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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1460th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 February 2024

On the occasion of Sami People's Day

Madam Chairperson,

We thank the Norwegian delegation for including this item on the agenda of today's Permanent Council meeting. On 6 February Russia also observed International Sami Day, a celebration of the traditions and history of one of the oldest peoples of the North, whose distinctive culture is an important part of the world's ethnocultural heritage.

It was on this day in 1917 that the first meeting of the Sami people of Sweden, Norway and Finland was held in Trondheim, Norway. For all the importance of this date, it carries additional meaning for the Sami people of Russia. In the Russian Empire, an administrative division for the Sami people, the Sami Volost, was established as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. It had an elected people's body, in fact their first ever parliament, the Kola Sobbar. It met once a year on 6 February, according to the Gregorian calendar. The Sami Parliament of the Kola Peninsula operates today on a permanent basis.

In Russia, the Sami people are small in number but no less important. There are just over 1,300 of them living in our country, mainly in the Murmansk region. A number of targeted programmes have been in operation there since 2005 for their socio-economic and cultural development. At the federal level, a comprehensive action plan for the implementation of the concept for the sustainable development of the indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East for the period 2016–2025 has been devised and is being successfully implemented. Support is being provided for the promotion of community-based businesses and self-employment, the preservation of traditions and customs and the improvement of living standards. Funds are being allocated to improve the infrastructure of Sami communities. Indigenous peoples have been granted various benefits, including in the areas of education and healthcare. Community organizations are given State grants to promote significant social initiatives.

In April 2023, the Sami Language Support Centre opened at the Institute of Linguistics of Murmansk Arctic State University. Russia has taken a wide-ranging approach to this issue, with the production of television and radio programmes and the publication of works of fiction. Work is under way to digitize the teaching material on Sami topics.

The village of Lovozero, which is considered the cultural capital of Russian Sami, has a Sami national cultural centre and a museum of history, culture and life of the Kola Sami, founded in 1962. Local schools offer Sami-language classes. Every year on 22 May, Sami Word Day is marked in the Murmansk region. The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and, of course, Sami People's Day are also widely observed. This year, the consolidated timetable provides for about 200 different events, including festivals, ethnic games, exhibitions and concerts, in the Murmansk region to celebrate the occasion.

We congratulate all Sami – Russian, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish – on their holiday.

Thank you for your attention.