leading positions in businesses in Greenland, relate to the predominant view of women in our society, among both men and women.

Formally, the Parliament of Greenland have passed legislation to ensure gender equality among board members of government owned companies and legislation which prohibits gender-based discrimination on the labor market. These legislative measures are important to take us some of the way, but we unfortunately still see, that actual gender equality on these areas have not been reached – in spite the fact, that women make up the vast majority of people in Greenland who finalize higher educations. We thus further recommend that legislative measures on protection against discrimination on all generally recognized grounds, including establishing an independent appeals board is introduced, while the Government of Greenland applies measures to further balance the gender distribution in politics.

We also would like to reiterate the importance of promoting gender equality and women’s participation in society in general, as legislative measures should be followed up by action and initiatives to change the general attitudes.

Ladies and gentlemen. We struggle as a society with large numbers of sexual abuse and violence against women – just as we see in many other Indigenous communities and nations. Greenland has a wide degree of self-determination, and we find, that the right of self-determination must go hand in hand with ensuring as safe society for all genders.

Inuit and Kalaallit do not have a history of being war faring peoples. But if half of the population live at risk of unsafe lives, with discrimination based on their gender, we are not at peace.

From the Human Rights Council of Greenland, we call for a strong focus on gender equality among Indigenous Peoples, a strong focus on women’s participation and gender diversity in leadership and for sharing knowledge about human rights approaches to deal with these issues among Indigenous Peoples around the World.

We support the written statement submitted by the NHRI of Denmark, and we look forward to hopefully welcome the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Greenland and can inform, that Greenland is now open for travelers from abroad.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity to show our support to all Indigenous women and human rights defenders around the World that live under threats and violence.

We stand in solidarity with you.

Qujanaq, thank you again for this opportunity to speak.