

PRESS RELEASE



Circumpolar Inuit to Develop Declaration on Responsible Resource Development in Arctic Regions

Thursday February 24, 2011 - Ottawa, Canada – Inuit leaders from Greenland, Alaska, Russia, and Canada concluded a two-day Summit on Resource Development today in Ottawa. The summit was held in compliance with article 20 of the Nuuk Declaration, mandated by the delegates to the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) General Assembly held in Nuuk, Greenland June 28 – July 1, 2010.

“We have heard from numerous experts, Inuit and academics over the past two days on the issues directly related to developing resources in the Arctic,” stated Inuit Circumpolar Council Chair Aqqaluk Lyngé. “The Arctic lands and waters exist in one of the earth’s extreme climates, and this is a place where Inuit continue to live in a way that still depends on the wildlife from land and sea for nutritional, cultural, and economic purposes. Thus our discussions can be characterized as passionate at all levels in relation to major developments such as offshore oil drilling, and uranium mining.”

“We have heard of the regulatory regimes developers must comply with in order to engage in major projects in our respective jurisdictions. Inuit want to inform these regulatory regimes and governments with a set of guidelines developed by Inuit in the circumpolar states,” said Mr. Lyngé. “Thus we are committing to the finalization and adoption of a “Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Responsible Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat.”

Inuit leaders expressed confidence that the Declaration will be finalized imminently, and presented at the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in May 2011 in Nuuk, Greenland.

The Declaration is expected to set out a number of Inuit principles that must guide resource development in the Arctic, for example:

- Ensuring Inuit are primary beneficiaries of resource development.
- Respect for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Inuit legal rights.
- Balancing of risks and benefits of development, and ensuring development is sustainable.
- Respecting the Arctic Council’s “Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines” as minimum standards.
- Support for an international mechanism for funds targeted towards liability and compensation for oil pollution damage resulting from offshore oil exploration and exploitation.
- Leaders will continue to work together and with their respective governments to aggressively address and pursue responsible resource development issues.
- Environmental and social impacts from resource development should be properly assessed.

The Summit demonstrated the unity among Inuit leaders, who are committed to work to make resource development benefit their people. The government of Greenland has kindly offered to co-host the next Summit with the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

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