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INTRODUCTION

The idea to prepare an expert report on small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East was born following the publication in 1999 of an independent expert report "Ways to Achieve Peace in the Northern Caucasus" by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). It got a positive response from representatives of the academe, the general public and politicians. Furthermore, it was one of the reasons why President Vladimir Putin met in February 2000 with members of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The report on the situation in the North Caucasus was developed with the assistance of the Head of the Peacekeeping Mission in the North Caucasus A. I. Lebed. When this well-known Russian politician (who died prematurely) was elected Governor of the Krasnoyarsk Region, he was asked to support a similar report, this time, on problems of northern indigenous peoples. The requested support was provided, which enabled the report's authors to carry out primary research. Due to various reasons the completion of the report was delayed for almost two years.

Initially, the idea was to assess the existing situation and prospects for the development of small-numbered northern indigenous peoples (SNIP). Instead of using the traditional approach usually found in relevant scientific literature (that is based on the assessment of the situation of individual indigenous peoples), it was decided to review the situation within the broader ethno-cultural context in Russia, taking into account international experience in resolving similar problems in the circumpolar region and other parts of the world. The following innovative approaches were used to develop the content and the structure of the research program:

1) the review was to be based on the cross-ethnic principle;

2) the research program was to include other indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (such as the Yakut, the Buryat, the Tuva, the Khakas and the Altai) who have larger populations but who are, nonetheless, as autochthonous as the small-numbered northern indigenous peoples and who face similar problems.

This approach was used to develop, with the assistance of experts from other relevant republics, the first drafts of the report's chapters. However, it turned out that similarity of problems alone was not enough to warrant the review of the status of "big and small" ethnic groups as part of the same overall analysis. Indeed, these two ethnic groups are so vastly different in terms of their problems and legal status, the traditions of academic analysis and their systems of state and political governance that the official term "small northern peoples", introduced in the 1920 and later changed to "small-numbered northern peoples", led to the creation of a special category of the population with its own specific set of problems. *Given the existing social and cultural reality, such criteria as the level of development, the demographic situation, the type of economy and the way of life have become a kind of a social niche for a differentia that is self-sufficient and self-contained in relation to the rest of the country's population.*

This "iron cage" of differentia has as its foundation the existing circumstances that are linked, in most cases, to social inferiority and cultural sensitivity. The very status of being "small-numbered and indigenous" becomes a kind of a barrier that stands in the way towards integration into the mainstream society. Moreover, it even hampers general

analysis. In other words, the Evenk and the Yakut are treated as different sociums that are subject to different systems of law and relevant policies are developed accordingly. This approach has been used for quite some time now, and not only in our country. It is justified to a certain extent and is probably still valid. However, there is something wrong with this approach, and this makes it fundamentally flawed in terms of sustainable development, the role and place of an individual, his or her personal strategy as a Russian citizen and a member of the Russian society. In other words, is the status of the "small-numbered indigenous peoples" a permanent status of part of Russia's population that is used to preserve their "identity", prevent their falling into oblivion and ensure their equality, or is it possible and, moreover, desirable to abandon this status when equality has been achieved or when the established demographic threshold has been exceeded and it is somewhat embarrassing to continue referring to them as being "small-numbered"? The answer to this question is given in the concluding part of the report.

The return to the traditional approach based on a separate analysis of problems faced by small-numbered northern indigenous peoples has demonstrated the inadequacy of available information found in scientific reports and statistical data. In the Russian Federation they keep track of statistical information "by region, inhabited by small-numbered northern indigenous peoples". This is why there is no specific data available on small-numbered peoples themselves. For example, what is the value of such general statistics on the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District if representatives of small-numbered northern indigenous peoples who live there account for only 2% of the District's total population? The information base of the report was improved somewhat, since it makes use of the results of ethnographic field research carried out in recent years. However, overall, the problem of obtaining reliable data remains unresolved. Where there is no accurate and reliable information, its place is taken up by mythology, surrogate statistics and politically motivated statements. Suffice it to mention in this connection information on "dying out of peoples". Such information has been fed to the Russian society over the last decade by the State Statistics Committee, various scientists, journalists and Aboriginal activists. The "dying out" myth has been around for more than a century now and is based on the primitive notion that ethnicity continues or ceases to exist only through birth or death. This myth was cultivated in the highly politicized 1990s and, obviously, it will exist in the future. However, the truth is that, contrary to this myth, the aboriginal population is not becoming "extinct". Moreover, if one takes a look at the periods in between the last two censuses, one will see its remarkable growth, – by 16% from 1979 to 1989 and by 17% from 1989 to 2002.

The second problem has to do with the inertia of researchers' mentality and the whole issue of objective perception of existing problems. In other words, it is difficult to ensure that scientific analysis is not influenced by some obvious ideological or political considerations. Clearly, it is impossible to avoid such influences since scientists always work against the backdrop of relations between different levels of power and are subjected to ideological pressures. Still, one would expect objectivity to be always maintained in scientific research, because it is a sign of true professionalism. However, it is well known from the history of the science that we represent that ethnographers have been far from successful in this regard, particularly when they study small-numbered northern indigenous peoples.

Due to various reasons a strong trend has emerged to view and interpret the situation of the Northern aboriginal population only as something *problematic*, or, to be more precise, something *tragic*. This tradition is rooted in the beginnings of the Russian

ethnographic science, when those who studied Northern peoples in the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century wrote about the tragic situation of aboriginal people predicting the inevitable disappearance of aboriginal languages and the approaching extinction of their carriers. To some extent, this attitude was typical of the entire international (more precisely, European) science that studied history, culture and situation of the so-called "native peoples" who made contact with the European civilization. In most cases this moral and ethical stance was based not only on compassion for aboriginal peoples, but also on political accusations of overexploitation of colonised territories and local population made by scientists and intellectuals who represented dominating regimes.

This *tragic perception* of the aboriginal peoples' fate was not only an aspect of the politics and ethics of the day. It also reflected the objective process of the destruction of unique aboriginal cultures under the influence of state entities that were more developed technologically, militarily and politically combined with the influence of ethnic entities that possessed huge demographic and cultural resources. This initial interaction between the two civilizations, unequal in terms of their status and capabilities, was accompanied by direct violence, exploitation, cultural assimilation and deadly outbreaks of epidemics. Imported diseases had a devastating impact on small aboriginal populations throughout the world, including the Russian North and Siberia. It is only natural that many representatives of the scientific world spoke in defence of the aboriginal peoples and did a lot to protect them.

This *tradition of providing protection* influenced the development of the policy of state paternalism that became particularly strong in the Soviet period, when it was implemented as an element of the so-called "nationalities' policy", that came to be known as the policy of "overcoming the historical backwardness of the country's outlying regions" and developing "the peoples and nations oppressed in the past". The Soviet paternalism that was practised in many forms as part of economic, social and cultural policies towards small northern indigenous peoples, produced significant positive results. However, it failed to resolve the underlying problems arising from the contact between differing civilizations. Neither did it manage to ensure a culturally sustainable modern development of aboriginal ethnic groups. Progress made in the areas of culture, education and health care could not make up for the deficiencies of the Soviet system in economy and political governance that were more fundamental in nature, while the generally low level of living conditions in the USSR determined low living standards of the small-numbered northern indigenous peoples.

However, the propaganda potential in the Soviet times was so huge that a myth persisted in the country about successful development of aboriginal population in the USSR and that this development was happening against the backdrop of the dying out and disappearance of the carriers of similar cultures under capitalism. It was not an established practice at the time to discuss serious problems that faced small-numbered northern indigenous peoples. The author remembers well one episode that happened at the time when he worked in Magadan in the end of the 1960s. Yuri Rytkeu, a Chukchi writer, returned from a trip to Canada and shared his impressions of the visit on local television. He compared what he saw there with the situation of the Chukchi and in so doing refrained from unequivocally praising the Soviet reality. This outraged the Communist Party leaders in the Magadan Oblast and led to the firing of the head of the Magadan TV station.

Scientific papers written by Soviet ethnographers at that time also reflected the existing realities. Highly professional research of ethnic history and culture of northern peoples, field research work often carried out in difficult circumstances, participation in the development of educational systems for aboriginal people and professional training of aboriginal representatives, – all this could not be complemented by equally detailed and fundamental studies of social, health and socio-political problems. The few reports (they were called "notes to policy-making bodies") that some scientists dared to write in most cases would not draw positive response or would simply be rejected. And when some steps were undertaken, these were essentially half-measures that did not go far enough. Their impact was limited due to lack of resources. Another reason was huge spending on military programs and grandiose mega-projects, such as building nuclear power stations on permafrost.

The new stage in the history of the small-numbered northern indigenous peoples came about with the advent of the Gorbachev liberalization and radical social transformations in the last decade of the XX century. In 1990 the First Congress of the Peoples of the North was held in the Kremlin. This event proved to be a real milestone. For the first time ever aboriginal peoples and experts were provided with a meaningful opportunity to voice their concerns and share their opinions. It was at that time when the "cultural heroes" selected by the party nomenclature to represent northern peoples and speak on their behalf were replaced by newly emerging public leaders (often these included the same writers-mentors). This was the time of such resounding statements as the one made by V. Sanghi, a Nivkh, who said that 60% of Russia's territory were traditional aboriginal lands, the time when politicians with an aboriginal background, such as E. Gayer, a Nanai, enjoyed extreme popularity that bordered on worshipping.

Since the author was aware of the experience gained by Canada's aboriginal peoples, this knowledge gave him reason to believe that this stage of aboriginal self-expression in Russia, that used the images and statements of 2 - 3 charismatic aboriginal leaders, would be followed by the emergence, at the middle and local levels, of aboriginal activists who would undertake to improve life in specific settlements and communities and that all this would be accompanied by the process of defining and defending aboriginal rights in the regions and autonomous districts. This stage did come about. For example, in November 2003 the city of Khanty-Mansijsk hosted the meeting of the Coordinating Council of the Association of the Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (RAIPON). Nowadays northern aboriginal peoples' interests are represented not only by mature and experienced national leaders, but also by many regional "chiefs" and local activists. A really surprising and, undoubtedly, positive metamorphosis of the last decade!

Has this new stage in the life of Russia's aboriginal peoples extended beyond such aspects of their activities as social and political organization, lobbying various programs and projects and participation in international circumpolar cooperation? In other words, has this new stage produced something new in terms of aboriginal self-perception, strategies and evaluations, thus helping researchers to better understand their situation, assess prospects for their development, so that scientists could assist them to make a meaningful breakthrough? Unfortunately, the answer is no, it has not, or practically has not. Aboriginal peoples have fallen into the all-too familiar and convenient pattern of rhetorical complaints and tragedization of their situation (a tested strategy that stimulates compassion while waiting for a reward). This strategy used to work in the past and continues to work, even though partially, today.

Complaints and tragedization do generate in a short period of time some dividends (although these are quite modest). They are the building blocks of the ideology and policy of "assistance" and "protection", –the paternalism mentioned above. To what extent can such an approach serve as the basis for sustainable development and for how long can this go on? After all, it is precisely this ideology that becomes part of the aboriginal inner world through external "subscription" – or imposition – rather than through people's own specific experience that causes emotional and psychological imbalance and directly influences their behaviour and actions, leading to alcoholism and suicide, these two curses of northern indigenous peoples. In many other regions around the world people die of starvation and social evils. However, the number of those who commit suicide is considerably lower compared to the suicide rate among Russia's aboriginal people. This makes one wonder whether, with the exception of cases when people commit suicide in a state of alcoholic delirium, this phenomenon of imposed hopelessness is a factor contributing to such behaviour.

Documents prepared by aboriginal activists and organizations which they represent (reports, presentations, statements, declarations and appeals) have become an important source for scientific analysis. For example, this report aims not only at presenting the viewpoint of scientists and researchers who have assessed the situation "from a distance", but also at providing those about whom the scientists write an opportunity to express their views and opinions. Thus, the report includes case studies, evidence and arguments presented directly by aboriginal people themselves. How do aboriginal leaders view their world and their future? To what extent their views and ideas differ from predominant scientific concepts and ideas? The author believes that there are no significant gaps in this regard. For better or for worse, aboriginal representatives often use the language of scientific articles and books. The same is true of scientific texts, – they often reflect opinions of aboriginal people. However, while aboriginal representatives occasionally venture criticism of some scientific papers and reports, scientists almost never call in question views and actions of aboriginal people. As the well-known saying has it, "...like a caribou, an aboriginal person is well-oriented in his environment." But is this really so, particularly if the issue in question is strategic vision and overall conditions for development?

At the above-mentioned meeting of the Coordinating Council of RAIPON held in Khanty-Mansiisk, A. I Rayshev, an aboriginal leader who is also the Deputy Chair of the Administration of the Autonomous District, presented in his report the following widely accepted vision of development: "One of the main conditions for sustainable development of modern society as a whole is the need to ensure continued existence of small-numbered northern indigenous peoples by means of socio-economic development of traditional economies that play a key role in the formation of ethnoses. Experience accumulated by northern peoples in traditional nature management has been recognized internationally as an important form of the preservation of natural environment that is the traditional living environment of aboriginal peoples". It was at that time that S. N. Kharutchi, the President of RAIPON, sent a letter to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in which he complained that the federal government refused to ensure practical implementation of the Federal Law *"On the Territories of Traditional Nature Management Inhabited by Small-Numbered Indigenous Northern Peoples"*. The letter restated the underlying thesis that "the right to a traditional way of life means for the small-numbered indigenous northern peoples the very right to life."

All scientists, including the authors of this report, consider this a starting point. Moreover, it was the scientists themselves who contributed to a large extent towards the creation of the very image of the "traditional economy", or the "cultural-economic pattern", using to this end historic reconstruction and detailed recurring descriptions, even though in historical reality economic practices were constantly influenced by changing circumstances and conditions, by migrations, borrowings and innovations. Nothing has changed in this regard at the current stage in the life of aboriginal peoples. Northern indigenous peoples, as well as all other "big and small peoples", retain the right to innovation and economic practices that correspond to their best interests and meet their needs. More often than not there are no direct links between "traditional economic practices" recorded in the past and preservation or "formation" of an ethnos. It is even more difficult to trace such direct links between traditional economy and identity. There is no reliable evidence to the effect that a Chukchi who is a reindeer herder identifies himself more with his people than his fellow Chukchi who is a truck driver or an oil-industry worker. This is why, while recognizing the significance of such traditional economic activities as reindeer herding, hunting, fishing and gathering that have been practised for a long time, that are important for safeguarding cultural distinctiveness and that comprise a vital element of the life-support system, it would be a mistake to consider "traditional economies" to be the very foundation of the existence of an ethnic entity or an Aboriginal person. One should take into account the fact that what is considered to be traditional in the beginning of the XXI century does not necessarily coincide with the concept of traditional that existed in the beginning of the XX century, and that today's innovations are tomorrow's traditions.

A small part of the aboriginal population that is becoming even smaller may equate "traditional economy" with their very existence. However, this "traditional economy" cannot play the same role and have the same meaning for the majority of the members of an aboriginal community. So, what is to be done about all these rhetorical statements on the one hand, and practical strategies on the other hand? The two extremes, namely, the romantic and demodernizing traditionalism and the purposeful and consistent modernization implemented outside cultural context to ensure total aboriginal integration into the dominant society, are separated by some middle ground. This middle ground is the strategy of culture-oriented modernization and integration of small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. *Culture-oriented modernization means preservation of specific types of economic and creative activity carried out by some representatives of small-numbered indigenous peoples in combination with other trades and types of activities that can ensure acceptable conditions for social existence and development.* Specific (traditional) types of economic activity are preserved not only as a "source of life" (for a small part of the aboriginal population), but also as a "source of culture" and an important element of ethnicity and identity (other important elements include aboriginal languages, customs and beliefs and aboriginal art). This means that there has to be an overall support of such activities coming from the rest of the aboriginal population, the dominant society personified by the state, economic entities and simply the general public at large.

Development in the true meaning of the word is possible only through involvement of aboriginal peoples in modern and more effective types of economic activity that will ensure satisfaction of their growing demands and interests. Another way to achieve true development is through promotion of such effective types and forms of economic activity within aboriginal communities themselves. Current popularity of the concepts of territories of traditional nature management and traditional lands is explained by the fact

that, to a certain extent, these concepts were promoted as a necessary strategy that had to be implemented at the time of privatization of state property and resources in order to ensure aboriginal peoples' participation in the process and grant them certain rights to own land and natural resources. In reality this strategy failed in the face of a more powerful offensive launched by private capital and bureaucracy. There can be some victories in this battle that are, in fact, crucial, such as winning the right to a share of royalties or compensation for inflicted damage. However, the question remains: should this be the focus of the development strategy?

Culture-oriented modernization means that all benefits of modern civilization that are enjoyed by the country's population become available to the aboriginal peoples, too. This is achieved through productive work performed by aboriginal people themselves. This may take different forms, but the work itself should be meaningful. One way to achieve this is to promote among aboriginal people modern trades and professions. Alternately, aboriginal people themselves should get involved in modern types of economic activity through involvement in various industries that exist not only within their communities, but in the entire country. Such an approach makes even more sense because over the last 50 years the social structure of the country's aboriginal population has been significantly transformed. It has become less homogeneous: some aboriginal people live now in cities and towns, others live in settlements, still others live in reindeer camps in the tundra and the taiga. Consequently, their way of life, their living and educational standards differ significantly.

Still, the main factor is the overall level of economic development of the country and its regions. It is through this overall development that the life of northern indigenous peoples can be improved. But even if the first task has been fulfilled, it is impossible to automatically achieve the second objective. This requires continuous input and even political struggle.

One of the conditions for achieving success is self-determination within Russia in general and within individual territories in particular that is understood as the implementation of the right to participate in a broader socio-political process, – in other words, the right to govern and exercise self-government. There are some fundamental problems associated with this approach, too, which have not yet been given proper consideration.

Autonomous districts in general and rapidly developing oil- and gas-producing territories in particular are perceived increasingly often as something else rather than a form of intrastate self-government of small-numbered indigenous peoples, for whom these entities were established in the first place. The stronger this perception, the more assured the local ruling bureaucracies become that these subjects constitute a given that cannot be reformed, moreover, that the very stability of Russia depends on them. To cultivate this perception they use as an argument local patriotism and territorial forms of identity, such as *Evenkianess* or *Khanti-Mansianess*. It should be pointed out, however, that, in reality, all this is dictated by economic and political interests. It is doubtful that the majority of people in these districts who moved there from other parts of the country believe that these territories need their own "statehood", – an attitude usually found in ethno-territorial entities. However, the following two arguments are being used quite effectively: "We will not allow..." and "You have asked for it...". One Russian newspaper wrote that "...the Evenk have been denied the right even to have their own senator...", referring to a court ruling on non-recognition of the decision made by the "suglan" (even

the name of the local legislature was stolen from the 2 percent of the region's population) to elect L. Nevzlin the Autonomous District's representative in the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

Here is just one example of this new political mentality of the "regional" elite. The way they disregard the very notion of ethnicity is quite striking, despite the fact that they turn to aboriginal culture and heritage, looking for symbols and elements of regional identity. Thus, the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District was named "Yugra" and the entire region – "Yugoria". P. S. Volostrigov who represents the Duma of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District in the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, gave a lengthy interview to the magazine "Russian Federation Today". He did not mention that aboriginal people constitute part of the local population and said nothing about problems that exist in the autonomous district due to this fact. The focus of his interview was different. Specifically, he said: "Under the pretext of reforms they (the federal government) will also take away from the district 80% of the budget revenues that it has generated. This does not make any sense at all: the most economically developed subject of the Federation that boasts the annual volume of production in excess of 500 billion roubles and the highest per capita output in the country, whose territory is over 500 thousand square kilometres and whose population is about 1,5 million people, will be governed by somebody else, by somebody outside the District. Even the financing of the bodies of power of the Autonomous District is to be done from the Tuymen Region." (# 11, p. 18, June 2003). Incidentally, this interview was accompanied by an information backgrounder on the autonomous district with the photo of a wooden Khanty idol. However, there was not a single mention of the Khanty or the Mansi people in the backgrounder, either.

This analytical report was designed and written, first and foremost, to present different aspects of the rather complex, yet not necessarily hopelessly tragic socio-economic, political and cultural situation of the northern indigenous peoples. Good knowledge of the true state of affairs will help develop adequate approaches to resolve existing problems both at the federal level and at the level of local administrations and aboriginal communities. At the same time the report focuses on the analysis of the situation and the development of concrete recommendations that will help achieve the main objective at the current stage in the development of indigenous northern peoples.

All authors who were invited to write the report's chapters, be it linguists, demographers or ethnographers, have worked for many years in the North and are experienced researchers and practitioners. Such an approach gives reason to believe that they have produced a solid report. It is possible that some points or ideas presented in the report may raise questions, particularly in so far as the interpretation of certain specific problems is concerned. It should be pointed out, however, that the authors tried to avoid unnecessary details and concentrated instead on essential features of the processes and phenomena in question. Overall, the final report corresponds to its original concept. The authors welcome constructive comments and suggestions from experts, public organizations and government officials who are interested in the preservation and sustainable development of the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East.

CONCLUSION

The small-numbered peoples of the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East are the creators and guardians of unique cultures and constitute an important part of modern global civilization. Northern peoples for many centuries developed territories in the Arctic, the northern mountainous regions and the taiga, adapting to extreme natural conditions and nurturing their distinct cultures. The vast lands inhabited by these peoples make up Russia's vital resource and geostrategic regions. Despite the importance of these regions for the country, the historical situation is such that small-numbered northern peoples will be the majority of the resident population on a significant part of the northern territories in the future as well. It will be these peoples who will continue to play the role of the carriers and guardians of life-support systems adapted to local natural environment, traditional knowledge and distinct sets of spiritual values. *Preserving the northern peoples' way of life and ensuring their socio-economic and ethno-cultural development is a national priority and a key priority of the cultural development in the world.* The Russian society's attitude towards small-numbered ethnic entities, their historic and cultural heritage should be based on this vision of the problem. The state policy towards small-numbered northern indigenous peoples should have as one of its priorities preservation of their cultural distinctness and should ensure their sustainable development.

An important aspect that should be taken into consideration when developing policies in this area is that, due to various factors (natural, historical, socio-cultural, medical-biological), these peoples (who comprise about 1,5% of the total population) are historically put at a disadvantage. They have been affected to a greater extent by some negative aspects of the modern civilization and find it difficult to integrate into modernization processes and modern culture. However, the global social trend is such that it is precisely this category of the population, these peoples who live, in most cases, in the world's regions rich in mineral resources, who are becoming increasingly involved in decision-making on issues pertaining to modern economic development, who are actively engaged in self-organization to deal with social and political issues, and who are exerting the ever growing influence on the development of policies designed to ensure their rights and meet their interests. In the Russian Federation this process is in its initial stage, but it will certainly become a major factor in the future. *Elimination of the historical inequality and finding solutions to the existing socio-cultural problems of the small-numbered northern indigenous peoples is critical to the overall strategy designed to ensure the country's development and civic concord in the Russian society, including Russia's regions that are important from the geostrategic perspective.*

Another important consideration that should be kept in mind is that, following several decades of intensive search, political and scientific debates, accumulation of economic experience in developing regions inhabited by aboriginal (native) peoples, including such regions in our country, *new opportunities have emerged and new conditions have been created to design and implement truly effective development strategies. New economic and political situation in the Russian Federation and the international community's concern about the future of the world's aboriginal population is another positive factor.* Other factors that exist in a number of the subjects of the Russian Federation and that create favourable conditions for the development and implementation of a new strategy towards the small-numbered northern indigenous peoples include the existence of a fairly effective leadership, the availability of significant material and financial resources

and social consolidation of the population around issues of socio-economic and cultural development.

The complexity of the existing problems, the failed attempts to resolve them in the past and the need to mobilize different resources to implement numerous activities make it necessary to design a national (all-Russia) targeted program of the development of the small-numbered northern indigenous peoples. This program must include an approach that will ensure on-going dialogue, flexibility to introduce changes and corrections "on the go" and a continuous feedback from the program's subjects. Development of the program's specific lines of activity to achieve sustainable development should be based not only on its overarching ideology, but also on the adequate evaluation of the existing situation and resources available for the program's implementation. *While the long-term objective is the preservation of the ethno-cultural diversity of the northern population, including northern aboriginal peoples that should be viewed as an integral part of the Russian and international cultural heritage, the more immediate goals should include resolving socio-economic problems, preventing socio-cultural degradation and ensuring acceptable conditions of everyday life.*

Evaluation of the situation of small-numbered northern indigenous peoples continues to be influenced by political considerations and emotions that unreasonably dramatize their plight (examples: myths about the "dying out" of ethnoses and languages or the inability to adjust to modernization processes) or that are based on the cultural-ethnographic romanticism created by poor science and radicalism of aboriginal activists. One can still come across negativistic opinions expressed by some chauvinistically inclined segments of the Russian society that concern the fate of the northern peoples, their collective image and their place in history. The predominant view of the international community is based on accusations that the Russian state used colonialist policies and the denial of successes achieved in the development of the small-numbered indigenous northern peoples. *The existing approaches have a demobilizing effect and look into the past rather than the future. The concept and the program of sustainable development should be based on an objective expert assessment of existing problems and should be supported by evaluations and forecasts that accurately reflect the real situation, rather than on the above-mentioned biased views and opinions that make up modern mythology.*

The following are some most important aspects that need to be addressed using new methods and approaches.

Demographic policy should take into consideration the fact there is a steady, although somewhat slow, growth of the number of representatives of small indigenous peoples and an increase of the share of the aboriginal population practically in all regions in the North and Siberia. According to the 2002 All-Russia Population Census the share of the aboriginal population in some autonomous districts reached almost 30 per cent. There is good reason to believe that it will continue to increase in the near future due to the higher birth rate, continued outmigration from some regions of those who settled there only in recent decades and the strengthening of the aboriginal identity that prevents assimilation. *These demographic trends create a totally new situation in many areas, from economy to politics. Some autonomous districts are becoming state-administrative entities where it is not only the name of the entity, but the very composition of the local population that confirms its status as an ethno-territorial autonomy.*

At the same time, there are certain trends in the area of demographics that speak of serious problems, but these are linked not so much to the "dying out of northern peoples" as to the state of their health, the high mortality rate due to external factors and the high sickness rate due to social problems, above all, alcoholism. There are serious problems concerning migratory behaviour and optimal geographical distribution of the aboriginal population that lead to the rise of the number of aboriginal persons living "on the margin" in urban areas and the existence of small communities that are not viable in most cases and could be compared to some kind of isolation wards. *The demographic policy should have as its objective not so much the increase of the birth rate as the decrease of the mortality rate and the improvement of aboriginal health.*

An important aspect is the development of a strategy to optimize population distribution to strengthen communities with a developed infrastructure that have communications facilities, education and information support systems and services. It is necessary to introduce measures to encourage mixed marriages and create in people's minds a positive image of such marriages. *Modern ethno-cultural policies must recognize – and view as a norm rather than an anomaly – the existence of a complex ethnic identity at the level of an individual, thus excluding the possibility of erecting impenetrable borders by distinguishing between aboriginal and non-aboriginal population. Whether a person is aboriginal or not should be the matter of self-consciousness rather than blood kinship.*

In most administrative entities there will be more Russian citizens with a mixed ethnic background who will consider themselves to be Chukchi, Eskimo or representatives of other small-numbered indigenous peoples, or who will consider themselves Russian Chukchi, Evenk Yakut or Russian Chuvan. Eventually it will be not so much an exclusive "nationality" as such as a permanent membership in an aboriginal community associated with some special collective rights that will be playing an increasingly important role. The right to record such membership in a registry or a community membership list should be eventually transferred from the state to the community itself. Thus, a category of the "status" aboriginal population will be created. This category will enjoy certain additional rights compared to representatives of northern aboriginal peoples who live in cities and are subject to national (all-Russia) norms, standards and regulations. In most cases population in status aboriginal communities will be of mixed ethnic background. This is why such communities should not be defined as "national" (Chukchi, Khanty or Shory).

In the area of economic development and socio-economic policy the formula of multi-optional self-development should be applied. This formula provides for the preservation and enhancement of the multistructural nature of aboriginal economy, including economic-cultural types of economy based on seal hunting, reindeer-breeding, fishing, hunting, gathering and integrated economic activities. These economic-cultural types can be easily complimented by the development of various arts and crafts industries (such as bone carving and production of souvenirs) that will be export-oriented and will target both home and international markets as well as the development of the recreational services sector (commercial hunting and fishing and extreme tourism).

Another area that has good commercial potential and allows for the development of culture-oriented aboriginal businesses is the transportation services sector. Such business could be successfully developed in areas with access to sea. It is possible to set up small aboriginal companies that will use both traditional modes of transportation and small aircraft, river and sea vessels to provide services to local population and visitors.

Finally, measures should be implemented to employ aboriginal people at modern industrial enterprises, including professional training of aboriginal representatives to staff engineering and technical positions. Such training will enable aboriginal people to play a bigger role in satisfying the northern region's needs in social workers, school teachers, journalists, administrators and managers.

It is necessary to create an appealing image of the successful aboriginal professional ("the first pilot", "the first engineer", "the businessman", "the master artist", etc. – this will be a kind of a "Hall of Local Fame" that will offer young people role models and examples to follow.) It is also necessary to promote positive images of model families, relatively successful communities, prospering enterprises, successful production teams and other work collectives as well as successful private businesses. The image of "an aboriginal company" or "an aboriginal corporation" is extremely important for the creation of a favourable business climate, social development and promotion of a healthy and meaningful way of life.

In the area of culture and education we propose to use as a starting point the fact that, overall, previous policies, particularly those implemented in the Soviet period, have contributed to the preservation of the northern aboriginal cultures, have ensured adequate educational levels and the development of professional culture. However, due to general conditions the cultural level of the population in terms of everyday life remained low. There were shortages of social services and consumer goods. In recent years there have been radical changes in this area. By and large, these changes have been positive. The prestige of aboriginal ethnicity, of being a representative of an aboriginal people, continues to grow, along with the interest in the culture and the language of the people with which the individual identifies himself or herself. There are more aboriginal people with higher education. Large-scale cultural goods (radio and TV sets, tape recorders, photo and video cameras and printed products) have become more affordable. Aboriginal people use in everyday life modern types of transportation, they wear better quality cloths and there is now definitely more variety in the way they dress. Social and cultural wants of the aboriginal population have increased quite noticeably. However, sometimes they cannot be satisfied due to insufficient income or lack of required goods and services.

At the same time, some important elements of culture and everyday life that determine the ethnic identity of aboriginal people and the degree of their satisfaction with life are gradually becoming a thing of the past. This concerns, above all, the use of aboriginal languages, the use of ecologically adapted food in the overall structure of aboriginal people's diet and the way they spend these days their free time. This is why it is so important to identify correct and effective strategies to satisfy cultural needs of the aboriginal population, particularly in such areas as education and the languages' policy. The problem with aboriginal languages is not confined to Russia, – it has become a global issue. Currently there are about 6 500 languages registered in the world. According to the most optimistic forecasts, by the end of the XXI century over half of them will have disappeared.

It is important to *develop a strategy of multiculturalism based on bilingualism*. One should distinguish between *aboriginal culture* and *culture of aboriginal peoples*. The latter is comprised of three components that have already become an integral part of modern life and should be accorded equal attention and opportunities in terms of their

development. The first component is ethno-culture as such (aboriginal culture) of a particular people. Here the main emphasis should be placed not so much on material, as spiritual culture (language, customs and beliefs, folklore, ethno-pedagogy, artistic activity). The second component is national (all-Russia) culture based on the Russian language, all-Russian historic and cultural values, legal norms and certain standards accepted by the society at large. The third component is contemporary material and spiritual culture that is rooted in universal achievements important for all civilizations and that is influenced to some extent by Western mass culture. Different age and social groups of the aboriginal population use these three cultural streams to a different extent and develop their attitudes towards these cultural streams differently. Rejection or isolation that favours a particular cultural norm is not an effective strategy for the aboriginal population. Conversely, a balanced combination and application of these norms enhances an individual's capacity and improves his or her competitiveness at the local, national and international levels.

Proceeding from this starting point, it becomes obvious that the focus of the cultural and educational strategy should be enhancing the knowledge of all-Russian norms, including the ability to speak and write in the Russian language, which is the key language for the majority of representatives of northern indigenous peoples because they know and use it and which, for this reason, should be considered their mother tongue or their second language. As for the aboriginal languages, they are an important component of ethnic self-consciousness and cultural distinctness. In some instances aboriginal languages play the role of the principal means of communication for a significant part of the population. Some languages in the autonomous districts, such as the Chukchi and the Nenets languages, are not threatened with extinction. However, their role and place in the life of these aboriginal peoples has been changing. Overall, these languages have been losing ground to the dominant Russian language. In most cases this is the result of an individual's personal decision that should be respected, because it helps him or her to succeed socially within the framework of the Russian society. Still, aboriginal languages should be preserved, particularly as the languages used to communicate within one's family or community. In some cases these languages should be used for official record keeping, in courts and in public service. The concept that provides for the "retreat" of a number of viable and developing languages used by many is unrealistic and should be rejected, just like the concept that maintains that these languages can assume the role of the main language of communication in *all* major areas of life. *Given the existing circumstances, full bilingualism that provides for the equal status of both languages is impossible to achieve. However, it is possible and desirable to preserve aboriginal languages and ensure their widespread use at different levels.*

The system of education based on relevant national standards and norms must include an ethno-cultural component. Students will study the nature and the history of their region, they will study the people that they represent, they will acquire necessary traditional knowledge and learn traditional skills and customs. This component should not be limited to schools where the majority of students are representatives of northern indigenous peoples. It should become an integral part of educational systems in relevant republics, autonomous districts, regions and territories. Learning aboriginal languages by representatives of aboriginal population should be encouraged and promoted, particularly among government officials and politicians in the republics and autonomous districts.

Boarding schools is another complex problem. It can be resolved through individual approach, voluntary choice and improvement of conditions for learning outside family environment. Modern means of transportation (such as bush aviation) and distance learning methodology make it possible to develop optimal approaches to resolve the problem of providing high-quality general education.

A special focus of long-term planning should be the development, promotion and commercial use of unique aboriginal arts and crafts. A particular emphasis should be placed on home and international marketing. To this end, a variety of instruments can be used, such as ethno-regional art galleries in Moscow. They will perform the functions of a museum exposition and a commercial art gallery where art works produced by a particular art studio or artist will be sold. It is necessary to promote more actively the image of the northern aboriginal peoples in our country's capital.

Turning to the problem of *political representation, administrative-state structures and aboriginal self-government*, the key issue here is the constitutional and legal significance of the status of the autonomous districts as independent subjects of the Federation that exist in the form of ethno-territorial autonomies established on behalf of a particular titled people and existing for this people. This status has a formal significance only, since it does not provide representatives of the so-called "titular" ethnic entity with relevant representation and authority because they make up a demographic minority, have a lower social status and weak social and political organization. One should also take into account the overarching legal norm that maintains that statehood in an autonomous district exists on behalf of its population and for the benefit of this population.

In terms of policies towards small-numbered indigenous peoples, it is possible to implement in the autonomous districts the two following strategies of state-building: a) abandoning the principle of ethnicity as the basis of the autonomous district in favour of territorial aboriginal entities that will be given more resources and more rights to exercise self-government and will enjoy exclusive rights to a part of the territory and renewable resources within this territory; b) enhancing the system of governance and representation developed for the bodies of authority and administration in the autonomous districts inhabited by small-numbered indigenous peoples; granting them the power of veto which they can exercise when deciding on certain issues of critical importance to them; giving local communities powers and resources.

It is becoming obvious at this historical stage that there needs to be a revision of certain provisions of the Russian Constitution, the Charter of the Autonomous District and local legislation. In certain cases it would be more expedient and reasonable to re-incorporate some autonomous districts into relevant regions and territories. Such a move would contribute to more effective (above all, less expensive) administration of autonomous districts and help implement strategies of sustainable development of aboriginal peoples in these districts. Besides, it would meet the national interests of the Russian Federation and would optimize the system of federal government. To avoid extreme situations and ensure effective administration that will be conducive to successful socio-economic and cultural development, it is necessary to undertake a number of steps in different areas. These steps are described below.

- It is necessary to ensure within the framework of the existing federal legislation on self-government a special status of local aboriginal communities viewed as local (community) entities with a predominantly aboriginal (possibly, mixed) population.

This would also stimulate law making at the district, regional and territorial levels. The above entities should be given resources/powers that they will be able to use/exercise, including those pertaining to such important functions as maintaining the system of education or ensuring customs control at the local level. A complex power structure can be established in such entities that will provide, among other things, for power sharing between elected civic bodies and public boards and councils.

- Instead of relying on the system of quotas, it is necessary to ensure northern aboriginal representation at the regional level through training and support of aboriginal leaders and activists as well as through promotion of understanding and accord among the so-called "predominant" population. An indirect measure to expand aboriginal representation could be the required (or preferable) knowledge of one of the languages (excluding Russian) spoken by small-numbered indigenous peoples in a particular region. In some regions with a sizeable aboriginal population local bodies of power could be supported by a system of aboriginal councils that would hold public hearings and exercise the right to make decisions and recommendations to be submitted to regional and territorial authorities.
- It is necessary to ensure full representation of all main ethnic groups and major aboriginal communities and organizations in legislatures and executive bodies of power at the district, regional and territorial levels; ensuring aboriginal representation at the senior management level in the executive branch. Training of top and middle executives for local administrations can be implemented with the assistance of the Russian Academy of State Service, while training of managers and other experts needed for the development of local economy can be done at the Higher School of Economics and other federal educational institutions.
- It is necessary to maintain and expand representation of small-numbered indigenous peoples in the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and among the personnel of a number of ministries (such as the ministries of natural resources, economic development, education, culture, fisheries, etc.). Besides, it is possible to develop a system of lobbying and indirect representation of aboriginal interests through offices (representations) of districts, regions and territories in Moscow.
- It is necessary to raise effectiveness of activities of aboriginal organizations of the Russian Federation at the international level. These organizations have already established ties with partners in other countries and are represented at the International Circumpolar Conference and other international organizations. However, more needs to be done in this respect. Rather than projecting the image of "bankrupt regions where aboriginal population is threatened with extinction", authorities in the subjects of the Federation inhabited by northern indigenous peoples should present these territories as Russia's developing regions with long history, rich culture and unique nature that have a lot of exciting things to offer to other countries around the world. The aboriginal component is a key element of Siberia's image and its further *enhancement and promotion requires well-directed efforts. This can be achieved, among other thing, through the development of scientific ties, cooperation between public organizations and information sharing.*

Future programs should have strategic goals and objectives that are not limited to the resolution of such problems as ethnic survival and preservation of small-numbered indigenous northern peoples, but extend beyond this to ensuring conditions for their sustainable development and allowing to combine mechanisms of self-organization with assistance provided by the rest of the society and the state. There are three known concepts of aboriginal development that have been implemented in our country and in other parts of the world. One of them is *traditionalism* based on the idealization of the historical norms and the return to the traditional economy and socio-cultural structure. Today one can find traditionalism in combination with isolationism practised by some aboriginal communities and associations that reject modern foundations of the organization of public life, from market economy to mass culture. The second concept is the *Euro-modernization model* that is based on full integration into the modern economic system and the predominant culture with active participation in the integration process of the state and various economic agents. This strategy leads to assimilation and fails to address problems faced by small communities that have preserved some traditional life-support systems. The third concept is *multi-optional self-development* that has emerged as a growing trend. This is the underlying concept of the strategy proposed by the authors of the report.

The essence of the conceptual basis of sustainable development is reflected in the following objectives:

- recognition and optimization of historical forms and patterns pertaining to population distribution, nature management and economy that takes into account existing cultural, spiritual and everyday needs and the new material and technical base;
- synthesis of traditional nature management, subsistence economy and market relations,
- a shift from state paternalism to partnership relations and negotiations;
- focus on self-development, local self-government and new opportunities for the participation of small-numbered indigenous northern peoples in broad social and political processes at the regional, district and national levels;
- state protection and development of special mechanisms for legal regulation that will be used besides general norms and standards pertaining to law and state structure;
- free choice of cultural and educational strategies that is determined, first and foremost, by an individual's interests.

This strategy is new not only in terms of the lines of proposed activities, but also in terms of conceptual and strategic assessments, specific achievable goals and objectives, the style and form of program execution. The concept of multioptional self-development takes into account the fact that it is impossible to ensure in the modern world acceptable social conditions solely on the basis of the traditional model. This is why aboriginal people need to learn how to use modern life strategies to live in the modern world. *The concept emphasises the importance of such socio-psychological factors as individual and collective success, aboriginal dignity, promotion of a positive attitude of the dominant society towards aboriginal people and their culture.* The concept provides for gradual transition from paternalism to partnership in relations with the state. These partnership relations are to be based on the principles of internal self-determination that is viewed as the right to independently choose one's way of life and, at the same time, participate in a wider socio-political process.

The concept of multi-optional self-development envisages *application of different approaches to specific ethnic entities (peoples) and communities as well as different social groups of the aboriginal population*. It is necessary to develop special approaches, projects and programs for aboriginal people who live in cities in a modern urban environment with market economy and dominating cultural norms and standards that are based on the Russian language and are universal throughout the country. Equally, special approaches, projects and programs need to be designed for those who live in settlements and communities with a mixed population and different economic and cultural structures. Finally, special approaches and projects need to be designed for ethnically homogeneous communities in small settlements and camps where traditional economic structures and traditional cultures have been preserved to the greatest extent. The multi-optional approach includes creation of the so-called points of growth on the basis of specific projects that will underline the importance of human resource development and enhancement of an individual's capacity. This approach takes into account the capacity for innovation that representatives of any culture and any social group have. It favours individuals' choices and strategies and their underlying strive to ensure better social conditions.

The new approach provides for a *change of focus, which is of critical importance. It is the emerging and actually existing local territorial entities (settlements and communities with a mixed population) rather than individual ethnic entities (small-numbered indigenous peoples) that become the main subject of policies and program activities. This shift of focus favours a broad category of aboriginal people who share common identity and common interests and who are united in their solidarity.*