

**STATEMENT**  
**of the representative of the Russian Federation**  
**at the 16th Session of the UNHCR Forum on Minority Issues**  
**regarding Item 4 “Positive examples, good practices and approaches,**  
**and also room to do more”.**

**1 December 2023**

Dear Chair,

In the context of safeguarding minority rights to social inclusion and socio-economic participation, I would like to touch on the issues of the sustainable development of indigenous peoples.

There are over 190 indigenous peoples in Russia. The majority of these have developed within the borders of our state which is a “multi-ethnic” federation with a centuries-long history. It is for that reason that territorial autonomy was established as the most effective form of self-determination for peoples – subjects of the Russian Federation in the form of oblasti, krai, republics, autonomous okrugi and autonomous oblasti – to exercise authority on their lands within Russia.

Some peoples are also designated as particularly vulnerable due to their traditional way of life and small populations – 47 native minorities, numbering 315,000 people in 34 regions.

This criteria of “minority” is not an exclusionary approach, rather it is a mechanism for ensuring that peoples’ actual opportunities for development are equal by granting additional rights.

As early as 1822, the Russian Empire adopted a unique code regarding native peoples – Устав об управлении инородцев (The Charter of the Aborigines). This Charter’s six-hundred articles established all of their fundamental rights, including the right to vote, exemption from the majority of taxes and military services, a prohibition on mortgages on their land, the right to

traditional belief systems, systems of self-governance and judicature, instruction in their native languages, and targeted socio-economic support.

Thanks to such approaches, they have maintained their population, their culture, their identity, their systems of settlement and their way of life as part of the Russian state for seven centuries.

In that sense, their history is the polar opposite of those regions of the world which today censure Russian imperialism, while simultaneously failing to overcome their own colonial mindset.

As previously, the tool for ensuring the sustainable development of indigenous peoples is special constitutional status, complex legislation, targeted state support, and a wide network of specialised cultural, educational, academic and media institutions.

Through federal acts, more than 4 million square kilometres of their traditional lands, where they make up less than one per cent of the population, are subject to various legal programmes, including restrictions on industrial activities and priority access to natural resources.

As a result of such a policy, enacted by the Russian Federation, the native minorities of Russia are undergoing population growth and their languages and unique cultural heritage are protected.

Thank you for your attention.