



INUIT

ICC Press Release

A victory for Inuit at IMO - Indigenous Knowledge to be included to deal with underwater ship noise pollution

January 24, 2022 – Anchorage, Alaska - Inuit voices were heard at an important meeting on underwater ship noise held by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) this week. The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) used its new provisional consultative status at an IMO sub-committee discussing underwater noise to ensure that the group's work on reducing noise from ships will use Indigenous Knowledge and engage Inuit and our communities.

The decision came after an intervention by Lisa Koperqualuk, ICC Canada's Vice President International, who called for "the Terms of Reference for the work plan on underwater noise explicitly includes engagement and utilization of Indigenous Knowledge."

The sub-committee met to begin development of a work plan intended to lead to reductions in underwater noise made by ship traffic. This issue is of major concern to Inuit due to the potential harm that such noise causes to sea mammals on which Inuit depend for food. To date, the current IMO vessel noise pollution reduction guidelines are voluntary, which has led to minimal implementation by industry.

Since gaining provisional status, this is the first opportunity for the substantive, effective use of this Observer status. Lisa Koperqualuk pointed out to the committee and all IMO members that the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) affirms that Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their culture and traditional knowledge.

"As a UN body, the IMO must consider and fully implement UNDRIP, including in our collective work here today," she said. "We are the first Indigenous organization to be granted this status and it's our hope that it will be the beginning of a new relationship between the IMO and its members with Indigenous people throughout the world, and more specifically in the Arctic," Ms. Koperqualuk told the sub-committee. "Inuit depend upon shipping for essential goods and services, and Inuit communities also depend on the sea for livelihoods and food. Our economy and culture depend on safe, low impact, and clean shipping."

ICC's representative made a specific suggestion that the terms of reference that will guide development of the work plan "explicitly includes engagement and utilization of Indigenous Knowledge, which is needed in the scope of work to complete the technical work of this sub-committee."

Her suggestion was adopted. ICC's presence and participation has now resulted in the global shipping community taking into account Inuit voices and Indigenous views. Global rules on underwater noise pollution reduction will now reflect local Inuit concerns and community input. The ICC seat at the IMO has enabled national input and an opportunity for national Inuit interests to be represented.

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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.