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**Eleventh United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names**

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Item 10 of the provisional agenda\*

**Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity (including indigenous, minority and regional language names)**

**Sami place names on road signs**

Submitted by Norway\*\*

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## I. General comments

### Sami place names on road signs

In the United Nations Working Paper from the 28 Session I gave you a report that gave a insight of how the Place Name Act and the Saami Act had been active for 20 years, but their implementation was lacking on several levels. One positive development is that The Norwegian Road Commission has decided that Saami geographical names will be on existing road signs and when new road signs are being put up.

The Place Name Act, section 2, states: "The Sámi and the Finnish place names which are used by the local people shall usually be used by the authorities on maps, signs, along with the Norwegian name form" (The Place Name Act § 9). According to the Sámi Language Act Sámi and Norwegian languages are equal languages in the administration area of Sámi language (§ 1-5). The purpose of the laws are obvious, it is the implementation of the laws that is problematic.

In 2013, a report commissioned by the Ministry of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs (Samiske tall forteller 6 1/2013 ), examined an issue regarding how the rights of the Sámi language in Norway are in official use, namely in relation to the choice of language on road signs. This analysis group selected six municipalities in the administration area of Sámi language. They concluded that Sámi language and Sámi terminology are sporadic taken in use on road signs. The Road Commission lack guidelines how to follow the Sámi Act. The result of this is that Sámi place names are not used systematically on road signs. The practice of using Sámi language on road signs varies from municipality to municipality. Many Sámi road signs do exist, but there is a common problem, the lack of procedures on how to strengthen supervision and control of the use of language on road signs.

The Sami Parliament of Norway has repeatedly pointed out that the lack of implementation of the laws is causing that the Sami place names are not taken in use. There have been no sanctions if the laws have not been followed up. It is a step forward that the Norwegian Road Commission admits that they have not been following their own guidelines and the laws that says that you have to use sami place names if they are approved and used by the people.

The Norwegian Road Commission guidelines (Veidirektoratets "Tekniske bestemmelser og retningslinjer for anvendelse og utforming(skiltnormalen)) says that requirements from laws and amendments to the laws must be followed. This guideline points out that the spelling of place names shall follow the rules given by the Place Name Act. If the place name is used in the area and has a approved spelling, the Sami place name shall also be used on road signs. The Norwegian Road Commission has said that from now on they are going to follow their own guidelines and the laws and amandements that says how to use the Sami place names in public. The Norwegian Road Commission says that all places that require multilingual road signs, shall be up by April 2019.

## II. Conclusion

The Norwegian Road Commission has set a deadline April 2019, by that shall all Sami place names that are approved and used by the people been put up on road signs.