

Revised translation as of 20 May 2025

The English translation is unofficial, for information purposes, and if there are any deviations from the original language versions, the translation into English shall not have legal significance.

## **NORDIC SAMI CONVENTION**

The Governments of Finland, Norway, and Sweden,

noting

that the Sami, as a people and an Indigenous People living in the three states, have their own cross-border culture and social life as well as their own cross-border languages,

that the first codicil to the border treaty of 7 and 18 October 1751 (known as the Lapp Codicil) laid a foundation for cross-border cooperation and confirmed the rights of the Sami in accordance with old custom,

that the rights of the Sami are safeguarded by international human rights treaties,

that the United Nations adopted a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 and that the support expressed for the Declaration was reiterated in the outcome document of the United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014,

that on the date of signature of this Convention Norway, but neither Finland nor Sweden, has ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, adopted in 1989,

recalling

that the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises give the business sector a special responsibility to respect human rights, including Indigenous Peoples' rights, and give the states a responsibility to guide enterprises in respecting these rights,

taking as their premise

that in determining the future legal position of the Sami it is necessary to consider, in particular, that during the course of history, the Sami have not been treated as an equal people and have thus been subjected to injustice,

that the Sami have a wish, will and right to assume responsibility for developing their own future,

that the States shall take the right to self-determination of the Sami into account when fulfilling their obligations under this Convention,

that the Convention does not prevent the States from granting, considering Article 2 on the minimum rights and Article 4 on the right to self-determination of the Sami, the right to be included in the electoral roll of the Sami Parliament to other persons who identify themselves as Sami and have a close affiliation with Sami culture,

that the Sami areas in this Convention can be defined differently in the three countries and differently in respect of different issues but that this shall take place respecting the historical

and modern Sami presence and the Sami use of resources, with the objective of confirming and strengthening Sami culture, languages and social life and by virtue of the Sami right to self-determination,

that in this Convention, Sami livelihoods and Sami use of resources refer to such traditional Sami livelihoods and such traditional Sami use of resources which preserve and develop Sami culture, languages and social life and that traditional use does not prevent the introduction of new appropriate forms of livelihoods,

that reindeer husbandry, fishing and other traditional Sami uses of natural resources are of particular significance for the preservation and development of Sami culture, languages and social life,

that Sami women have a central role in the preservation and development of Sami culture, languages and social life,

recognising

that the Sami must have access to land and water as the foundation for Sami culture, languages and social life,

that Sami, in the same way as others, may have acquired both property rights and usufructuary rights, on an individual as well as on a collective basis,

that the Convention safeguards but does not alter acquired rights in Sami areas,

that the States, while respecting the customs of the Sami, have a specific responsibility to guarantee the Sami a real opportunity through the national legal system to get acquired land rights in their areas acknowledged and affirmed by a court decision,

that the States are able to ensure that the Sami partake of the value of natural resources extracted in Sami areas, with consideration given to the effect on the Sami livelihoods, culture and traditional way of life that the extraction of natural resources has had and has in Sami areas,

recognising the active role and participation of the Sami Parliaments in the negotiations, and taking into account that the Sami Parliaments of the three States have endorsed the Convention,

have agreed on the following Nordic Sami Convention.

## **Chapter I General rights of the Sami people**

### **Article 1 Purpose of the Convention**

The purpose of the Convention is to confirm and strengthen the rights of the Sami people so that the Sami can preserve, practise and develop their culture, languages and social life with as little impediment of national borders as possible.

### **Article 2 Minimum rights**

The rights safeguarded by this Convention are minimum rights. They shall not prevent any individual State from extending the rights of the Sami or from adopting more far-reaching measures, and they may not be used as a basis for limiting the rights of the Sami that follow from other legal rules or international commitments.

### **Article 3 Rights of the Sami**

The Sami are an Indigenous People of the Contracting States. The Sami shall have the right to preserve, practise and develop their culture, languages, and social life.

The States shall effectively safeguard the rights of the Sami and, if necessary, take special measures to facilitate the exercise of these rights by the Sami.

### **Article 4 Right to self-determination**

The Sami people has a right to self-determination. By virtue of this right, the Sami freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

Self-determination is exercised through self-government in internal affairs and through consultation in matters which may prove to be of particular significance to the Sami.

### **Article 5 Equality between women and men**

The States shall promote equality between Sami women and men and between Sami girls and boys. The objective is to achieve equality between Sami women and men.

When preparing matters and making decisions in areas covered by this Convention, the States shall analyse and consider the consequences of measures for Sami women and men.

The exercise of the freedoms and rights laid down in this Convention shall be safeguarded without any discrimination based on gender.

### **Article 6 Rights of Sami children**

The States shall in particular promote the right of Sami children to preserve, practise and develop, individually and together with other Sami, their culture, languages and social life.

The States shall pay special attention to the needs and rights of Sami children when fulfilling their obligations under this Convention. Sami children shall have the right to influence matters affecting them in accordance with their age and maturity. In all actions concerning Sami children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

### **Article 7 Non-discrimination**

The Sami shall be guaranteed protection against discrimination related to Sami affiliation.

The States shall take effective measures to prevent discrimination of and prejudices against the Sami as well as to promote mutual respect and understanding between the Sami and the rest of the population.

### **Article 8 Language**

In this Convention, Sami refers to all Sami languages.

### **Article 9 Customs**

The States shall show appropriate respect for Sami conceptions of law, legal traditions and customs.

When preparing legislation in areas where Sami customs may exist, the States shall examine whether such customs exist and, if so, consider whether they should be protected or otherwise considered in the legislation.

### **Article 10 Cross-border cooperation**

The States shall facilitate cross-border cooperation of the Sami and seek to abolish obstacles resulting from citizenship or residence or otherwise from the fact that the Sami are a people whose residence extends across national borders.

The States shall facilitate cross-border preservation, practising and development of culture, languages and social life of the Sami. To this end, the States shall particularly facilitate Sami engagement in cross-border economic activities and improve the possibilities of the Sami to receive education, health care and medical treatment as well as social care in another of these countries than their country of residence where this is more appropriate.

### **Article 11 Symbols**

The States shall respect the right of the Sami to decide on the use of the Sami flag and other Sami symbols and promote the visibility of Sami symbols.

## **Chapter II Right to self-determination**

### **Article 12 The Sami Parliaments**

Each Contracting State shall have a Sami Parliament which is the supreme elected body of the Sami in the country. The Sami Parliament represents the Sami people, and it shall be elected on the basis of universal right to vote among the Sami in the country.

The provisions on the elections for the Sami Parliaments shall be prescribed by law.

The Sami Parliaments shall have such responsibilities and duties so that they can effectively fulfil the Sami right to self-determination.

The duties of the Sami Parliaments shall be laid down by law. The Sami Parliaments shall autonomously decide on other issues which they want to address and on which they wish to give statements.

### **Article 13 Electoral rolls for the Sami Parliaments**

A person who identifies oneself as a Sami and

- a) has Sami as home language, or
- b) has a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent who has had Sami as home language, or
- c) has a parent who is or has been registered in the Sami Parliament's electoral roll,

shall have the right to be registered in the Sami Parliament's electoral roll in Finland, Norway or Sweden, provided that other requirements, such as age, citizenship and national registration, are fulfilled.

The Sami Parliaments may cooperate in the implementation of the above provision pursuant to national legislation.

### **Article 14 Right of the Sami Parliaments to autonomy**

The Sami Parliaments make autonomous decisions on matters for which they are responsible under national legislation, as well as on other matters with which they deal.

### **Article 15 Cooperation**

The Sami Parliaments may conclude agreements on cooperation with other Indigenous Peoples as well as with national, regional, and local entities.

### **Article 16 Joint organisations**

The States shall promote the opportunities of the Sami Parliaments to cooperate and form joint organisations. Where national legislation permits it, such joint organisations may be entrusted with public administration duties.

### **Article 17 Consultations**

When enacting legislation, making decisions, and taking other measures which may be of particular importance for the Sami, the State shall consult the Sami Parliament. The consultations shall be conducted in good faith, and the aim shall be reaching agreement with or consent from the

Sami Parliament prior to making decisions. The States shall inform the Sami Parliaments as soon as possible when they initiate work on such matters.

#### **Article 18 Consultations with other representatives of the Sami**

When enacting legislation, making decisions, and taking other measures which may be of particular importance for other Sami entities than the Sami Parliament, such as Sami villages, *siidas*, reindeer owners' associations, Skolt village meetings or other Sami organisations, the State shall, if there are reasons for it, also consult representatives of these entities.

#### **Article 19 International representation**

The States shall promote the right of the Sami Parliaments to independent representation in international organisations and meetings dealing with issues of particular significance for the Sami.

The States shall actively involve the Sami Parliaments in international contexts when issues of particular significance for the Sami are dealt with.

## **Chapter III Language and culture**

### **Article 20 Right to language and culture**

The Sami shall have the right to practise, use, develop, preserve, and pass on to future generations their languages and culture. The States shall respect, promote, and protect these rights.

### **Article 21 Use of Sami language**

The Sami shall have the right to use their personal names and have them acknowledged under national provisions.

It shall be possible to have Sami geographical names acknowledged and used in Sami areas.

The Sami shall have the right to use Sami languages in courts of law and before public authorities in Sami areas.

The States shall promote the opportunity for the Sami to use Sami languages in health care and care services in Sami areas.

The States shall facilitate the use of Sami languages outside the Sami areas.

The States shall take Sami cultural circumstances into account in the fields of health care and care services.

### **Article 22 Sami cultural heritage, Sami cultural expressions and Sami traditional knowledge**

The States shall take the Sami cultural heritage, Sami cultural expressions and Sami traditional knowledge into account in decision-making concerning Sami circumstances.

The material cultural heritage of the Sami shall be protected by law. The States shall promote the protection of the immaterial cultural heritage of the Sami. The Sami Parliament or public authorities in cooperation with the Sami Parliament, Sami museums or other Sami institutions shall be responsible for issues relating to the Sami cultural heritage.

The Sami Parliament, or museums or institutions in cooperation with the Sami Parliament, shall be responsible for managing Sami cultural heritage in the possession of the State or another public institution.

The States shall promote the repatriation and management of Sami cultural property in accordance with the third paragraph.

### **Article 23 Education**

The Sami shall have the right to education both in and through the medium of a Sami language at compulsory school or at another corresponding educational level in the Sami areas. In other geographical regions the States shall ensure that the Sami are given the opportunity of receiving education in a Sami language and promote opportunities for education through the medium of a Sami language.

The States shall take measures in the field of education to increase knowledge of and respect for the status and rights of the Sami as an Indigenous People as well as in relation to their history, languages, and culture.

The Sami Parliaments shall, in accordance with Article 17, be consulted on the development of, or within set parameters be able to develop, the content of education in Sami subjects and in relation to Sami history, culture, traditional livelihoods, and way of life.

The States may, if considered necessary, temporarily provide alternative teaching methods in areas where there are no teachers with knowledge of a Sami language and where the number of Sami pupils is low.

#### **Article 24 Research**

The States shall create good conditions for research and research cooperation which are of significance for the Sami community. In conducting such research, it is necessary to take established rules on research ethics into account and give consideration to international principles applied to research on Indigenous Peoples.

#### **Article 25 Media**

The States shall promote a wide range of Sami language media services.

Respecting the independence of the media, the States shall ensure, as far as possible, that the Sami are given the opportunity to establish and use their own media.

#### **Article 26 Cross-border cooperation**

The States shall promote cross-border cooperation in maintenance of Sami languages, in particular in the determination of language standards and terminology.

The States shall promote cross-border cooperation in issues relating to education and teaching in and through the medium of Sami languages as well as to education and teaching of Sami history, culture and languages. The States shall also promote cross-border cooperation concerning the development of teaching materials in Sami languages as well as in the history, culture and languages of the Sami.

The States shall promote cross-border cooperation relating to the documentation, protection and use of the Sami cultural heritage and Sami traditional knowledge.

The States shall encourage, as far as possible and respecting the independence of the media, cross-border cooperation between the media offering Sami language media services.



## **Chapter IV Land and water**

### **Article 27 Right to land and water**

The areas traditionally used by the Sami constitute a basis for the Sami to maintain, practise and develop their culture, languages, and social life.

In the states, the Sami has, through long-term traditional use of land and water, acquired collective or individual property rights or usufructuary rights in Sami areas.

### **Article 28 Safeguarding the rights to land and water**

The States shall take measures to ensure the Sami's right to, access to and opportunity to use the natural resources traditionally used by them in Sami areas.

The States shall ensure that there are appropriate procedures in national law which with binding effect can determine the rights of the Sami to land and water.

When assessing the existence of rights, it shall be taken into account that the use of natural resources by the Sami seldom leaves permanent traces in nature.

### **Article 29 Mutual respect**

The States shall ensure that the holders of rights and all other users of land and water areas show mutual respect for each other's interests, while taking account of the significance of the Sami use of natural resources for Sami culture, languages, and social life.

### **Article 30 Interventions in natural resources or their altered use**

When States consider taking decisions on, or permitting interventions in or alterations to the use of, natural resources in Sami areas, they shall pay particular attention to ensuring that the interventions or alterations do not cause significant harm to Sami culture, language or social life. When deciding, whether the intervention or alteration may be permitted, the States shall ensure that the accumulated impact of different measures on Sami culture, language and social life in the area concerned is taken into account.

In the case of interventions in Sami ownership or usufructuary rights, compensation shall be paid pursuant to the relevant provisions laid down in national legislation.

### **Article 31 Right of the Sami to practise their culture, languages and social life**

The Sami as an Indigenous People shall not be denied, through incursions in or altered use of natural resources, the right to practise their culture, languages, and social life.

### **Article 32 Management of natural resources**

Given that the rights of the Sami to land and water are of particular significance for the preservation of Sami culture, language and social life, the States and other parties managing State property shall, as far as possible, confer with or otherwise actively involve the Sami in matters which relate to the management of natural resources that affect the Sami and to which the requirements of Article 17 do not apply.

**Article 33 Natural and cultural environment**

The States shall promote, respecting the traditional knowledge of the Sami, the sustainable use of the natural and cultural environment in Sami areas, taking account of the particular significance of the natural and cultural environments as a foundation for Sami culture, language, and social life.

## **Chapter V Livelihoods**

### **Article 34 Sami livelihoods**

Sami livelihoods are of particular significance for the preservation, practising and development of Sami culture, language and social life.

Nature-based means of livelihood, including fishing, hunting, small-scale animal keeping and utilisation of natural resources, have long Sami traditions in different Sami areas and effects on the language, culture and traditional knowledge of the Sami as well as on housing, household economics and raw materials for *duodji* (traditional Sami handicraft) production.

The States shall promote Sami livelihoods.

The practise of livelihoods and use of natural resources shall continue to be regarded as practise of Sami culture, even as new appropriate forms of livelihoods are adopted along with general developments in society.

### **Article 35 Cultural and creative livelihoods and tourism**

Sami culture, history and natural environments serve as resources for cultural and creative livelihoods and tourism in Sami areas. The States shall promote the utilisation of these resources in a sustainable manner, respecting the Sami culture, languages, and social life.

### **Article 36 Reindeer husbandry**

Reindeer husbandry as a Sami livelihood and cultural expression is founded on custom and shall be protected by law.

The States shall promote the position and business conditions of reindeer husbandry practised by the Sami and develop cross-border cooperation.

### **Article 37 Marine resources**

In the regulation and allocation of wild marine resources in Sami sea areas, special emphasis shall be placed on the particular significance of the Sami ways of utilising these resources for Sami culture, languages, and social life.

### **Article 38 *Duodji***

Through legislation, administrative measures or economic measures, the States shall promote the possibilities for the Sami to revitalise, preserve, protect, and develop traditional skills, customs and traditional knowledge related to *duodji* as well as the conditions for practising *duodji* as a livelihood.

## **Chapter VI Implementation of the Convention**

### **Article 39 Cooperation Council of ministers and presidents of Sami Parliaments**

The ministers responsible for Sami affairs in Finland, Norway and Sweden and the presidents of the Sami Parliaments in each of the three States shall convene regularly.

This cooperation shall promote the purpose pursuant to Article 1 of this Convention. The meetings shall deal with the implementation of this Convention.

### **Article 40 Follow-up of the implementation of the Convention**

The implementation of this Convention shall be followed up by a working group associated with the Nordic Officials Committee on Sami Affairs. The working group shall consist of six members who represent the States and the Sami Parliaments. The States shall appoint one representative each, and the three Sami Parliaments shall appoint one representative each.

The follow-up of the Convention shall take place through dialogue between the three states and the three Sami Parliaments in the working group. The purpose of the dialogue is to identify challenges, to exchange experiences and information on good practices as well as to jointly seek to reach agreement on solutions that promote the purpose of the Convention.

The working group considers thematic issues as well as reports received from the Sami Parliaments and others on the realisation of the rights of the Sami according to this Convention. The working group shall be able to cooperate with different actors.

With a view to promoting the purpose of the Convention, the working group shall be able to submit proposals and reports to the Governments and Sami Parliaments of the States. If a proposal or report is not adopted unanimously, members of the working group may submit separate remarks.

The working group shall adopt its own statutes and regulates the above-mentioned activities in its statutes.

### **Article 41 Costs for the follow-up of the Convention**

The costs for the follow-up of the Convention referred to in Article 40 shall be divided equally between the three States or pursuant to a separate agreement.

## **Chapter VII Other provisions**

### **Article 42 Signature**

This Convention shall, prior to signature, be submitted to the three Sami Parliaments.

### **Article 43 Ratification and entry into force**

This Convention shall be subject to ratification.

The Convention shall enter into force thirty days after the date all the Parties have deposited their instruments of ratification with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall notify the other Parties of the deposit of the instruments of ratification and of the date of entry into force of the Convention. The Parties shall be responsible for informing the Sami Parliaments of the matter.

### **Article 44 Amendments to the Convention**

Amendments to this Convention shall be made in cooperation with the three Sami Parliaments.

An amendment to the Convention shall enter into force thirty days after the date the Parties have notified the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they have accepted the amendments.

### **Article 45 Denunciation**

A party may denounce the Convention by a notification in writing to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shall notify the other parties of the receipt of the notification and of its content. The Parties shall be responsible for informing the Sami Parliaments of the matter.

The denunciation shall only apply to the Party which submitted it and shall enter into force six months after the date the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has received the notification of denunciation.

### **Article 46 Deposit and signature of the original Convention**

The originals of this Convention shall be deposited with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shall submit certified copies of the Convention to the other Parties. The Parties shall be responsible for submitting certified copies of the Convention to the Sami Parliaments.

In witness thereof the representatives of the Parties to the Convention have signed the present Convention.

The Convention shall be made available in Sami languages.

Done at...the...day of...20-- in the Finnish, Northern Sami, Norwegian and Swedish languages.