**Press release**

**Tusagassiorfinnut Nalunaarut**

Nuuk, June 5th 2020

**Parlament of Greenland approves historic National Action Plan to comply with UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**For decades it has been documented that many children in Greenland live under very difficult conditions. Greenland has major socioecomic problems, including care neglect and high levels of suicide and substance abuse. And for many years, the political response to children's problematic living conditions has been characterized by fire extinguishing, an often changing political course, inadequate coordination of cooperation between the authorities, and non-involvement of children and adults.  
Now, Inatsisartut(Greenland Parliament, ed.) has adopted an Action Plan for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.   
The politically independent Children's Spokesperson in Greenland, Aviâja Egede Lynge, calls the National Action Plan "*a historic step forward for Greenland children's living conditions*".**

Despite Greenland's signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Greenlandic legislation, compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child remains unsatisfactory:

Approximately one-fourth (1/4) of the population is children (about 14.000). Of these children 1/3 – or 27 % is estimated to be victim of some form of neglect. Furthermore, 42 % of the homes is reported to have some form of substance abuse. Children grow up with abusive parents, leaving them with lasting emotional scars with no guarantee of getting treatment or social recovery. Over 50 % of the Greenlandic youth do not continue at some form of educational institution after primary school. Furthermore, the barriers to get a higher education are not being scrutinized.

Although the awareness of children’s living conditions and rights is increasing, the political initiatives have been on firefighting practice rather than a long –term action plan. So far, the focus has been on the "tip of the iceberg" and the visible forms of neglect in the forms of violence, hunger and sexual abuse.  
Lastly, Indigenous children and youth are in particular vulnerable as they have no formal authority on their own and few channels to voice their opinion.

Children's Spokesperson Aviâja Egede Lynge praises the country's politicians for finally adopting a National Action plan for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With the upcoming National Action Plan, she is pleased that the adoption of a National Action Plan for All Children will take into account those children who have been overlooked for too long.

"*With this National Action Plan, Greenland now sets once and for all the direction that all the rights of the country's children are respected*," she estimates.

For many years, a National Action Plan has been a landmark case for the Children's Spokesperson. In addition to bringing the children's living conditions to light, the Children's Spokesperson is known for raising debate about adult taboo behavior, the authorities' lack of and slow handling of cases, and for telling directly what children and concerned adults are saying about children's living conditions.  
  
In addition to recognizing the politicians for taking action, the Children's Spokesperson will highlight the children and the population to have the courage to tell about children's living conditions in Greenland:   
*"I especially want to thank them,"* concludes Children's spokesperson Aviâja Egede Lynge.

About National Advocacy for Childrens Rights, Greenland:   
The Greenlandic spokesperson has a special mandate to monitor children's conditions and assess whether legislation and practice are in line with Greenland’s obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Act on Children's Spokesman and Children's Council was passed in 2011 and the institution works to spread awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Advocacy for Childrens Rights provides advice and guidance on children's rights and is politically independent. The task of the institution is to carry out advocacy activities for children and young people and advocate general conditions in relation to children's conditions and propose measures that strengthen children's rights.

Children & youth in Greenland – context:

* World’s largest island – least densely populated territory in the world
* Approximately 84% of the landmass is covered by the ice sheet, the population lives in the coastal areas in towns and settlements
* Lack of infrastructure - No roads exist between towns, and all travel is by ship and aircraft only.
* Politically associated with Europe (Denmark/Norway)
* Self-Government
* 56.000 people in total – a third live in the capital
* 5 municipalities – 74 cities and villages
* Approximately 88% Inuit – migrated from mainland Canada in the 13th century
* Subsistence hunters
* Fishermen
* Urbanization from the 1960’ies on
* Children: 0-17 year olds: 14.600

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