The 13th session of the Expert Mechanism

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Regional meeting: The Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia

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Community of Indigenous Peoples Representative Speech (Tyakha, Krasnoyarsk region, Russia)

My name is Sergey Sizonenko. I represent the community of Tyakha.

Covid19 affected all countries, continents and all population groups. But if we talk about Indigenous Peoples and the pandemic, then first of all, we must speak and act with those people who lead an aboriginal lifestyle and live in remote and hard-to-reach places.

In Russia, this category of the population includes the nomadic reindeer herders of the North. We managed to preserve reindeer husbandry as a unique nomadic culture and at the same time large herd reindeer husbandry. For example, in Taimyr, only one Tyakha community (The community includes 40 people) grazes more than 10 thousand reindeer on a total pasture area of 200 thousand hectares. During grazing, reindeer herders spend long periods away from large settlements (The average distance is 250 km).

What has been done by the state and what measures have been taken?

First of all, the task of promptly informing about the epidemic and providing communication means was solved (in Yamal, reindeer herders were provided with 1,300 satellite communication devices, a free tariff for 250 minutes per year was provided for them, and the ability to call emergency response services with a zero balance).

Secondly, the work of mobile medical teams was ensured. This task began to be addressed before the pandemic. Teams of specialists have been created to provide services to the nomadic population on schedule. To do this, it is necessary to draw up medical route maps of nomads, which include information about the composition of the family, the route of movement in summer and winter, contact information of relatives living in the villages. Particular attention is paid to families with newborn children and pregnant women. In those regions where this problem was dealt with before the pandemic, the current situation was dealt with much more effectively.

Thirdly. The traditional feeding system of reindeer herding communities maintains a sustainable level of food security. However, in conditions of isolation, there is a risk of insufficient provision of goods such as fuel, ammunition for hunting, various types of technical equipment and spare parts for them. To avoid this, each region has a special life support system for the nomadic population.

Of course, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should summarize best practices for responding to the COVID-19 situation. This will make it possible to prepare for such emergencies, analyze the impact of COVID on Indigenous Peoples based on statistics, as well as develop recommendations for monitoring and assessing the health status of Indigenous People, and hold an expert meeting on new technologies in the field of healthcare in hard-to-reach areas.