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**Eleventh United Nations Conference on the
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Item 10 of the provisional agenda*

Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity

Geographical names and linguistic minorities

Submitted by Norway**

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Sami place names

I. General comments

Geographical names and linguistic minorities

A white paper on the Sami language, Hjertespråket - Forslag til lovverk, tiltak og ordninger for Samiske språk, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2016-18/id2515222/>.

Among other things, the white paper discusses the safeguarding and use of Sami geographical names. The committee refers to history, where Sami place names have been hidden, rewritten to Norwegian and removed from maps. Sami place names have strong legal protection. Both the Sami Act, the Place-Names Act and international obligations protect Sami place names.

The Committee of the white paper emphasizes the duty of public authorities to actively promote the use of Sami place names in the Sami language areas, possibly parallel to Norwegian and kven place names.

Both the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization and the Ministry of Culture have overall responsibility for securing Sami place names and ensuring that Sami name traditions and multilingual name traditions are continued in Sami language areas.

The Sami Parliament, by the sami name consultants, is responsible for the approval and spelling of sami names, and provides advice on which Sami names are used in an area and what is the proper spelling of Sami place names.

For Sami people, the use of Sami names in everyday life is important. In order for Sami languages to be preserved and having the opportunity to develop into a modern age, Sami names must be used in public relations and public institutions have official Sami names.

The committee proposes that the legislation distinguish between traditional place names, names of municipal streets, districts, residential areas, facilities and administrative areas. The names of towns and villages are, in the opinion of the committee, traditional place names in line with natural names. In the opinion of the Committee, the definition of the mode of writing in terms of traditional place names is traditional place name in line with the nature name. In the opinion of the committee, the definition of writing method in terms of traditional place names is more a professional flaw than a local policy issue. The committee proposes that the Norwegian Mapping Authority decides names of Sami towns and villages.

The Committee wishes to clarify the rules that it is possible to decide parallel multi-lingual road names, which may also have address function, and that this does not conflict with the current requirements to establish unambiguous road names.

The paper comes with suggestions for action. It suggests that the Norwegian Mapping Authority will be the decision-making organ for traditional Sami names. The committee also suggests that the order of multi-lingual place names should follow which place name is the oldest. It also suggests that the

regulations stipulate that the decision-making authority may decide multilingual road names on the same road. In addition, the paper also suggests official names of cities and counties.

These suggestions has to be discussed and looked carefully, some of these suggestions are good. The committee has also shown how the process to decide a sami place name is. It is complicated and it takes longer time than the guidelines deadlines are. This is something what the Sami Parliament of Norway will follow up. For the future the Sami people is hoping to see more Sami place names in official use.