**Opening Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greenland**

**Mr. Pele Broberg**

**(video recorded)**

**The Kingdom of Denmark’s Universal Periodic Review**

**6 May 2021**

Madame President, distinguished delegates of Members of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

It is a great honour for me to address you at the opening of this important universal periodic review of the Kingdom of Denmark, on behalf of the Government of Greenland.

Greenland as a self-governing nation, consists of a population of 56.000 persons, spanning an enormous territory which makes up the entire island of Greenland – or Kalaallit Nunaat – as is the proper name in our own language, is deeply committed to human rights and fundamental freedoms, including that of equality and non-discrimination.

Despite, the tiny size of our population by global standards, we do have issues regarding the full enjoyment of human rights by all. Some of these issues are related to the challenges of ensuring equal and affective access to services and even development outcomes in more than the 70 towns, villages and hamlets across which our people are spread. Due to our geography, none of these are connected by roads or railroads and can therefore only be connected by sea, including by sea ice in the winter, or by airplanes and helicopters. So, Greenland is, in terms of demography and infrastructure, an archipelago spanning an enormous territory.

During the COVID-19, our otherwise challenging geo-demography has been an advantage. Greenland has only seen 32 cases of COVID-19 over the course of the pandemic with no fatalities. This is due to the tight control of arrivals into Greenland from abroad, primarily from Denmark, allowing only essential travels. In addition, other COVID-19 related measures have been taken, all of which are temporary and based on law with the sole objective of protecting public health. The Government is monitoring closely the development of the pandemic with a view to ensure the relevance and legitimacy of the measures. The pandemic has also had socio-economic impacts, which has led the government to initiate support packages for the most vulnerable people in society as well as to businesses to prevent the lay-off of employees.

Madame President let me turn to the core of the dialogue today and where I will focus on two issues: Non-discrimination and child abuse and neglect.

The Danish Human Rights Institute together with the Greenland Council on Human Rights have recommended that Greenland takes legislative measures to ensure protection against discrimination on any grounds, including by establishing an independent appeals board.

Let me underline that the Constitution of the Danish Kingdom guarantees all citizens in Greenland protection against discrimination on any grounds. In addition, we have legislation on the prohibition of racial discrimination, the equality of men and women and the Act on Support for Persons with Disabilities of 2020.

As regard, the non-discrimination based on gender, the Council of Gender Equality as an independent organisation may investigate conditions related to gender equality either on request or on its own initiative. In addition, individuals who experience discrimination related to all grounds, including gender, race or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion have the right and option to initiate court proceedings.

Regarding the discrimination in actions or decision by public authorities, a complaint can also be launched with the Greenland Parliamentary Ombudsman.

Regarding child neglect and abuse, the Convention on the Rights of Child provides the foundation and guidance for combatting violence against children and for the prevention of neglect.

Three action plans are directed at children: The national action plan against parental neglect of children 2020-2030”, “Inuuneritta III – The National Strategy on Cooperation for the Good Child Life 2020-2030” and the Greenlandic-Danish cross-sectoral cooperation on strengthened efforts for vulnerable children and youth in Greenland, 2020-2023. These plans are of high political priority for ensuring greater well-being of families, and the reduction of child neglect.

The three action plans complement each other and are in some cases integrated into each other. In the period 2020-2023, funds have been set aside for all 16 initiatives of the Greenlandic-Danish cross-sectoral cooperation. Therefore, these initiatives are prioritized and being implemented in the period 2020-2023. From 2024 until 2030 work will continue in the implementation the initiatives from Inuuneritta III and The National Action Plan Against Parental Neglect of Children.

All the above-mentioned initiatives and action plans are now being dramatically invigorated following the arrival of my government that was sworn in only a couple of weeks ago on April 23. My government puts the utmost priority on securing equality and welfare for all, including through massive efforts to enhance the welfare of children and youth.

As a reflection of this commitment my government has established a separate government ministry for Children, Youth and Family. The purpose of establishing a dedicated ministry is to ensure coordination of knowledge and evidence related to the situation of children, youth and families, including through cooperation with the Children’s Spokesperson. All of which has the end objective of fulfilling the rights of the child as enshrined in Convention on the Rights of the Child. Finally, the well-being and the enjoyment of rights by persons with disabilities, older persons and the homeless are among other expressed priorities of my government.

Madame President, It’s with this hopeful background, that Greenland welcomes and looks forward to today’s dialogue on how to enhance and ensure the protection of human rights in Greenland. Due to other obligations, I cannot stay with you all through the dialogue. So, I leave you in the competent hands of our Special adviser Ms. Tove Søvndahl Gant.

Qujanaq – thank you!