13th session of the UN HRC Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Speech by the representative of the "KmnSOYUZ" organization.

Good afternoon, My name is Antonina Gorbunova. I am a Nenets by nationality, I represent the "KmnSOYUZ " organization.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted certain challenges for Indigenous Peoples, as well as the need to find effective ways to prevent the negative impact of epidemics on Indigenous Peoples.

Our meeting is a manifestation to how "digitalization" has accelerated amid the epidemic. It promotes the development of multilateral cooperation, exchange of experience and information, and the dissemination of good practices. In the recommendations of our session, it is necessary to note the importance of Indigenous Peoples' access to digital technologies.

This means access to public services, telemedicine and education in isolation. This means the possibility of promptly informing the population living in remote and hard-to-reach places. In many cases, this is a key factor.

I would like to draw attention to a joint project of the authorities and Indigenous Peoples in the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug, which is called "IT camp". This is a region where representatives of indigenous peoples make up 2.2% of the total population of the district. The region has 475 territories of traditional nature management, 109 communities of Indigenous Peoples of the North. About 5 thousand people are engaged in traditional types of economy and live in remote and inaccessible places. The project provides for the connection of reindeer herding camps to the Internet using satellite and cellular technologies. In 2019, it was planned to cover 54 territories of traditional nature use and about 830 people. By the end of this year, about 2,000 people should have access to the Internet. The Internet will also make it possible to introduce a distance learning system for the native languages of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the provision of additional education in the form of “virtual subject classrooms”.

I propose to indicate in the recommendations the need to work at the global level to eliminate the digital divide, as well as call on nation states to intensify efforts to ensure Indigenous Peoples' access to digital technologies.