

5.3 How are Indigenous peoples and communities in northern Yakutia affected by industrial development?

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Introduction

To secure the survival of Indigenous peoples is now one of the key global challenges. The importance of its solution is emphasized in many international documents, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent countries, the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and others.

Today, the Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation are called in Russian legislation: “the peoples living in areas of traditional settlement of their ancestors, preserving the traditional way of life, economy and trading, numbering in the Russian Federation at least 50 thousand people and considering themselves as independent ethnic communities”. Currently, in 28 Russian regions there live 41 peoples of the North. According to the census of 2002, the total number of Indigenous peoples of the North is 244,000 people, while the population of individual nations ranged from 41,500 people (Nenets) to 22 people (Kerek). According to the 2002 census, 33,133 of them lived in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), about 65 percent of them living in rural areas – traditional territories. Those are 81 localities in the 21 districts. Five peoples of Yakutia are recognized as Indigenous: Dolgans (1,272 out of 7,330 in Russia, that is, 17%), Chukchi (602 out of 15,827, 4%), Evenki (18,232 from 35,377, 52%), Evens (11,657 from 19,242, 61%) and Yukaghirs (1,097 of 1,529, 72%).

The main occupations are reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing. The area of reindeer pastures is 36,769,000 hectares, which is much less than in previous years. In recent years, the number of reindeer has increased steadily, the reindeer population today is 200,500 head (01.01.2010), but it is significantly less than in 1985 (when it was 360,000 head). In the republic, there are 110



deer farms, the number of all herders is 2,255, and their average monthly salary is 7,600 rubles. The hunting territory is 308.3 million hectares, which accounts for almost 95% of the republic. The main objects of hunting are sable (43,300 pcs.), squirrel (65,400 pcs.), muskrat (180,700 pcs.), moose, and wild reindeer. More than 20 species of fish are caught by fishermen, and the annual catch is about 3,200 tons.

The presented data show that the traditional industries are in crisis due to different reasons. However, traditional economic activities of the Indigenous peoples of the North remain crucial. Production of traditional economic sectors, meat and fish, are the staple food of the local population, and the skins of ungulates and fur are used in sewing garments, footwear, manufacture of household items, souvenirs, and also as barter goods. The deer are year-round means of transport for herders, hunters, and fishermen. In the coming years, only the development of traditional industries, trades, and crafts of Indigenous peoples, including setting up some business and self-employment can provide some stability in the labour market.

The ethnic role of traditional industries must be considered as well. Thus, herding provides an opportunity for sustainable development of Indigenous peoples in four aspects:

1. Socio-economic: as a source of cash and in-kind income, and providing employment for Indigenous people.
2. Demographic: associating with reindeer the herding way of life provides a relatively isolated living for nomadic families. It promotes marriages with representatives of their nationality and education of children in the traditional ethnic culture.
3. Cultural and ethnic: for most of the northern peoples of Russia, home deer are the main symbol of culture. In addition, deer-breeding creates a favorable environment for communication in their native language, the transfer of traditional knowledge, spiritual and cultural values.
4. Political: Indigenous peoples are exclusively engaged in deer-breeding, which is the most favourable field for their constructive self-organization. This is an opportunity to unite representatives of different Indigenous peoples on the basis of common professional and economic interests. It is the protection of their professional interests which help the Saami, reindeer herders of Norway and other Scandinavian countries, to gain experience in various forms of social and political activity, and finally to form the Saami Parliament.



Displacement of traditional industries breaks the traditional livelihoods of Indigenous populations, leading to the extinction of ethnic culture and later to the dying out of the ethnic peoples themselves. Ignoring these facts, as well as the role of traditional knowledge in sustainable environmental management, is a result of the alienation of Indigenous inhabitants from the competent management of their development.

Modern challenges and adaptation strategies

Now we can speak about 5 main modern challenges for Indigenous peoples. These are:

1. Globalization;
2. Industrialization;
3. Ecological problems;
4. Climate change; and
5. Geopolitics.

Let us consider their impact on Indigenous peoples and suggest variants of adaptation strategies to them.

Globalization

A distinctive feature of the modern world is its ethnic and national diversity. At the beginning of the third millennium on this planet, there were some 5,000 ethnic groups and more than 600 community representatives who speak the same language. However, according to some predictions, by the end of the 21st Century more than half of currently existing ethnic languages may disappear forever. This means that many cultural values, as well as much of the knowledge presented in these languages, will be lost forever and will be simply inaccessible to future generations.

Linguistic assimilation of the Indigenous peoples of the North is expressed very strongly. According to a sample survey in the mid-1990s, among the rural population 69% of Saami, 87% of Evenki, 39% of Evens, and 94% of Yukaghirs considered the language of the other nationality as their “mother tongue”. So, today less than 200 out of 1,509 Yukaghirs speak their native



language. Only 23 of those 200 speak Yukaghir fluently, among them 3 speak in Forest dialect and 20 speak in Tundra dialect.

The process of globalization of culture has led to the commodification of culture. Such an effect is determined by the fact that the laws of market and competition (“mass culture”) are felt more and more in the sphere of culture. The impact of mass culture through the mass media is pushing traditional cultural values and native language out.

Cultural assimilation is probably not less in its scope and language, and it is also expressed very strongly. The traditional system of values is being actively reviewed. Western individualistic values, rationality, the desire for material well-being and self-assertion in society, founded on the primacy of consumption are spreading wider and wider. At the same time such values as social responsibility, community teamwork, mutual support, respect for elders, environmental awareness, and others are being actively displaced and lost. This destroys the continuity of generations and leads to the loss of linguistic diversity as well as to the loss of much of the traditional knowledge necessary for human survival.

The internal policy of some countries is also aimed at the assimilation of traditional communities. There, children are brought up in isolation from their families. The state language, the one of the dominating group of the population, dominates in all the spheres of communication. This also undermines the established ways of transmission of traditional knowledge to future generations.

The ethno-cultural aspect of adaptation is connected with the necessity to preserve the cultural and ethnic diversity in the course of the social and cultural modernization of the population. Thus, it is necessary to ensure the prevention, or at least slowing down, of the processes of natural assimilation (cultural, linguistic, ethnic) of the peoples in the North by other nations.

An important role in this direction belongs to bringing Russian legislation in accordance with international standards on the rights of Indigenous peoples to preserve their ethnic identity. The legal practice and an active government policy to support the language and culture of Indigenous peoples are especially important. Thus, in the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) languages of Indigenous peoples in their “places of compact living” have official status and are equal to the



state ones. Only activation of the population in the area of cultural and linguistic policy in such settlements for the actual use of their granted rights is required.

A special role belongs to the educational system, where conditions should be created to study the native language and culture. In the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) more than 40% out of 6,033 school-age Indigenous children have an opportunity to learn their native language. New models of educational institutions have been created: nomadic schools organize their work on the principle that it is a traditional economy which creates the natural conditions for the preservation of cultural and linguistic identity and ethnic identity among the Indigenous peoples of the North. Now in the Republic Sakha (Yakutia), 9 schools of such type are operating. All of them have been opened at the initiative of parents.

Thus, the decision to open an elementary–kindergarten nomadic tribal community school has already completed construction of the building. The question of its opening became important in the mid-1990s, because 15 children were born in ten families of the community those years. Before, the children of the community employees were traditionally taught at Kolymskaya National School, which is located 230 kilometers away from the community’s territory. Parents wanted their children to be educated. The main goal of the work is to connect the educational process to the nomadic lifestyle of the parents, and the preservation of the native Chukchi language, traditions, and customs.

There are some achievements in the realization of language building programs:

- More than 30 books, manuals, textbooks about the language and culture of Yukaghir people were published in 2005 - 2009. It is more than the number of such books published in 1970-1990.
- There is TV and radio studio of the “Gevan” Indigenous peoples on Sakha television.
- There is also a monthly national newspaper “Ilken”.

Despite this, the potential of the media in the field of languages is not used enough. The Internet space remains completely untapped.



Industrialization

The consequences of industrialization are the following: focus on mining, the acceleration of assimilation, the reduction of traditional subsistence territories; unprofitable traditional industries, low attractiveness of the traditional economy for young people; violation of ecology. Currently, Indigenous people are no longer threatened by foreign colonization. But even in countries that have freed themselves from colonial rule, where the Indigenous population constitutes the majority, such as in Africa or in Asia, the communities leading traditional lifestyles are threatened by the so-called “internal colonization”. Now Indigenous people are threatened not by physical extinction, as it was in the 18th and 19th Centuries, but by assimilation and the destruction of their habitat. The traditional territory of Indigenous peoples is reduced every day, with each new project of industrial development in pristine areas.

The Arctic and the North of Russia is the vast and important area of our country. Two-thirds of the Russian Federation is the North and its territories. With only 7% of the population of our country, it generates 27% of national GDP. However, this land contains around 80% of all minerals in Russia, 80% of water resources, 90% of forests, 100% of diamonds, 90% of oil, gas, gold, coal, and other mineral resources. The widespread commercial development of natural resources in the Russian northern territories has greatly undermined the foundations of the existence of traditional economic activities of Indigenous peoples of the North, since reindeer grazing areas (more than 20 million ha) were removed from circulation, hunting areas, and hundreds of rivers have lost their fisheries value due to pollution. Northern ethnic groups are put under the threat of dying out because of their continued exclusion from native habitat, traditional lifestyle, and ethno-cultural values.

Traditional branches of the economy (reindeer herding, hunting, and fisheries) were not ready for the conditions of the market economy, and they are still in deep crisis. For example, the reindeer population has been reduced by half compared to 1990. Moreover, reindeer herding, which used to be one of the gainful sources of the traditional economy, has become economically irrational.

The recent year's analysis of the economic sustainability of traditional land in the North shows that in the absence of continuing government support, the traditional economy is gainful only



for reindeer herds of more than 2,500 animals, with mass production of valuable fish and the harvesting of eggs, etc. In this case, the economic effect is achieved due to two factors. Firstly, due to bio-resource products mass processing leads to a sharp increase of pollution and always contains environmental risks. Secondly, the economic impact is impossible without the introduction of new technologies and productivity growth.

But the problem is that new advances in science and technology should be adapted to the North, and production in this region should be not only about economic growth, but also about the conservation and development of traditional livelihoods of Indigenous peoples. In this direction, the community of Nizhnekolymskiy district started implementing a project called “Solar panels for reindeer herding” since 2009. The aim is to use modern technology to improve the living standards of herders, reduce production costs, and support nomadic schools. We also need to develop and maintain a system to regulate economic activity in the Arctic, to ensure the preservation and development of traditional culture and traditional economic activities of Indigenous peoples in response to climate change and industrial growth in arctic regions.

The main task is to provide for participation of Indigenous people at all stages of development of such systems: from research to implementation, as well as their participation in all decisions that one way or another influence the situation in northern regions. The Indigenous population of the North cannot be happy when large mining companies do not teach the locals how to work in this modern type of economy. But it is not just for the admission of Aboriginal people to work, which occurs infrequently, it is also about receipt of income from the exploitation of mineral resources. Small nations can become full participants in the industrial development of the North. For that, mining companies must give them a certain number of shares. In addition, the business entities must be prohibited by law from making development decisions on the traditional territories of Indigenous people without their consent.

The integral part of this process, which deserves special attention from the federal government, should be the following: improving the regulatory framework to ensure the rights of Indigenous peoples of the North to use the land and its natural resources, ensuring legal protection of native habitat and traditional ways of life, development and approval of valuation methodologies and damage to habitats and ways of life caused by the negative effects of



industrial resource development, improving the efficiency of conservation and development of northern cultures, and the creation of standards for nature-saving technologies.

Of course, some steps have already been made. The Ministry of Regional Policy of the Russian Federation in December 2009 approved the experimental methodology to assess and redress impacts on habitats and ways of life caused by the negative effects of the industrial use of natural resources. The State Assembly (Il Tumen) of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in April 2010 adopted the Law “On Ecological Expertise in traditional residence and traditional economic activities of the Indigenous peoples of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)”, and so on.

The most important condition of adaptation of Indigenous peoples is the growth of social activity of these people and their participation in all decision-making process in their interests.

Ecological problems

Modern industrial production is still aimed primarily at large-scale development of mineral deposits. This development does not take due account of any peculiarities of the Indigenous peoples, nor their traditional needs, nor the unique circumpolar ecological systems, nor their centuries of experience with nature. As a result, such activity has led to several negative consequences that affected the lives of Indigenous peoples. It led to a marked reduction of traditional subsistence territories of Indigenous people at the expense of removal and destruction of land, and because of pollution. Civilization brings new tools and methods which are not friendly to nature (guns, traps, machines, oil pollution, etc.) and destroy traditional livelihood (youth prefer to live in villages, to have conveniences in everyday life, etc.). It has also rendered traditional livelihoods unprofitable. For example, beginning in the 1970s hunters started to use snowmobiles and helicopters to reach hunting places as opposed to traditional transport using reindeer. For some people, like the Forest Yukaghirs, reindeer herding disappeared in the 1980s. But this system only works with state support. When the Soviet system was destroyed and replaced by market economics, hunters could no longer afford helicopter or sometimes even snowmobile transportation. The result is that many hunters cannot go hunting in distant hunting places, and they cannot use reindeer because the reindeer have either disappeared or people have forgotten this traditional way of travel.



Throughout the North, man has formed large deserts areas usually as the result and impact of industrial activities. A striking example of the violation of ecology is Sakhalin, where oil and gas development goes together with foreign companies, which would have to produce according to modern international environmental standards. Today, in the northern part of Sakhalin, 60% of the land is a degraded landscape, and 90% of the reindeer pastures are covered with negative manifestations of human activity.

This situation naturally causes great concern for Indigenous peoples in relation to the implementation of industrial mega-projects in Siberia and the Far East. There are now, in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), 15 mega-projects that will be implemented in the territories of their traditional land.

An example of the first of them is the oil pipeline: "Eastern Siberia - Pacific Ocean" (ESPO). In early 2010, the public was extremely alarmed at the news of accidents on it. The length of the ESPO across the territory of the Republic is more than 1,500km, the pipeline is not in uninhabited lands, according to industrial companies, but directly passes through the traditional lands of Indigenous people - Indigenous peoples of the North and rural residents who have reindeer pastures and hunting lands, territories of breeding and walking the unique breed of Yakut horse, muster vegetable and non-timber natural resources, grasslands, and crosses large and small rivers with valuable species of fish.

Implementation of this project, which is of great geopolitical significance for the Russian Federation took place under unprecedented haste, the client company OAO Transneft, from the design stage, constantly ignored environmental and resource laws, regulations, and construction regulations. Designers and builders assured all about the complete reliability of the pipeline and emergency protection systems, as well as a full guarantee of ecological safety of the entire project. Transneft has always stated that public concerns are groundless, that the pipeline is a technically perfect object: "The new pipeline system is created, taking into account the best achievements in the design, construction and operation of oil and has a high level of reliability and minimal impact on the environment" (as described by ESPO on its website).



Mistakes in design, inadequate accounting for geoclimatic extreme conditions (as referred to after the accident by CEO LLC Vostoknefteprovod Vladimir Bronnikov) led to the logical result – an accident at ESPO. The first accident occurred near the town of Lensk, where the accidental discharge of 450m³ of crude oil occurred in the Nyuya watershed just 12-13 km from the river mouth. There is a real threat to falling oil and polluted water during the spring thaw in the river Lena. The second accident was on the territory of the Amur region, near the Skovorodino station. The third accident was not far from Olekminsk. In light of the first accidents, the VSTO project solutions to ensure environmental safety cannot withstand any criticism now. Greater concern is the possibility of the recurrence of accidents in other places, particularly where the pipeline runs along the bottom of rivers, including and on the bottom of the Lena River. These accidents clearly indicate the absence of an automatic system for public notification, the opacity of the company, positioning itself public, and blatant negligence of the attendants at the oil spill response. Fixing the facts of the accident and the first steps in oil spill response, as is customary in the practice of Transneft in other regions, were launched in total secrecy. It turned out that even the regional authorities have no authority on environmental control of the pipeline.

Implementation of this project has shown relationship problems between the operating companies of mega-projects and Indigenous peoples. It turned out that most Indigenous communities do not have appropriate registration and the documents necessary for the activities. This fact has formed the basis for the company “Transneft” to deny the majority of communities any compensation for land taken. On the other hand, the communities in which all the documents were in order had a stronger position in discussions and negotiations with Transneft. They were able to receive better compensation / disbursement for lands taken by the pipeline. It was also found that the oil pipeline project ignored the traditional use of natural features by northerners – as the draft plan does not provide crossings for herders, hunters, and wild animals. Thus, the hunting territory of Kornilov’s community was divided by the passing pipeline, so hunters have to make a significant detour to get to another part of their territory.

The basis of the adaptation strategy in these conditions should include the development of environmental protection legislation and legal education of the local population. It is very important to develop various forms of local government, and to secure land for the Indigenous communities and to issue the relevant documentation. This requires improved social activity



and development of the social structures of Indigenous peoples so that they can represent and protect their rights. Indigenous communities should be active participants in industrial decision-making at all levels.

Climate change

Changing climate worsens existing conditions and generates new threats and risks to the Indigenous peoples of Arctic regions. Climate warming increases problems for people and animals because of changing weather patterns, deteriorating water quality due to the strong thawing of permafrost, and the emergence of new species. Arctic ecosystems are destroyed and there is permafrost degradation, which leads to a change in the traditional conditions of food storage. Changing the water regime of rivers and lakes leads to later periods of ice, more frequent floods, increased coastal erosion, and accelerated freeze-out of the remains of the mammoth fauna. So, some Arctic villages, such as Andryushkino, Argahtah now have autumn floods that cause great damage to existing infrastructure – incapacitated airports, washed out roads, damaged houses increased because of melting around pile foundations. This also dramatically speeds up wear and tear on utilities, and power and communications lines. For residents of remote settlements, reducing the duration of winter roads and ice crossings poses problems with delivery of food, consumer goods, petroleum products, and reduces the opportunities for contact with the outside world. The rapid erosion of river banks raises the question of closing or moving some settlements. Local residents drew attention to another threat – there is a possibility of erosion of the burial sites for cattle that died many years ago of anthrax, and the old cemeteries with the graves of people killed by plague and smallpox.

Traditional branches of industry – reindeer breeding, hunting, fishing, and gathering are also subjected to serious threats. Most vulnerable to climate change impacts is herding. The main problem is pasture degradation. For the tundra zone, a disaster has been the rapid spread of shrubs, forming in some places, impenetrable thickets. As a result, some communities such as “Turvaugin” in Nizhnekolymskiy district have today lost up to 30% of their pastures. As well, sustained increase in precipitation in recent has formed a deep snow cover which creates difficulties in procuring the reindeer lichen. As well, the later onset of cold weather has led to difficulties in passing deer to winter pastures.



Abnormal rainfall in November 2005 at Tomponsk and Srednekolymsk, and in December 2006 in Nizhnekolymsk District, resulted in the formation of a dense ice crust which became an extreme test for herding. In Khalarcha, rain in December 2007 formed an icy crust across a 90km wide band of the tundra, making it impossible to use much of the pasture. Only highly competent professionals, councils of elders, and dedication have helped to avoid the loss of reindeer. Uncertainty in predicting weather makes it impossible to plan in advance the more efficient migration routes.

Climate change is causing great difficulties for hunters. Due to the later freeze-up, there is the need to go around unfrozen lakes and rivers. This extends travel and transport routes leading to excessive consumption of gasoline and, consequently, more expensive costs. This also causes rapid wear on snowmobiles and its component parts (tracks, rings, pistons, etc.). Many hunters may, as a result, sometimes miss the autumn (November) transition of fur animals, which usually makes up 40% of the total commercial take. In addition, wild deer are changing the routes and timing of their migrations. As well, abundance of water also broke the usual routes and timing of the spring flights of geese and ducks.

For fishermen, the change in water regimes has changed the seasonal behavior, composition, and abundance of fish. In Andryushkino, 2 families had difficulties in connection with the “care” of fish lakes that are their ancestral fishing grounds. The reason for their disappearance was the thawing of the permafrost. As a result, these families had little or no traditional fish food. There are also problems due to the late freeze-up period and missing some ice fishing, etc.

Access to resources is closely linked to security, which is provided by traditional knowledge accumulated over millennia. But climate change alters that reality, and Indigenous peoples are increasingly finding themselves in situations where their practice, experience, and knowledge cannot help them. This leads to an increase in the number of accidents, especially those related to the late freeze-up, early frosts, and floods.

Climate change results in deteriorating conditions within the traditional economy of Indigenous peoples. In addition, the warming Arctic climate is favorable for its industrial development, so an inevitable consequence of climate change is the growth of industrial loads in the territory. This multiplies the environmental risks produced by the already existing industry: rising levels



of pollution, and landscape and geological changes that may lead to habitat destruction through the release of hazardous substances or oil pipeline ruptures. The greatest danger of industrial development in the Arctic is the unknown and unpredictable changes, which can be extremely negative for the nature of the region and the Arctic Indigenous peoples.

The current processes show that the communities themselves are unable to effectively resist the effects of warming. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt national and regional programs to minimize the negative impacts of climate change. This should be implemented in the program to reduce the negative human impact on nature, and which includes the introduction of modern eco-friendly and environmentally sound technologies. Standard practice should be the participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making on climate change at all levels. There remains a considerable role for traditional knowledge to help us adapt to these processes.

Geopolitics

The recent years have seen a great increase in the influence of geopolitics on the lives of Indigenous peoples. The future of the northern territories is increasingly dependent on global economic and political trends. These include the continued importance of the extraction of mineral and hydrocarbon resources. In this case, the production volumes of non-renewable natural resources, and the related transport infrastructure, will inevitably grow, predominantly from the northern regions. Thus, in the Arctic are concentrated up to 30% and 12% of world reserves of gas and oil, respectively.

In the Russian Federation, the main political trend in recent years was centralization, which was expressed for northerners in the elimination of national regions by merging with bigger administrative regions. This led to a dramatic reduction of local authorities to oversee both the economy and land use.

Particularly painful for Indigenous people is legal unification. Amendments to the federal legislation on fishing and hunting in 2009 abolished without compensation the allocation of fishing grounds for Indigenous peoples in areas of their traditional lands so that now fishing sites and hunting areas should be allocated through auctions. The first auction of fishing



grounds in the lower Indigirka in early August 2009 showed what the law threatens Indigenous peoples. Of the four sites auctioned, the largest and richest bidders won the Lena river basin, bypassing the communities of “Allayiha” and “Russkoye Ustie”. Outraged fishermen together with the district office of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), August 9-10, picketed the district administration in Chokurdakh, and wrote a letter to the President and the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). The action of the fishermen had a resonance and drew the attention of authorities – President Medvedev, after treatment Shtyrov VA, instructed to prepare and submit relevant proposals to integrate the interests of Indigenous peoples.

As a result, spring 2010 Interdepartmental Working Group of the Federal Fisheries Agency had drawn up proposals. However, contrary to hopes the proposals are worsening the situation. It is proposed to prohibit the sale of products of the traditional fisheries of Indigenous Peoples of the North, to prohibit fishing for Indigenous people in any place, and limit the places where one can use Indigenous traditional fishing gear. The first sentence practically deprives the members of the community their livelihood, and the second significantly impairs the possibility of fishing for personal consumption, while the third allows you to prohibit the use of motorboats, purchase online, etc. Unfortunately, the latter is not a joke, because in 2008, the prosecutor's office banned the use of snowmobiles in the Primorsky Territory conservation area as being inconsistent with the concept of traditional land. Completed proposals the Federal Fisheries Agency appalled Indigenous people and caused several calls to higher authorities of the Russian Federation.

Given the unfortunate experience of fishing grounds, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Sakha (Yakutia) has initiated their own process on the consolidation of hunting grounds. They want to do this before the Law on Hunting comes into force on 1 April 2010 and the lands go up for auction. During the winter of 2009-2010, they did a lot of explanatory work. However, these actions have caused dissatisfaction among some persons who contacted the Office of the Federal Antimonopoly Service in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) with a claim of monopolization



by Indigenous peoples and their communities of the rights to hunting grounds. In this case, it is important to develop international and local law, which requires recognition of human rights, priority, and people. The urgent problem of contemporary Russia is the development of real federalism and civil society, especially among Indigenous peoples. It should facilitate the participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making at all levels.

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