



INUIT

Press Release

IPCC Special Report on Ocean and Cryosphere Highlights Critical Inuit Concerns Over Climate Change in the Arctic

September 25, 2019 – Ottawa, Ontario – The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate was released today in Monaco. The Report points to drastic consequences to Arctic regions as a result of unstoppable changes to oceans and ice coverage.

All people on Earth depend directly or indirectly on the ocean and cryosphere. The global ocean covers 71% of the Earth surface and contains about 97% of the Earth's water. The cryosphere refers to frozen components of the Earth system. Around 10% of Earth's land area is covered by glaciers or ice sheets.

"This report proves what Inuit have been saying for decades," said ICC Canada President Monica Eil-Kanayuk. "Warming oceans and air mean reduced ice coverage, rising sea levels, contributing to flooding in low lying areas, and the erosion of our shorelines resulting in massive relocations of infrastructure and people."

The importance of sea ice to Arctic Indigenous Peoples, and our interdependence with the Arctic ocean and cryosphere were *again* stressed in the Special Report. Furthermore, the Report appropriately noted the depth of this interdependence as one of the reasons Inuit experience unique challenges from impacts of ocean and cryosphere change which are further exacerbated by non-climate factors such as social inequities.

The Report also points to our reliance on our environment and history with our homelands as key strengths informing our understanding of adaptation as well as our management and governance structures. Indeed, ICC received particular attention in the report for our work on the Pikialasorsuaq Commission as an example of Inuit Knowledge and Inuit-led management responding to cryosphere change in the North Water Polynya.

Among the Special Report findings related to the Arctic it notes that:

- Over the last decades, global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere, with mass loss from ice and glaciers, reductions in snow and Arctic sea ice and thickness, and permafrost thaw.
- Cryosphere changes have impacted terrestrial and freshwater species and ecosystems in high mountain and polar regions, for example through the appearance of land previously covered by ice, changes in snow cover, and thawing permafrost. These changes have contributed to changing the seasonal activities, abundance and distribution of ecologically, culturally, and economically important plant and animal species, disturbance regimes, and ecosystem functioning.
- Impacts of climate-related changes in the ocean and cryosphere increasingly challenge current governance efforts to develop and implement adaptation responses from local to global scales, and in some cases pushing them to their limits. People with the highest exposure and vulnerability are often those with lowest capacity to respond.

The ICC Canada President also noted the immense transformation to Inuit Nunaat due to climate change. Immediate and drastic measures are needed to curb global GHG emissions. Global leaders need to take strong action at the upcoming Climate Change COP25 Conference in Santiago, Chile in December.

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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. In regard to 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.