



**UPR pre-sessions 49 Sweden**  
**21 February 2025, Geneva**  
**Statement by Mr. Eirik Larsen, Saami Council**

Thank you, and thanks to UPR Info for providing us with this opportunity.

The Saami Council is a NGO with Sámi member organizations in Finland, Russia, Norway, and Sweden. Since our founding in 1956, the Saami Council has been promoting the rights of the Sámi People and other Indigenous Peoples.

In my presentation I will focus on some of the issues from our written submission, specifically the effective implementation of international law concerning Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the principle of free, prior, and informed consent.

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Allow me to begin by thanking member states for the recommendations to Sweden in the 3rd UPR Cycle. Sweden received 21 recommendations concerning the Sámi as an Indigenous People. While only a few can be considered fully implemented or in progress, they have been valuable to the work of the Sámi Council.

Many called for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 169, yet Sweden has taken no steps in this direction, despite similar recommendations in previous UPR cycles and from treaty bodies. We urge Sweden to finally act on this matter.

Additionally, Sweden was urged to ensure the Sámi People's right to consultation and free, prior, and informed consent, particularly concerning land, water, and resource rights. Although Sweden adopted a Consultation Act in 2022, it fails to guarantee the free, prior, and informed consent and does not fully ensure meaningful participation for the Sámi.

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The Sámi People's land sustains the Sámi culture. Since our culture, traditional livelihoods, and languages are fully dependent to the land, our culture cannot survive without it. Therefore, efforts to promote Sámi languages and other cultural initiatives will be futile unless our land – the very foundation of Sámi culture – is protected. In other words, strengthening the Sámi people's rights to their own land safeguards the entirety of Sámi culture, including its languages.

Today, the Sámi People face a double burden. While climate change severely impacts Sámi lands, governments and industries justify further land encroachments, such as wind power

and mining, in the name of the green transition. Collectively, the land encroachments currently being planned pose a threat to the survival of Sámi culture.

Sweden should ensure a fair and inclusive green transition by reviewing legislation governing industrial activities in Sámi territories, such as the Mining Act.

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For this reason, our main message today is that Sweden must implement the rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law, including land rights and the free, prior and informed consent.

Sweden should ratify ILO Convention No. 169. Sweden should take steps to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Let me remind us that Sweden contributed to the adoption of the Declaration in 2007 and also endorsed the Outcome Document at the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014. Consequently, Sweden has committed to developing an Action Plan for implementing the declaration, a commitment it has unfortunately not demonstrated willingness to fulfill. The Saami Council believes that Sweden should engage in systematic efforts to ensure compliance with the declaration.

The Consultation Act, which came into force in March 2022, establishes a duty for the government and its agencies to consult the Sámi People on matters affecting them. While this represents some progress, the Sámi Council views the Act as insufficient in ensuring meaningful participation. Sámi consultation rights remain significantly limited, and a critical weakness is the absence of free, prior, and informed consent.

The draft text of the Nordic Sámi Convention was released in 2017 after challenging negotiations. Its primary goal is to support the preservation and development of Sámi culture while minimizing barriers across national borders. However, the current text fails to align with the Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. However, the Sámi Council commends Sweden's efforts in revising the draft text and urges Sweden to continue its efforts to bring the other treaty parties to the negotiation table in order to align the text with UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Finally, In 2020, the Swedish Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in the Girjas case, recognizing the Sámi reindeer herding community's exclusive rights to control hunting and fishing on their traditional lands. This decision aligns with Article 26 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirms Indigenous Peoples' rights to their lands and resources.

The current Reindeer Herding Act already acknowledges the Sámi reindeer herding communities' right to access and use land areas historically relied upon for their herding practices. However, the exclusive property rights established by the Girjas ruling provide an opportunity to bring Swedish law further in line with international standards. To fully comply with these obligations, Sweden must implement legal reforms that recognize and protect the Sámi People's territorial rights, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Sámi culture and livelihoods.

Thank you for the attention.