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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1552nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 February 2026

On the occasion of Sami People's Day

Mr. Chairperson,

On 6 February, the international community celebrates Sami People's Day. For our country, the celebration of this commemorative date on this day is symbolic. In the Russian Empire, the Sami Volost was established as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. It had an elected people's body, in fact their first ever parliament, the Kola Sobbar. Representatives would meet once a year on 6 February, according to the Gregorian calendar.

In Russia, the Sami people maintain their distinct way of life. This unique indigenous minority lives predominantly in the Murmansk region. There are 40 Sami communities registered in the region, whose main goals are to preserve, revive and develop their traditional way of life, culture and language and to protect the indigenous population's territory and environment. Nine of them have leased forest areas for reindeer grazing, where there are bodies of water in which traditional fishing is permitted. Five communities have fishing grounds on the White Sea and on lakes with a total area of almost 1,500 hectares.

The Russian authorities are doing everything in their power to ensure that the Sami preserve their native language and ethnic identity.

In order to create the conditions for the preservation of the Sami language, a programme of key measures is being successfully implemented in the Murmansk region as part of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages for the period 2022–2032. The study of the Sami language in the Murmansk region is organized as part of extracurricular activities in three areas where the Sami traditionally live (the villages of Lovozero, Yona and Tuloma).

As part of secondary vocational education, the Northern National College, a branch of the Olenegorsk Mining and Industrial College in the Lovozero district, trains specialists in professions closely related to the traditional economic activities of indigenous peoples.

In 2025, an additional social support measure was introduced for the Sami people of the Murmansk region. Sami people are now able to claim reimbursement for the cost of purchasing sanatorium and health

resort vouchers. Reimbursement shall cover the full or partial cost of the voucher, up to the value of 62,000 roubles (about 700 euros). This measure is aimed at improving the demographic situation among the indigenous citizens of the region, ensuring disease prevention and maintaining a high standard of health among the population that leads a traditional way of life and is engaged in traditional trades. Sami people who work in agricultural production co-operatives (reindeer farms) and/or members of communities who reside in areas where indigenous minorities traditionally live and engage in traditional economic activities, who lead a traditional way of life and who are engaged in traditional economic activities and trades, are entitled to reimbursement. Reindeer herders, fishermen and beekeepers are included in the category of recipients.

In order to promote the distinctive Sami ethnic culture, various cultural events are organized in Russia, including national holidays, festivals, exhibitions, round tables, seminars, conferences, creative events and evenings.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, the situation with regard to respect for the rights of the Sami in a number of Western countries is, to put it mildly, far from perfect. Cases of discrimination against them continue to be recorded in Scandinavia.

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health notes that the large-scale State policy of assimilation of the Sami in Norway has repercussions to this day. Sami people face violence, harassment and discrimination. And society has little understanding of the Sami language and culture.

As part of the Universal Periodic Review of Sweden in the United Nations in 2025, the Swedish Institute for Human Rights stated that people from the country's five national minorities were often subjected to racism, hate crimes and hate speech. In this regard, a recommendation was made to step up measures to combat racism, anti-Semitism, discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech, and further support the rights of national minorities. Antiziganism, Afrophobia, Islamophobia and racism against the Sami were also mentioned in this context.

The Sami Parliament in Sweden is sounding the alarm about the transition to a "green" economy, which is in direct conflict with Sami land use aimed at preserving traditional sources of livelihood. Concern has been expressed that the Government did not consult with the Sami people on the relevant draft legislation.

Questions are also being raised by human rights defenders. It has been reported that the basic rights of the Sami people, rights that are guaranteed, *inter alia*, by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are being violated in Norway, Sweden and Finland. In particular, when local authorities develop land, extract resources and introduce green technologies, the relevant consultations take place without due participation of the Sami or their representatives. The principle of free, prior and informed consent is not observed. As a result, the Sami people's traditional way of life and culture are under threat.

The situation in Finland is especially dire. According to a report published in 2025 by the Government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People, discrimination against the Sami and efforts to assimilate them were widespread in the country. This shameful practice has repercussions to this day. The Finns deliberately tried to erase the Sami identity by restricting access to their native language and culture, and their lands were confiscated.

It is noted that, owing to Finland's accession to NATO and the expansion of military activity in that regard, the Sami people's traditional homeland is under threat. The military and logistics infrastructure impinges on the Sami people's traditional way of life, primarily reindeer herding, hunting and fishing. It is claimed that Finland ignored the interests of the Sami people during its accession to the politico-military bloc. The Sami were not kept informed of developments and no consultations were held with the Sami Parliament. Such militarization will have far-reaching negative consequences.

I should like to hope that the countries I have mentioned will finally begin to address their own systemic problems, rather than trying to intimidate their own populations with the imaginary threat allegedly emanating from Russia. Using this as a smokescreen to distract their citizens from the unfavourable human rights situation at home. After all, there are more than enough unresolved issues in these countries, besides those related to the infringement of the freedoms of the Sami people.

Thank you for your attention.