

## **25<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

### **Item 3: Discussion on the theme “Ensuring Indigenous Peoples’ health, including in the context of conflict”**

**April 21, 2026**

Thank you Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark together with Greenland, and my own country Norway.

Across the world, also in non-conflict situations, Indigenous Peoples face public-health challenges. The challenges are often shaped by historical injustices, marginalisation, and unequal access to services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. At the same time, Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and traditions remain vital sources of resilience, community cohesion, and health.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states Indigenous Peoples’ right to non-discriminatory access to health services. Yet, across the Nordic countries, limited access to health professionals with Indigenous Peoples’ language skills and cultural competence remains a challenge. Strengthening such competence in health education and services is therefore essential to ensure equitable and non-discriminatory care for Indigenous Peoples.

In the Nordic countries, concrete steps have been taken to respond to this challenge. Notably, in Norway we have established a dedicated Sami nursing education that integrates language and cultural knowledge into professional training. In Finland, the Sámi psychosocial support unit *Uvja* offers low-threshold mental health services in Sámi language and in accordance with the Sámi culture. Furthermore, The Swedish Sami Parliament has commissioned a research group to conduct a public health survey among Sami people in Sweden, focusing on health, living conditions, and the use of health care services.

The use and development of digital health technologies that support Indigenous Peoples languages has the potential to strengthen access to health information, support communication with medical services, and help ensure that persons are met in the language of their heart and identity. For example, high-quality and accessible interpretation services remain crucial to ensuring equal access to care.

The Nordic countries continue our work to ensure rights-based, just and inclusive access to health services for Indigenous Peoples, both at home and abroad.

Thank you for your attention.