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**STATEMENT BY
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE 1507th
MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 February 2025

On the occasion of Sami National Day

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, 6 February, is Sami National Day. In the Russian Federation, the Sami are an indigenous minority that lives mainly in the Murmansk region.

An administrative division for the Sami people, the Sami Volost, was established as far back as in the times of the Russian Empire in the middle of the nineteenth century. It had an elected people's body, in fact their first ever parliament, the Kola Sobbar. It met once a year on 6 February, according to the Gregorian calendar.

In Russia, the Sami live in the territories of their ancestors, maintain their unique way of life and view themselves as an independent ethnic community. The main traditional economic activities are reindeer herding, hunting and fishing.

It is worth noting that the Sami people not only set themselves apart from the rest of the population of the Murmansk region but also steadfastly preserve their native language and their ethnic identity.

According to the most recent data from the Russian census, there are 1,363 representatives of this indigenous minority group.

Over 82 per cent of Russian Sami consider Russian to be their mother tongue. More than 17 per cent of members of this ethnic group identified the Sami language as their mother tongue.

At present, the study of the Sami language in general education institutions in the Lovozero district is carried out in accordance with the wishes of parents. All applications from those wishing to study their native language are granted.

In order to preserve traditions and customs and to promote a distinctive ethnic culture, various cultural events are organized on a regular basis: national holidays, festivals, exhibitions, round tables, seminars, conferences, creative events and evenings. These include Sami National Day; an annual Sami

music festival; “Moainas lan – the Fairy Tale City”, a festival of Sami-language children’s and youth theatre productions held in Olenegorsk; Sami Word Day (22 May); International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (9 August); the Northern Festival; Reindeer Herder’s Day, and traditional summer and autumn Sami games.

Every year, a delegation from this indigenous minority takes part in the “Treasures of the North” international exhibition and fair, which is held in Moscow.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, cases of discrimination against the Sami are increasingly being recorded in Western countries.

For example, in its study for the period 2014–2024, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health states 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. A similar unacceptable situation exists in Sweden and Finland. Furthermore, the societies in those countries have little understanding of the Sami language and culture.

Even biased Western organizations are sounding the alarm when it comes to respect for Sami rights. In Amnesty International’s January 2025 report, entitled “Just Transition or ‘Green Colonialism’?”, it is stated that the basic rights of the Sami people, 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.

We should like to hope that the situation will be rectified by the aforementioned Scandinavian countries, which claim to be leaders when it comes to the protection of human rights. It seems the time has come to be concerned about the situation regarding the protection of freedom at home.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize once again that the Sami people have a very unique culture. Everything possible should be done to preserve their language, culture and traditions.

We congratulate all Sami people on their national day.

Thank you for your attention.