



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE SAMI PEOPLE'S DAY 6 FEBRUARY

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henrik Malvik at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 9 February 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the Sami People's Day. The Sami people is the indigenous people, mainly inhabiting the Arctic area called Sápmi, which today encompasses parts of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia.

February 6<sup>th</sup> marks the first Sami national congress, held in Norway in 1917. The Sami People's Day is a celebration, but it is also an occasion to remind ourselves of the injustices of the past. Injustices we must ensure that are never repeated.

Mr. Chair,

Norway has sought to ensure that indigenous peoples can take part in decision-making processes. The Sami parliament was established in 1987. In 1988, the Sami people of Norway was granted a constitutional right to develop its language, culture, and society.

Dialogue and consultations between the Sami people and state authorities are key to mutual knowledge and understanding. In 2005, Norway formalized the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making processes through an agreement on Procedures for Consultations between State Authorities and the Sami Parliament.

The Sami Parliament and Sami organizations have been working actively in raising awareness and attention about the Sami People. Through this work they have also played a crucial role in improving the living conditions for the Sami people. In recent history the Norwegian Government has supported these efforts by means of favorable framework conditions, but the significance of the work done by Sami civil society organizations cannot be underestimated.

However, there are still challenging issues between Norwegian authorities, private enterprises, and Sami interests, not least related to economic and environmental

developments in regions considered crucial for reindeer husbandry and other traditional areas. ILO Convention No 169, the ICCPR and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples give guidance to the Norwegian government and legal system.

The Norwegian Parliament has established a truth and reconciliation commission to examine the assimilation policy the Sami were subjected to in our country. A report from this work is expected this summer. The Commission has revealed how the history of assimilation and its consequences up to this day are largely unknown to most Norwegians. To enter a reconciliation process means being willing to take responsibility, and to be serious about addressing the injustices that have been made. Not everything can be put right, but we can learn from history and mistakes made.

Dear Colleagues,

The nationwide celebration of the Sami People's Day helps raise the visibility of Sami culture and languages across Norway and contributes to increased awareness among the public. In doing so, it aids our efforts to strengthen our indigenous culture and languages. Today it is also true to say that the celebration of the Sami People's Day embraces tolerance and advocates against discrimination.

So, by way of concluding, let us recall that the OSCE has a toolbox which can assist us as participating States in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We encourage all states to make use of this, and fight prejudices wherever they appear.

Thank you