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March 12, 2019 – Mexico City, Mexico – Dalee Sambo Dorrough, ICC Chair, is participating in an international workshop “Indigenous peoples’ rights to autonomy and self-government as a manifestation of the right to self-determination”.

She was invited to present an “Overview of the International legal framework of the right to autonomy and its application” within the context of Indigenous peoples, where she surveyed the history and achievement of the right to self-determination and its equal application to Indigenous peoples as understood in international law. Sara Olsvig, ICC Greenland delegate and former Greenland Government Minister for social issues, family, equality and justice, and Hilu Tagoona of Baker Lake, Nunavut, were independently invited to address respective Greenland Government and Nunavut developments.

The seminar was hosted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples Rights and International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, from March 11-13, 2019 and held at the Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The objectives of the workshop were to share and analyze experiences among Indigenous peoples and regions, on the recognition and exercise of autonomy and self-government, as a manifestation of the right to self-determination. The seminar offered an important forum for exchange of experiences and the cross fertilization of approaches to gain recognition of and respect for the Indigenous peoples right of self-determination at all levels.

Dr. Dorrough stated that “Though we have managed to make extraordinary gains throughout Inuit Nunaat, outstanding issues exist, from recognition of the many needs for our relations in Chukotka to food sovereignty in Alaska to genuine self-government in Canada and the continuing dialogue for independence in Greenland.”

In the context of a panel entitled “Responses from States and other relevant actors to IPs’ demands to autonomy and self-governance”, participants benefited from Hilu Tagoona’s narrative about the emergence of Nunavut and emphasized education and wellness as key to next steps in capacity building. She stressed the importance of strong partnerships between levels of government and Inuit organizations to achieve the objectives of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement.

Sara Olsvig was able to expertly address the status of the Government of Greenland and the current issues facing the whole of society within Kalallit Nunaat. She was invited to address the Greenland Government in the context of the “Key elements of autonomy and self-government”. Sara stated “I was happy to have the chance to emphasize the importance of claiming and implementing the rights we attain with self-government and through self-determination. Not least to make sure, that we stay informed on foreign policy and security implications that our own decisions often have, internal and foreign relations are often inseparable.”

The gathering provided a useful forum for diverse participants to exchange knowledge and to listen to analysis and various political, legal contexts and how contemporary states are either responding or not. One key objectives of the seminar were to identify the main processes, models and achievements in terms of indigenous autonomies and self-governance as well as the options and challenges that exist.

Contact:

Kelly Eningowuk
ICC (Alaska)
907-274-9058
kelly@iccalaska.org

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an Indigenous Peoples’ Organization (IPO), founded in 1977 to promote and celebrate the unity of 160,000 Inuit from Alaska (USA), Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). ICC works to promote Inuit rights, safeguard the Arctic environment, and protect and promote the Inuit way of life. Regarding climate change, we believe that it is crucial for world leaders and governments to recognize, respect and fully implement the human rights of Inuit and all other Indigenous peoples across the globe.