

Good afternoon. Madam Chairperson, thank you for giving me the floor to speak.  
My name is Gavrilova Natalia.

I am the leader of the Murmansk Regional Autonomy representing a numerically small indigenous people, the Sami.

On the territory of Russia there are around 1800 Sami people. Officially, the Sami are recognized as a numerically small indigenous people of Murmansk Oblast. Their population is 0.6 % of the number of the inhabitants in this region. This territory is rich in natural resources. Historically, Murmansk Oblast is the territory traditionally inhabited by the Sami people though nowadays the regional authorities have several times downsized this territory.

Today we are speaking about women. As part of a big country we are facing the same issues like any other woman in our country.

But we are also confronted with issues intrinsic to the women belonging to numerically small peoples related to their aspiration to preserve their identity, preserve their culture.

The woman is the primary carrier of culture for a child. Today Sami women are displaying the most activity. Industry and tourism step more and more on the territory historically inhabited by the Sami people. This may lead to assimilation and extinction of our people.

Children are studying the Sami language only at the elementary school 2 hours weekly; the problem related to the use of the territory for traditional occupation such as reindeer grazing, fishing, hunting for subsistence; two thirds of the Sami did not get a quota for fishing, the use of styled culture in tourism that leads to the distortion of our culture; there are problems related to the health care system on account of the remoteness of the area; there are problems in the labour market; female alcoholism.

I want to note that in Russia at the federal level there are four laws protecting numerically small indigenous peoples and also women's interests.

The Article 69 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation safeguards the rights of numerically small indigenous peoples in compliance with universally acknowledged principles and norms of international law and international covenants of the Russian Federation. Russia also ratified the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities.

The federal budget has an item for financing the needs of indigenous peoples. Conceptions and programmes are being written but these laws do not work at the regional level. Regional bodies do not want to solve the issues, the most painful problems concerned with the indigenous population together with the indigenous population and they are not directly accountable for their actions and inaction. Financing is not used for the priorities that we need. Part of financial means is not utilized and is returned to the federal budget. Our recommendations and requests are ignored. Often we receive complicated senseless responses to our letters or we are told that our letters are lost.

International law establishes the right to participate in decision-making on issues relating to indigenous peoples.

One of the recent attempts to use this right was observed in creation of the council of authorised representatives of the people. The initiative group consisting of Sami women worked long hours on the issue of how to draw attention of the regional authorities to the problems of the Sami. In compliance with the legislature the conference of delegates representing the Sami people convened and during the session the body of the authorised representatives of the Sami people was founded. But the authorities did not recognize this body and do not accept cooperation though there is their written reply that this body can be established as affiliated to Murmansk Oblast's government.

In this respect I support the recommendation 60.62, in particular 64, 67, 70, 71. I am making the following concrete recommendations for the attention of the regional authorities:

- To establish the structure of a regional legislative body under the umbrella of which there is the department of the authorised representatives belonging to indigenous peoples with the right of independent decision-making when solving issues directly relating to the interests of indigenous population.
- To give top-priority to the Sami to use natural resources on lands of their traditional occupation.
- To begin to collaborate on equal terms with the representatives of the indigenous Sami people.

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