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Lansering av rapporten *Linking the Indigenous Sami People with Regional and Rural Development in Sweden*

[Introduktion på samiska med hänvisning till United Nations Year of Indigenous Languages]

My name is Per-Olof Nutti and I am the President of the Sami Parliament in Sweden.

Firstly, I want to welcome you all to my homeland Sápmi. It is a great pleasure for me to be here and participate in this launch of the report *Linking the Indigenous Sami People with Regional and Rural Development in Sweden*. I would like to start off by **congratulating us all to have this report in our hands**. And to thank all parties who were involved and contributed to its content.

On behalf of the Sami Parliament **I especially want to extend a warm thank you** to the OECD and the Swedish Government and Ministry for Innovation and Enterprise for inviting this study to be conducted and for including us in the process. **I also want to compliment the staff of the OECD secretariat** for its transparency, cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to our views and perspectives.

We all know that historically indigenous peoples have not been allowed to sit at the table to discuss and influence decisions that concern our future. **Step by step this is changing**. Indigenous peoples are now represented within various UN procedures such as the work on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, protecting biodiversity and addressing climate change. The international recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, cultures, traditions and livelihoods is reinforcing and encouraging changes and improvements at a national level. **We strongly believe that in a Swedish context, the country case study can facilitate such improvements further.**

For the Sami Parliament, **the report and its recommendations are highly valuable.** It supports us in building our internal capacity to address necessary changes. **It is also a toolkit for the Regions** on how to include the Sami and Sami perspectives in their policies and frameworks. In addition, **it also functions as a roadmap for the Government** on what measures are required to create an enabling environment for Sami businesses and livelihoods.

The Sami people are the only indigenous people in Sweden and Europe. As such, **we welcome a report where Sami perspectives are in the center.** Where our right to self-determination and right to economic and cultural development have been the points of departure. Where our understanding of existing gaps, challenges and opportunities have guided the recommendations.

The Sami possess unique and vital knowledge that we are willing to share in order to contribute to a sustainable development and sustainable use of resources. **The Sami society, Sami culture and Sami livelihoods and trades are necessary to rural development as well as regional growth.** This report is the first one ever made in Sweden to acknowledge this. That shows how current tools, efforts, frameworks and policies could be improved to ensure our right to cultural and economic development.

The study applies a holistic approach where Sami culture and livelihoods are interlinked. It shows how current opportunities to develop and diversify Sami economy and businesses are dependent on accurate data. Dependent on adequate funding and support. Dependent on tailored policies and programs as well as acknowledgement of land tenure and other rights.

I would like to highlight a few recommendations we find especially crucial and that also echo some matters we have already brought to the government's attention.

- Improving data collection and dissemination and enhancing the role and activities of the Sami Parliament in statistics collection – **Without data on the current state of Sami businesses it will be impossible to address the obstacles and identify proper measures** – this data must be indigenous owned.

- Inclusion of Sami perspectives and participation in shaping the regional development programs. – I believe **increased cooperation on matters such as local management, infrastructure and capacity building is the road to success.**
- Enhancing Sami tourism and support the development of an umbrella organization – **This is necessary to diversify Sami businesses and interlink cultural values with economic prospects.**
- Amend EU funding requirements to better match the needs of Sami businesses. – **This in order to ensure better equality in the opportunities to receive funding and run projects.**

However, we would also like to stress that for us this report is not just about the recommendations. During the OECD mission to Sweden it became clear that there is a common goal and motivation shared by the Sami Parliament, the County Administrative Boards and the Regions in strengthening Sami inclusion in regional and rural development efforts. **It is our belief that this country case study can help translate this motivation into action.** Not the least through improving engagement with Sami society in the context of regional and rural development; **through annual dialogues, agreements and the duty to consult.**

As a first step in this direction I would like to announce that **the Sami Parliament is inviting all the Regions to a first meeting to be held in June.**

The Sami Parliament has developed a strategy on how to make the best use of the report. **We expect the Government to do the same and to take its responsibility to actively work with the report and its recommendations. We invite the government to carry out this work in close partnership with the Sami Parliament and the Sami people.**

Thank you for your attention!