



Press Release: ICC Chair Addresses Arctic Biodiversity Congress, Emphasizes the Interconnectedness of Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Indigenous Rights

October 9, 2018 – Rovaniemi, Finland – The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Chair, Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, provided a keynote address at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress (ABC) in Rovaniemi, Finland. The opening session included the President of Finland Sauli Niinistö and The Finnish Saami Parliament President Tiina Sanila-Aikio. Many of the speakers noted elements of the newly released Intergovernmental Panel and Climate Change (IPCC) report, Global Warming of 1.5°C. Importantly, the IPCC report underscores that “...approaches...informed by Indigenous Knowledge...can accelerate the wide scale behavior changes consistent with adapting to and limiting global warming to 1.5°C.”¹

Within her address at the ABC, Dr. Dorough stressed the interrelated significance between biodiversity, human rights, and “Inuit status, knowledge, intellectual property, land and territory, sustainable development, and above all the need to play a central role in Arctic policy.” She quoted Eben Hopson Sr.’s address to the ICC delegation in 1977 - *Our language contains the memory of four thousand years of human survival through the conservation and good managing of our Arctic wealth... Our language contains the intricate knowledge of the ice that we have seen no others demonstrate. Without our central involvement, there can be no safe and responsible Arctic resource development.*

Dr. Dorough elaborated to state that “Hopson’s specific reference to sea ice reflects an understanding of the cold, foreboding, harsh conditions that many non-Inuit are still working to understand in the face of dramatic, adverse changes. Indeed, today we have hundreds of scientists still trying to figure out climate change and resource development impacts on sea ice and the Arctic Ocean and coastal seas generally.”

Dr. Dorough further stressed the importance of Indigenous Knowledge. Indigenous Peoples hold the right to be different and respected as such. A distinction that should not be conflated with “local communities.” In short, Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge should not be lumped together with non-Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge.

She concluded with a statement concerning the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Arctic. “If we are to achieve the ‘objectives’ of Agenda 2030 [of the UN SDGs], it must be understood that Inuit life ways are inextricably linked with what are now referred to as the sustainable development goals. Indeed, it is largely due to lack of respect for and recognition of Indigenous human rights that our cultural integrity is threatened by the values of the non-Indigenous or western world. Indeed, *The Future We Want* states - *We stress the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development. We also recognize the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of global, regional, national and subnational implementation of sustainable development strategies.*²

¹ The Summary for Policymakers of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (SR15) is available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/> or www.ipcc.ch.

² A/RES/66/288* The future we want, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012.

The Arctic Biodiversity Congress attracted 450 participants and will continue through the week. Additionally, Rovaniemi will host an Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting, and a Youth Summit this week. With so many people gathered to address the common challenges and potential solutions we face within the Arctic, it is hoped that States and others embrace the central role of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge.

For more information:

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Founded in 1977 by the late Eben Hopson of Barrow, Alaska, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has flourished and grown into a major international non-government organization representing approximately 155,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). The organization holds Consultative Status II at the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is a Permanent Participant at the Arctic Council. ICC strives to strengthen unity among Inuit of the circumpolar north; promote Inuit rights and interests on an international level; develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and seek full and active partnership in the political, economic, and social development of the circumpolar North.