



Address by Minister Arhinmäki in Inari 12 April

Dear attendees,

Cultural policy is guided by basic rights as well as cultural rights. Cultural rights are vital to the identity, unity, autonomy and dignity of nations.

The Constitution of Finland supports also cultural rights such as freedom of art, the right to one's own mother tongue and culture as well as responsibility for the environment and cultural heritage. The right to one's culture is a basic human need. Without their own culture, people find it difficult to become ingrained into their community, perceive the world and learn the values of their community. The mother tongue of each person is bound to those oral and written stories, poems and songs that have been created in that language.

The Sámi people's right to cultural autonomy has also been defined in the constitution of our country.

According to our constitution, the Sámi people, as the indigenous people of our country, have the right to maintain and develop their language and their culture. I feel that Sámi languages have priceless cultural value in Finland. It is the special duty of us Finns to treasure these small, endangered languages. If a language is lost, so is a part of invaluable cultural heritage; we do not lose just words and grammatical structures, we lose thoughts, notions and experiences of the world, we lose views of the world.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has in its administrative field taken a serious approach to this right – and duty – to maintain and develop language and culture.

Sámi art and culture are supported in many ways. The general services and the various grants of art and culture are available to the Sami people the same way as to the other population. In the state budget, an annual special subsidy has been reserved for supporting culture in Sámi language and Sámi

organisations. This separate grant is part of the affirmative action for the Sámi people. The objective of these actions is to ensure that a certain minimum amount of the art and culture grants will be used to promote the Sámi culture.

In accordance to the principle of cultural autonomy of Sámi people, Finnish Sámi Parliament grants the subsidies.

Dear attendees,

The Sámi culture has soon prospered for already two decades. It is wonderful that Sámi youths are interested in their cultural heritage and many of them are re-building their Sámi identity. The Sámi youths are combining the traditional Sámi arts and their language with global youth culture. This creates new forms of art. The most significant traditional Sámi art forms are handicrafts, visual arts and music – in particular the joik.

One year ago, the world's most famous joik-artist, Wimme Saari, performed in a concert in Helsinki's Savoy theatre, and on stage he was joined by rap artist Paleface. Two different genres of music came together. On his record *Helsinki – Shangri-La*, Paleface performs his song *Sammuva soihtu* ("fading torch") with Wimme and Davo (born in Kemijärvi) singing with them about how "storm is rising over the land of four winds".

Also literature and films are some of the more recent forms of Sámi art. In addition to the grant reserved for Sámi culture, the Ministry of Education and Culture has supported Sámi children's culture and film and music center activities through annual special grants. The development in the film and music field in particular has been astounding. The already famous Skábmagovat film festival of indigenous people is organised regularly in Inari, and so is the Ijahis idja musical event of indigenous people. Now that it is complete, Sajos cultural centre is an excellent venue for film, music and children's culture centre activities.

However, the position of Sámi artists could still be improved. Last year (2011), the researcher Kaija Rensujeff carried out a study in a research unit of the Arts Council of Finland. The study reviewed the structure of the Sámi artist community and the participation of Sámi artists in the operations of the Finnish art administration. For the first time, Sámi artists were the subject of a study as appliers and receivers of Finnish art committee grants.

According to the study, Sámi artists are still a marginal group among those applying for and receiving the grants of the state art committees. Most of them do not apply for grants. Over the years, Sámi people have been represented in only a few state art committees and the art committees of Lapland. In practice this means that Sámi artists themselves have not been there to assess the grant applications of Sámi people. Therefore, the principle of peer review is not executed fully in their case.

There are over 200 professional Sámi artists in Finland. Their percentage of the whole Sámi population of Finland is about 2.5 %. The Art Council of Finland, the state art committees and divisions, the Board for Grants and Subsidies to Writers and Translators and the board for Public Display grants for Visual arts receive annually around 14–20 grant applications from Sámi artists. 2 to 4 applications from Sámi communities arrive annually. Those are most often concentrated on film arts. About half of the applications have been accepted. The grants have been mostly allocated to literature and visual and film arts.

Among Sámi artists there are those who do traditional Sámi handworks, but especially the younger generation has professionals of films and music, as well. Additionally, the percentage of multidisciplinary artists is exceptionally high among the Sámi artists. Almost 80% of Sámi artists live and work on the home region of the Sámi people.

Sámi artists receive support for their professional work from the Sámi people's own art and culture grant systems. Nevertheless, the grants have decreased over the years, because the actual value of the cultural grant allocated to the Finnish Sámi Parliament has decreased during the new millennia. Most of the subsidies of the Parliament and the Sámi council are given to communities to enable them to organise various events and to finance their activities. However, the artistic subsidies granted to the Sámi people cannot be seen as insignificant when the size of the artistic community and the number of applicants are taken into account.

According to the data from 2011, there are a total of 10,000 of Sámis. 65% of them lived outside the Sámi home region or abroad. Even though the Sámi population has more than doubled since 1970, the number of those who announce one of the three Sámi languages as their mother tongue has decreased. This is why we saw that it was our duty to work together with the Sámi people and to compile a special action plan for reviving the Sámi language.

During the last years, many actions have been taken in an attempt to revive the languages. However, they do not yet guarantee that the Sámi languages will survive. The languages are still endangered. Out of the Sámi languages, Skolt Sami and Inari Sami are under a serious threat of extinction. The view of the workgroup in charge of compiling the reviving programme is that from the perspective of art and culture, reviving the languages requires supporting and developing the Sámi art and culture, extending the facilities of Sámi Museum and reinforcing the Sámi expertise in the state art promotion system, so that peer reviews can be ensured. This would also increase the Sámi people's possibility to fully influence the art and culture policy. This action plan suggestion has been delivered to me at the beginning of March, and we will prepare a government decision based on it.

As I stated at the beginning of this address, it is the special duty of Finland to protect these small endangered languages. It is quite a challenge. The life of people who know Sámi is not after all only limited to these northern parts. There is not one day care centre in Helsinki that offers language immersion in Sámi. I believe that different kind of educational solutions are needed.

Dear attendees,

The ILO agreement number 169 on indigenous peoples was renewed in 1989 and it is one of the most important international agreements relating to indigenous people. It recognises the special rights of indigenous peoples to their traditional living regions and their natural resources, and, through them, to their traditional livelihoods. The agreement obligates the states to carry out special action to protect the culture, language and environment of indigenous peoples. The UN reporter for indigenous peoples, James Anaya, recommends in his report given to the UN Human Right Council last year that Finland should improve the autonomy of the Sámi people and that we should ratify the ILO 169 agreement while also including the Sámi people in the ratifying process.

The government of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen has also set up a goal to ratify the ILO 169 agreement during this term of government. The Ministry of Justice has already started the clarification work of the ratifying process, and all Ministries as well as the Finnish Sámi Parliament have been sent a related report request concerning matters significant to the ratifying preconditions and the removal of all possible ratifying obstacles. The deadline has been pushed back to 30 April 2012. Further actions will be decided after that.

On the part of Ministry of Education and Culture, I can say that there are no decrees on the administrative branch that would hinder the ratifying. All actions that have been taken to promote the Sámi culture have followed the ILO 169 agreement.

An expert group including Finns, Norwegians, Swedes and Sámi people compiled a draft of a Nordic Sámi agreement in 2005. The Ministry of Justice assessed the draft in 2009, but the acceptance process of the Nordic Sámi agreement is still underway. Ratifying the ILO 169 agreement would give Finland a strong basis for accepting the Nordic Sámi agreement and therefore become an international pioneer in the promotion of indigenous peoples' rights. The Finnish Sámi Parliament has in its recent statement related to the subject suggested that a parliamentary work group should be appointed to prepare the ILO 169 agreement. The work group would include equally people from different government parties and the Finnish Sámi Parliament.

As Minister of Culture and Sport I would like to state that the culture of indigenous peoples is, through its forms and contents, strongly tied to keeping the traditional livelihoods alive. On the Sámi regions, this means a connection to the cultural heritage and knowledge of the ancestors, to grazing lands, fishing waters, hunting grounds and to language, values and the system of the community. Sámi people are experts on sustainable ways of living and therefore have a lot of traditional knowledge that could also help the dominant culture to develop their cultural durability and to face the challenges of the climate change. As Minister of Culture and Sport, I therefore think that ratifying the ILO 169 agreement is extremely important, not only to ensure that the cultural rights of Sámi people are upheld, but also because of the priceless cultural value the indigenous Sámi culture brings to this country and its population.

Dear friends,

I'm very pleased to be here in Sajos today. The idea to establish Sámi culture centre in Inari and to move the Sámi Museum, established already in 1959, here as well, was suggested in Sámi committee already in 1973. For some of you, this has been a real test of endurance. The Sámi Museum Siida was established in 1998. Now we can also be proud of the Sámi Cultural centre Sajos, which acts as both premises for the Finnish Sámi Parliament and as a comprehensive cultural centre. This place is an important step forward in promoting the Sámi culture. Its purpose is to offer the Sámi people better conditions for independent maintenance and development of their language, culture and livelihoods,

and to maintain and improve their cultural autonomy and support the development of the general living conditions of the Sámi people.

Sajos also significantly improves the opportunities of sharing information about the Sámi people as an indigenous people. Sajos is also a great meeting place for all Sámi people of the Cap of the North to meet each other and the representatives of the dominant culture in their country. Sajos and Siida, the Sámi Museum concentrating on recording and exhibiting the Sámi culture, complete each other perfectly.