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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 August 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

Situation of the indigenous peoples in the Arctic, Siberian and the Far East Regions in the Russian Federation

Indigenous Peoples in Russia's Arctic, Siberia and the Far East struggle for their survival as distinct peoples. Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic together with fast growing development of extractive industries in their territory increase the risk for their survival significantly.

With a growing market for electric cars and other electronic items the need for batteries and battery packs is rapidly growing. Raw material to build the batteries and battery packs, a.o. nickel and zinc, are extracted in indigenous territory in Russia's Arctic, Siberia and the Far East. One of the world leaders in the respective extractive industry is Nornickel, a Russian company seated in Moscow.

Aborigin Forum, an informal association of experts, activists, leaders and organizations of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation, incriminates Nornickel as main cause for environmental damage. Nornickel made international headlines end of May 2020 for causing environmental disaster on the Taymyr Peninsula and the Murmansk Oblast by spilling 21,000 tons of diesel fuel into a system of rivers in the fragile Arctic ecosystem, home of indigenous Sámi, Nentsy, Nganasan, Entsya, Dolgan and Evenki communities. They live as hunters, gatherers, reindeer herders and fishermen and depend on the rivers and lakes now polluted for fisheries and as source of drinking water for man and reindeer. This livelihood is severely threatened.

Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) is very concerned about this situation. Extractive industries should be held responsible for the consequences of their businesses on indigenous peoples' livelihood. Indigenous voices like Aborigin demand that Nornickel conducts a full and independent assessment of the environmental damage of mining for nickel and other metals in Russia's Taymyr Peninsula and Murmansk Oblast; compensates indigenous communities for the damages done to their traditional way of life; prepares and implements a plan for re-cultivating contaminated lands in the Taymyr Peninsula and Murmansk Oblast; revises its policies for engaging with indigenous peoples. New guidelines must follow the guidelines of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) with a particular focus on the right to free prior and informed consent.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the Russian Federation to:

- respect and guarantee the basic rights of all indigenous peoples in Russia's Arctic, Siberia and the Far East to have a say in decision-making about the use of their territory by extractive industries
- respect and implement the rules and regulations of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), especially the right to free prior informed consent.
- ratify and implement the ILO Convention 169
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Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the UN Human Rights Council:

- To initiate negotiations on an International Arctic-Agreement, that defines rules and regulations for extractive industries in indigenous peoples' territories in the Arctic in respect of human rights and landrights as well as indigenous peoples' right to selfdetermination
