



By Øyvind Ravna, head of the GoSápmi project

Dear Finnmark Estate board members, director, former UN special rapporteur, dean, colleagues, friends.

Welcome to the conference. Great to see you all here, coming to participate in the summit of the GoSápmi project

The GoSápmi project succeeded in the competition for the Norwegian Research Council funding in the autumn of 2020. At that time, we were in the midst of a pandemic, so all physical cooperation was put on hold. In the winter of 2022, we had put most of the pandemic behind us, and were ready to physically meet, both within the project and with partners, reference group and others who might be interested in our research.

On February 24, Russia attacked Ukraine and suddenly Europe was in a war we could hardly have imagined. Although the war is terrible, cruel, and brutal, and both overshadows and challenges what we are doing at the universities, there is reason to stand firm on research into indigenous legal protection and human rights law.

Experience shows that it is in war and conflict minority and indigenous rights are most severely challenged. It is therefore with recognition of responsibility and awe I welcome you all to this conference in Lakselv today, which is a cooperation between the GoSápmi project, the Research Group of Sámi and Indigenous Law and the Finnmark Estate (FeFo).

Indigenous people's participation in the governance of land, waters and natural resources in their traditional areas is essential for the safeguarding and development of their culture and social life. It is also their self-governance and autonomy. This understanding has

prompted the international community to adopt treaties to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in such governance. These are treaties that Norway has signed up to.

Norway has subsequently worked for several decades to implement arrangements to fulfill these obligations. The Reindeer Husbandry Act, the Marine Resources Act and the Fishery Participation Act are examples of this. And the most important here is the Finnmark Act carefully, adopted to meet the Norwegian obligations in ILO Convention No. 169, which Norway, in 1990, was the first country globally to ratify.

The GoSápmi project has grown out of a desire to find out how this implementation works.

The project is, as mentioned, in part funded by the Research Council of Norway - and we are also grateful for the support the Finnmark Estate has given to the project - and which is one of the reasons for this collaboration conference here these days. The funding has contributed to the project being able to employ two PhD-candidates and two Professor II in 20 percent positions. In total, 12 people are connected to the project - and this will probably increase - especially if we also succeed in getting the plans for a Center for Sami and indigenous rights to fruition.

The project will investigate the governance of the Sámi areas in the Counties of Finnmark, Nordland and Troms, and in the Middle part of Norway, where the spotlight will be placed on legislation, implementation of international law and application of national law - and we can already reveal that we have uncovered surprisingly large differences - also in relation to public outlying areas outside the traditional Sápmi. The project will thus cover the Norwegian part of Sápmi and also the areas on the other side of the randomly drawn state borders in the traditional Sami areas.

The overall aim of the project is to analyze and investigate models for governance of land and natural resources in Sápmi – among other things, to see how international law is implemented and used in Norwegian law.

The Finnmark Estate is the largest land manager and landowner in Sápmi. We are therefore very pleased to be able to organize this conference together with the Finnmark Estate, which hopefully can lead to a fruitful co-operation and a mutual exchange of knowledge that both the project, the Sámi law research and the Finnmark Estate can benefit from.