

B09-P01

THE NORTHERN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND CO-MANAGEMENT OF THE RUSSIAN ARCTIC TERRITORIES IN THE PERIOD OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

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The majority of indigenous peoples in Russia live in the northern areas with severe climatic and geographical conditions. They are a unique source of traditional knowledge about environment and sustainable development as they have responded to major climatic and environmental changes by altering group sizes, relocating, and being flexible with seasonal cycles in hunting or employment. Northern indigenous peoples possess a unique historically assimilated knowledge of the Arctic landscapes, traditional values and culture.

On the other hand, the Arctic is one of the main resource-rich regions on the planet, and economic activities in the northern territories are on the rise in all Arctic countries. The economic policy of Russia in the new century focuses on exploration of mineral resources and industrial development of the Arctic territories.

The traditional lifestyle and occupations of the northern indigenous peoples have been endangered due to climate change and industrial development. It has become obvious that northern indigenous peoples in Russia as well as in other Arctic countries are now interested not only in the compensation of loss and environmental harm, they not only demand protection of their rights and interests from the government. They want to be involved in the decision-making and management of their territories and resources. Moreover they strive for cooperation with the government and industries.

A new form of cooperation has been developing in the northern countries called “co-management of the territories of traditional lifestyle and occupations”. Co-management can be defined as a partnership between two or more parties, one of which is usually the state.ⁱ

Thus, the objective of Russia is to create a comprehensive and reasonable approach to maintaining a balance between the extensive industrial development of the Arctic and sustainable development of the northern indigenous peoples. The approach should be mostly based on co-management. The certain steps should be followed:

- To ratify two international documents: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention # 169 and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to implement international norms on co-management into national legislation
- To change national laws on indigenous peoples guarantying their representation in the federal, regional and local authorities and joint decision-making
- To establish the legal framework for the conferences and discussions between all stake-holders before starting development projects
- To involve indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic into international cooperation in the area of co-management.

ⁱ http://npa-arctic.iwlearn.org/publications/co_management.pdf