



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF  
SAMI PEOPLE'S DAY 6 FEBRUARY**

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 10 February 2022

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**On the occasion of the Sami People's Day 6 February**

Last weekend we celebrated the Sami People's Day. The Sami people are 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. I use this opportunity to also congratulate Swedish, Russian and Finnish colleagues.

The Sami Council, consisting of Sami organizations from these four states agreed on February 6<sup>th</sup> as national day in 1992. This date marks the first Sami international meeting, held in Norway in 1917. The meeting came partly as a result of increasing Sami opposition against the policy of assimilation introduced by the Norwegian government towards the end of the 19th century.

The Norwegian Parliament has established a commission to examine the assimilation policy and its consequences. The commission's mandate and composition were determined in close consultation with the Sami parliament and relevant minority organizations, and its report is expected next year.

The Norwegian Sami Act of 1987 codified rights for the Sami People, including the establishment of the Sami parliament. In 1988, the Sami people was granted a constitutional right to develop its language, culture, and society.

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Norway seeks to ensure that indigenous peoples can take part in decision-making processes that affect them. As of last year, all levels of government must consult with the Sami in all matters of concern to them. These consultations shall ensure that Sami interests are heard throughout any process and that Sami are given real possibility to influence decisions. The consultation process is something Norway is committed to through ICCPR and ILO- convention 169.

There has been a positive development in the use of the Sami languages, of which there are several. They are more visible, and language education is becoming better. In 2021, the Norwegian Parliament also decided on official Sami names for the Kingdom of Norway. Despite this, the Sami languages are still endangered.

This year, the UN launched the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Norway is member of its steering committee. Meaningful participation by indigenous peoples both nationally and internationally is crucial to saving and strengthening their languages. Indigenous peoples' languages must be alive and in active use on all arenas alongside the majority language. Modern language technology is an important element. Partnerships between technologists, policy makers and language users are central to secure the indigenous peoples' languages a place in our future society.

Mr. Chair,

On Sunday, the Sami People's Day was celebrated all over Norway with Sami national costumes, cuisine, and music. Public broadcasting and media published films, programs and articles about the Sami culture and history. The Mayor of Oslo opened the city hall for celebration, as is tradition.

The increasing attention we have seen over the last few years shows that respect for and interest in Sami language and culture is growing. But this increased interest has not happened by coincidence. The Sami Parliament and Sami organizations have played a crucial role, and the government has supported the efforts by means of favorable framework conditions.

The Sami are one of many indigenous peoples in the OSCE area. Today, the Sami People's Day is a celebration. But it is also an occasion to remind ourselves of the injustices of the past. We must ensure that they are never repeated.

Let this occasion encourage us to use our organization to promote tolerance and non-discrimination, and fight prejudices wherever we may find them.

Thank you