**STATEMENT**

**UPR47
Review of Norway**

**4 November 2024**

 **Statement delivered by Director General Bjørn Olav Megard, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development**

*Check against delivery*

Thank you, chair,

We thank Germany and the UK for their question(s)

about actions taken to protect the Sami and national minorities,

in light of the consequences of past assimilation policies,

giving us the opportunity to address these important issues.

The Sami are recognised as the indigenous people in Norway,

while the Kven – also known as Norwegian Finns –

Forest Finns,

Jews,

Roma

and the Romani people – also known as Tater –

are recognised as national minorities.

Our current policies for these groups,

over the last decades,

seek to rebuild culture and languages

that were weakened during the assimilation policies,

primarily from the middle of 19th to the middle of the 20th century.

The Norwegian government has apologised

for the injustices committed

and endeavours to compensate for their impact.

Strengthening the education, for the society-at-large,

on the rights and the history of the Sami, the indigenous people,

and the national minorities

has also been key.

Consideration of report from Truth and Reconciliation Commission, referenced by the state secretary, will be concluded by the parliament next week.

We expect the parliament to emphasise

the need for strengthened, active measures

for the Sami and Kven languages,

from kindergarten, throughout the school system,

and for adult learners.

It is not just an issue of funding,

but of having staff with the right competencies, in the right place.

We also expect the Parliament to task the government

with further efforts raising awareness of and knowledge

among public sector employees

of the rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities,

and of their languages, culture, and traditions.

Chairperson,

To strengthen the national minorities

and enable them to participate effectively

in matters that particularly affect them,

the government provides operating grants to their organisations.

The grant scheme also provides project grants

for reinforcing the language, culture, and identity

of the national minorities.

The national minority organisations participate

in the annual Contact Forum

between the national minorities and state authorities,

and annual meetings with each organisation.

In addition, ministries and directorates initiate dialogue meetings

with national minorities, whenever relevant.

We strongly encourage the participation

of young representatives of the national minorities

in these meetings.

To facilitate this goal,

we organise annual gatherings

with young representatives from the national minorities.

Chairperson,

Over the last decades, Norway has maintained

a comprehensive, forward-leaning policy for the Sami indigenous people.

It is implemented through action plans,

budgetary means,

and an extensive legal framework.

The Sami are recognised and protected

in the Norwegian Constitution

and in the Sami Act

in accordance with the ILO-convention 169 on indigenous peoples

and the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, there is specific legislation on matters such as

land rights, natural resources, education, and geographical names.

[**IF** questions regarding action plan for implementation UNDRP:

When the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples

was adopted in 2007, the Government of Norway found

that the legislation and Sami policy

was already in line with the declaration,

except, possibly, one or two ongoing issues

then already under implementation

under the ILO-convention 169 on indigenous peoples.

This assessment has not changed,

and therefore, an action plan does not appear

to be a reasonable or appropriate.]

Chairperson,

The Sámediggi – the Sami parliament –

is the representative, elected, political body

for the Sami.

Many of the practical measures

for strengthening Sami culture, languages and way of life

are run by the Sami parliament itself.

Norway has recognised that the Sami, as an indigenous people

have a right to self-determination.

This occurs primarily through the Sami parliament,

regarding their internal affairs

and in voicing their policies and political positions.

Maybe equally important,

the Sami must be ensured real and effective participation

in matters affecting them.

This is carried out through consultations

between the national, regional, and municipal authorities

and the Sámediggi and Sami rights holders.

In the consultations,

the aim of the authorities must be, by law,

to pursue agreement or consent.

In addition, *free, prior, and informed consent*

is considered a legal requirement in certain land use matters,

in cases where lack of consent would mean

breach of the threshold under article 27 of the ICCPR.

This was confirmed by the Supreme Court

in the Fosen-case in 2021.

Rules for consultations

have been in place by agreement since 2005

and were codified in the Sami Act in 2021.

The provisions in the law tracks closely

with the requirements in ILO Convention No. 169,

and the UNDRIP.

Finally, in 2024 a bill entered into force

that applied new statutory provisions

for the use of Sami languages,

with different rules in the different categories of municipalities, according to their particular circumstances.

The new rules will make it easier for more municipalities

to strengthen Sami languages

and encourage strengthening the Sami languages

in a wider area.

[If questions on antisemittism:

With regards the recommendation / question from …,

it is true that Since October 7th

we have witnessed an increase in antisemitism

and fear among Jewish people in Europe,

and unfortunately, also in Norway.

Antisemitism is never acceptable.

Norway has active government action plans

against antisemitism

since 2016.

We will launch our third action plan next week.

The plan includes efforts within education

and procedures to identify and investigate antisemitic hate crime.

Thank you, and I pass the floor back to the chair

for facilitating further recommendations.