



ICC PRESS RELEASE

Inuit Congratulate Arctic Council on 25th Anniversary Urge Greater Role for Permanent Participants

May 20, 2021 – Anchorage, Alaska – The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), as one of the six Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council (AC), expresses its congratulations to the Arctic Council in its 25th year of existence, as the 12th Arctic Council Ministerial meeting, chaired by Iceland, takes place.

In a statement, the President of ICC Alaska, Jimmy Stotts said, “The people that have been engaged in this endeavor over the past 25 years have much to be proud of. The six working groups, various task forces, and different expert groups have accomplished a great body of work since the Council was formally created in September of 1996 in Ottawa. Our hats off to the many Senior Arctic Officials and Permanent Participants for pushing significant policy recommendations forward by adoption by the Ministers of the eight Arctic states over the past two and a half decades.”

ICC was instrumental in the creation of the Arctic Council on September 19, 1996 with the signing of the Ottawa Declaration. Our former Chair, Mary Simon played a central role in the development of the Ottawa Declaration. ICC Canada President Monica Eil-Kanayuk, ICC Greenland President Hjalmar Dahl, and ICC Chukotka President Liubov Taian also attended the 12th AC meeting.

At this Arctic Council Ministerial session, there has been progress, but also more must be done to ensure greater inclusivity and representation of the Permanent Participants who represent the Indigenous peoples who in the vast majority live in the circumpolar Arctic region. “The term ‘meaningful engagement’ has a different meaning for the Arctic states than it does for the Permanent Participants.”

Jimmy Stotts commended the Arctic Council for returning to its original objective of trying to balance sustainable development and protection of the environment. “I spoke to this body two years ago in Rovaniemi of the need to find that balance. ICC believes the Arctic Council is still attempting to find that balance. Thankfully, global climate change is one again back on the agenda.”

ICC voiced concerns about the proliferation of marine protected areas. Inuit must have guaranteed access to these protected areas to practice our way of life and to our food resources. Similarly, ICC stated it would not be excluded from discussions related to how food resources should be monitored and managed. Inuit must be an integral part of any Arctic wildlife management scheme developed. We have concerns over recent attempts by some to stop Inuit hunting for food.

“We strongly encourage the Arctic Council to join with Inuit on developing policy recommendations to address our concerns on these two issues,” said Stotts. “We will not be separated from our food and our culture. We will not accept our culture being outlawed.” Stotts noted ICC would call out organizations that did not recognize the rights of the Arctic’s First Peoples to food security and cultural survival.

ICC reiterated its longstanding position that the Arctic should be a peaceful region, and a nuclear free zone. In his concluding remarks Jimmy Stotts noted, “We express our thanks to the Icelandic team for their strong effort leading the organization during their chairmanship. They did a great job during the added burden of the COVID-19 pandemic. We pledge our support to the Russian chairmanship.”

-30-

Contact:

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

Tukumminnguaq Nykjær Olsen
ICC (Greenland)
tukumminnguaq@inuit.org

Stephen Hendrie
ICC (Canada)
613 668 1923
type88@post.com

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.