



Press Release

Inuit Circumpolar Council Calls for Safe Arctic Shipping to Protect Inuit Rights and the Marine Environment - ICC Applies for IMO Consultative Status

February 25, 2020 – Ottawa, Canada – The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) attended the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR7) meeting in London, UK last week. ICC fought hard for protections for the Arctic marine environment and reiterated its call for regulations on heavy fuel oil use. In light of the final decisions, ICC will continue to reach out to industry and governments to work together to protect our marine ecosystems for the generations that will follow us.

Modern day remote Arctic communities depend on markets in the south for many of our goods. With this comes the need for safe and economically sound shipping and transportation routes to move people and goods to and from this region, which is becoming more accessible, as ice recedes. ICC's position is clear, we must take measures to ensure safe Arctic shipping in a manner which does not further burden remote Inuit communities.

Throughout the difficult negotiations, we observed resistance by some countries over the regulations and timelines for use of heavy fuel oil in Arctic shipping, resulting in compromise language providing for a deadline for a ban that will take 10 years. Other issues related to safe Arctic shipping that we are closely watching and will continue to work on include enhanced spill response capacity in communities, ship emissions, ballast water discharges, underwater noise, and safe shipping corridors.

"The Inuit Circumpolar Council wishes to express our encouragement that a text toward restrictions on the use and carriage of heavy fuel oils in Arctic waters has been formulated. However, we remain deeply concerned about the potential negative impacts that "exemptions" will continue to put our communities and ways of life at risk. We will continue advocating for a full ban to phase out use of HFOs and ultimately protect our communities and environment," said Lisa Koperqualuk, Vice-President of Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada.

We will continue to work with member countries, industries, and our regional Inuit organizations to protect the Arctic marine environment and Inuit communities.

The ICC also submitted its application for consultative status at the IMO to ensure that the ICC can participate directly and independently to advocate for issues of concern to Inuit voices, to make our voices heard throughout these important discussions as well as a host of other issues within the purview of the IMO.

"Both of these actions are linked," said ICC Chair Dalee Sambo Dorough in Alaska. "ICC representatives have attended IMO meetings, depending on member states and other non-governmental organizations for the opportunity address the IMO. However, we want the ability to represent ourselves directly consistent with our right to do so. It is crucial that we, as Inuit, bring our own voices to the table in light of our reliance upon the marine environment. Furthermore, our call for safe Arctic shipping and to "phase out heavy fuel oil (HFO)" in Arctic waters as directed by the *Utqiagvik Declaration*, passed by Inuit at our 2018 General Assembly in Alaska in July, 2018."

Article 18 of the Utqiagvik Declaration mandates ICC to “advocate for the enforcement of the IMP Polar Code, other international and national regulations, advance emergency response, and phase out heavy fuel oil (HFO) in order to minimize impacts on marine mammals and fish to prevent disruption of seasonal hunting, and for safety and environmental protection.”

Lisa Koperqualuk, ICC Canada Vice-President (International), fought hard for Inuit rights and this directive while in London at the IMO meetings, commending the government of Canada for supporting the ban on HFO. “We are pleased that Canada announced its support for the ban in the days leading up to this meeting, bringing the number of Arctic states in favour of a ban to seven out of eight. We are living in an age of transformation in the Arctic and we must not hold Indigenous communities hostage by threatening increased costs. We are simply taking action to safeguard our Arctic marine waters, animals and environment – each are interrelated to the many dimensions of who we are as distinct peoples.”

The IMO Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) deals with all matters relating to pollution prevention and response which falls within IMO’s mandate. It held PPR7 February 17-21, 2020

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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 180,000 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.