

ICC GA 2018

“Inuit – The Arctic We Want”

SESSION #5

THE FUTURE OF INUIT NUNAAT – BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR A STRONGER INUIT NUNAAT

PARTNERSHIPS – BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN INUIT NUNAAT & BEYOND

/Sara Olsvig

Honorable ICC delegates, Ms. Chair, ministers, ladies and gentlemen, friends and family

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this 13<sup>th</sup> Inuit Circumpolar Council General Assembly. It is an honor for me to have this opportunity to share a few views of our shared future with all of you.

I am also truly happy to visit Utqiagvik again. This is my third time here; first time was in 1979 when I as a baby (same age as my son Uno who is with me now). I visited together with my mother and her class from Ilinnarfissuaq, the teachers college in Greenland. Second time was at the 2006 ICC General Assembly (with my daughter Navarana in my belly) and now, in 2018. It is an amazing and a fulfilling feeling to find a place that feels like home, so far away. May we continue to build our relationships across Inuit Nunaat and further increase our contact, not just at the ICC GA's, also on a more regular basis.

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We, the peoples of the Arctic, hold a very special and, if you think about it, incredible position. We live in a region of the World, where our states and governments, different as they are, work together, based on dialogue and diplomacy. We live side by side, sharing both cultures, languages and resources. We have a huge responsibility to do things right, to maintain our strong partnerships, both among Inuit and with other indigenous peoples, and with other partners in the Arctic and beyond. Not least, we have a responsibility to take the lead of the development of the Arctic.

Today, I would like to reflect on some of the challenges we share with our international and national partners, and secondly reflect on some of the challenges we face internally in our communities and as peoples.

### **The Arctic as a Zone of Peace**

In 1977 the Inuit Circumpolar Conference adopted its Resolution 77-11 with the title “Peaceful and Safe Uses of the Arctic Circumpolar Zone”. It said: “Recognizing that it is in the interest of all circumpolar people

that the arctic shall forever to be used exclusively for peaceful and environmentally safe purposes”... “THAT the arctic shall be used for peaceful and environmentally safe purposes only”.

Today, more than forty years later, it is even more relevant and important for us Inuit to lead the advocacy for the Arctic to be declared a Zone of Peace.

Many of the challenges we face are still the same, but new challenges continuously emerge and we must continuously better our work to meet these challenges. As we have heard over the past few days, advocating for our rights, paving the way for our development, bettering the livelihood of our peoples, is hard work. As it has been stated many times during the week, so many people before us worked hard for us to be where we are today. I would like to recognize all of our leaders over those forty years. We have come to be known in international fora as the pragmatic people, always finding and leading ways to solutions. Our leaders have been sitting side by side with state leaders and UN secretary generals calling for our voices to be heard. This takes diplomatic skills, and it takes hard work. Thank you for leading the way.

It also takes a strong believe in our visions and goals. And boiling it down to very few words, advocating for peace in all its forms is exactly what we have done, and must continue to do.

Believing in peace is to believe in people. Believing in peace is about hope and it’s about human rights.

### **Nothing about us without us**

Much work still lies ahead of us. As many others have noted, many new players want to take part in the Arctic dialogue, not least the Arctic decision-making.

In the Arctic, we have another unique forum of cooperation. The Arctic Council. We see how more and more states and international organizations apply for observer status to the Arctic Council. We see how the Arctic and issues relating directly to us, and all Arctic issues do, increasingly become at the center of attention both in the Arctic States governments and in states beyond.

Over the last forty years many of us Arctic peoples have developed and established our own parliaments and governments. Greenland since 1979. We develop the Arctic every day. Decisions taken by us, be they about airports, ports or health and social issues, affect not only our national and local communities, but the whole Arctic.

Therefore it is crucial, that the Arctic Council includes our governments in all aspects of its work. This is not just a matter of coordination within the particular nation states. Our governments must have a seat at the table. It is a matter of the legitimacy of the Arctic Council.

Inuit Circumpolar Council holds an important position in the Arctic Council. The structure of the Arctic council is unique, with six permanent participants at the table. Let us work to build on this unique structure to make sure, that the Arctic Council continues to be for and by Arctic peoples.

Nothing about us, without us.

### **Our own responsibilities**

Now, I would like to turn to some of the challenges we face internally in our societies. It is my view, that we share some of these challenges across Inuit Nunaat and we must act on them collectively.

Looking across Inuit Nunaat it is evident, that we must have a stronger focus on social affairs. We spoke briefly about homelessness here in plenary a few days ago. We also spoke briefly about the sexual abuse of children and adults. My message is clear. We must recognize that we have held the responsibility to act on our own social affairs, for most Inuit, for decades. It is our own decisions and our own priorities that form our local societies and social initiatives.

Of course we must never lose focus on our history and the impact of our history. But it is also time to look ahead and within.

A few days ago we heard from the Head of ICC Canada Delegation about the number of Inuit in Canada migrating to the big cities in the South. In Greenland, we see the same pattern. It is estimated that between 15.000 and 20.000 Greenlanders now live in Denmark. The majority lives well integrated and with good and healthy lives, but as we hear from the social workers at the Greenlandic Houses in Denmark it is also very likely, that an increasing number leave Inuit Nunaat because of serious social challenges, despair and homelessness or meet these challenges after migrating to Denmark.

We must act, both in our own local communities and for those Inuit who has left Inuit Nunaat. We must do more outreach from back home. And we must put these social challenges on the agenda in the ICC and other fora, because we do have a lot to learn from each other. We need to learn from each other in order to engage better in approaches that are designed and fit our own societies.

Having recently held position as Minister of Social Affairs in Greenland, my message is also, that we must have a holistic approach to our social challenges. Prevention, early intervention, working across the different sectors is crucial for our social initiatives to succeed. Employment is closely linked to social well-being, housing is closely linked to health, and education is closely linked to employment, and so on.

A holistic and culturally appropriate approach to social affairs is also about understanding the links between our mental health and our social challenges.

This requires partnerships not only within the national government sectors, but also between the business sector and governments. I am happy to see, that the business sector in Greenland increasingly focuses on their social responsibilities, including education. CSR Greenland, co-lead by a number of businesses, has initiated a systematic work on the SDG 2030. This is the kind of partnership that could go across Inuit Nunaat, and can impact our work on social issues positively, if done right.

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We must start talking openly and honestly about our social challenges. The abuse of children is happening in our own communities. In Greenland, we have had a strong focus on this in the past years and many, many good initiatives are happening – **still the latest numbers from Greenland's National Advocacy for Childrens Rights show that 1 of three girls have experienced sexual assault before they turn 18, and one in ten boys. Besides that we must also expect numbers we still do not have knowledge about.** We must engage in holistic approaches to prevent abuse, including focus on the violators.

It is crucial, that each and every one of us adults takes responsibility to act. This is about children's rights, this is about human rights. I would like to turn your attention to the campaign co-lead by the Government of Greenland and UNICEF Denmark "Ullut tamaasa" – meaning "every day" against sexual abuse of children. The campaign consists of info material, and videos that can be found on the Facebook and YouTube of NAKUUSA.

Let us all act, every day, to protect our children from abuse.

### **Inclusiveness for us all**

I am highlighting this here as an example of how we must take the human rights we fight for, and fought for over forty years in international fora, and bring them back home. This was mentioned by a few speakers before me. As Dalee Sambo Dorrough said, these rights mean nothing in the hallways of the UN. They must be applied back home.

Fighting for our human rights gives us an even greater responsibility to apply those rights in our own societies.

We must engage in a systematic focus on the increasing number of Inuit moving South. In Greenland, the number of inhabitants has been decreasing over the past few years, from over 57.000 a few years ago to 55.860 by January 2017, although we have seen stagnation in the numbers last year, where we increased by 17 people, this is worrying.

What is it, our people is searching for when deciding to move South? What are the factors that can bring folks back home? We must investigate this, and act.

In finalizing this subject I would like to bring one more point to your attention. I thought quite long about how to say this, and I have decided to be blunt.

We must stop fighting about who is more Inuk, who is more kalaaleq. Being Inuk comes from within; it is not defined by the color of one's eyes or by language alone or by livelihood. Identity comes from within. Identity cannot be measured or put into boxes. And it is a human right for each and every one of us, to self-identify.

There is no such things as a "half-breed".

There is a link between us striving as peoples to be recognize collectively and individually.

We have talked quite a lot about "rural or urban" this week. I would like to say that we as a collective are both rural and urban. We are both hunters and construction workers. We are teachers, nurses, scholars, phd's, designers and child care workers. And we need all!

This diversity is part of our strength. We must embrace our diversity, we must embrace that culture and identity is not static.

And more importantly, we need all human resources – inuit, human beings, is our most important resource.

These are the responsibilities that come with self-determination and independence. The responsibilities we are meeting and must act on in the future we want.

### **Human rights approach to development**

In conclusion, going back to where we started, advocating for our human rights, wanting our part of the world to be a zone of peace, all of that is what we must also do here in Inuit Nunaat.

To advocate for our region of the World to be a zone of peace requires us to find peace within ourselves. To spread those principles in our own societies. Let us make sure, that we have a human rights approach to our development. And that lies within our own responsibility.

I was very inspired by one of the youth speakers talking about forgiveness. It is time to forgive. The self-determination we have gained and will increasingly gain requires us to move forward, and take responsibility.

Independence comes from within.

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On Monday Jimmy Stotts told us, that he has always wanted to be a Greenlander. I would like to say, that since that trip here to Utqiagvik when I was one year old, having been told the stories of our meetings back then, and in particular one story about how I had embarrassed my mother by crawling out on the floor joining the Inupiaq Dancers one night, I have always wanted to be a Inupiaq Dancer.

My daughter, who is now 11, soon 12, really, really wanted to come with me here. I am confident, that she will find her way here one day. And I am convinced, that even if my son Uno is only one year old now, he will remember the rhythms and sounds of the drum dances he has heard this week, and will find his way back here too, as I did.

Our meetings, the meetings we have between Inuit, even if they happen rarely, leave such strong impressions that they stick with us for the rest of our lives. They give us strength, they give us connectedness, and they give us hope for a future where more of our scars and challenges have healed. Because we, meeting with fellow Inuit, we fill in each other's gaps. We complement each other, with our differences and our connectedness. We give each other extra strength.

We must give our fellow Inuit more opportunities to meet and use this strength.

That way, the future we want is a future that includes all Inuit.

A future that is bright and full of hope.

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Qujanaq