



PRESS RELEASE

UNDRIP 15th Anniversary: The framework is established, more work must be done

Nuuk, September 13, 2022

On September 13th, 2007, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was endorsed by a majority of 143 UN member states. On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the finalization and recognition of the UN Declaration, the Inuit Circumpolar Council celebrates the achievements, but also reminds of the work that lie ahead.

Sara Olsvig, International Chair of Inuit Circumpolar Council:

- *We are grateful to all those from our homelands that directly contributed to the drafting, negotiation, and finalization of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as we celebrate the 15th anniversary of this significant international human rights instrument adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007.*
- *We continue to face the challenge of the effective implementation of the human rights that we fought for. Therefore, we are happy to see so many Inuit youth organizations and individuals embracing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and embracing indigeneity. It is your demands and your tireless focus that will bring us all forward to truly and fully implementing the UN Declaration.*

In the renewed focus on the individual and collective rights recognized in the UN Declaration, the Inuit Circumpolar underscores the hard work that the Indigenous Peoples' Organization and its leaders contributed to in the development of the UNDRIP.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council was an integral part of the negotiations. Together with five other Indigenous Peoples Organizations, ICC representatives pushed for the fundamental and in all ways instrumental recognition of Indigenous Peoples' right of self-determination. As far back as 1983, Inuit participated in the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. In 1985, the ICC took part in proposing the following text, which largely remained part of the final version of the UNDRIP:

All indigenous nations and peoples have the right to self-determination by virtue of which they have the right to whatever degree of autonomy or self-government they choose this includes the right to freely determine their political status, freely pursue their own economic social religious and cultural development and determine their own membership and/or citizenship without external interference.



Furthermore, ICC proposed principles, that are today recognized as integral to Indigenous Peoples' Rights, including the rights of self-determination and self-identification. The principles laid out were as follows:

All indigenous peoples have the right to determine the person or group of persons who are included within its population.
Each indigenous people has the right to determine the form structure and authority of its institutions.

Throughout the negotiations on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ICC maintained a focus on equality and non-discrimination as peremptory norms and demanded that the rights recognized through the declaration are not rights that are '*granted*', but rights that are *inherent*.

Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council Sara Olsvig:

- *Today, we welcome the new debates and initiatives across Inuit Nunaat, that focus on our rights and our identity. We urge that the principles which are foundational to the Declaration are remembered. Throughout history, colonizers and outside powers attempting to define Indigenous identity have threatened to divide us. Colonial constructs, such as outsiders bringing concepts of 'half-breeds' or demanding a certain 'blood quantum' have not succeeded in defining who we are as Indigenous Peoples, or as Inuit.*
- *It is our desire that Inuit carefully proceed with our own definitions of who we are, and that those efforts are based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Outside pressure and threats to our rights are still real. Through our joint efforts and our collective identity, we will remain strong in our belonging and our unity across Inuit Nunaat.*

As the Inuit Circumpolar Council celebrates the fifteenth anniversary of the UNDRIP, the council is pleased to see new generations of Inuit discussing and debating the rights of Indigenous Peoples and relating the specific provisions of the Declaration to the everyday life of all Inuit.

- *As affirmed in the 2022 ICC General Assembly Declaration, we will continue exercise "the right of Inuit to directly participate in processes that affect us" to ensure that we are engaged in ongoing discussions and debates concerning our distinct rights as Inuit.*
- *We urge our governments and parliaments to ensure implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – and to engage our leadership and organizations and not least our youth in these efforts. Good governance initiatives are taken across Inuit Nunaat. More must be done to truly apply and implement the rights that are inherent to all Inuit. We still have a long way to go.*
- *The Inuit Circumpolar Council remains determined and engaged to provide a service to all Inuit and to be a good partner in the endeavors of our governments to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We congratulate all citizens of Inuit Nunaat on the 15th anniversary of*



this important human rights instrument, and we call for a continued strong democratic development forced on human rights across all of Inuit Nunaat.

Sara Olsvig

International Chair

Inuit Circumpolar Council

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FACTS:

1977: The founding of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (later Inuit Circumpolar Council) took place in Utqiagvik, Alaska.

1980: The ICC was formally established with recognition and membership of Alaska, Canada and Greenland.

1982: The Working Group on Indigenous Populations was established in the UN.

1983: The ICC gained UN ECOSOC NGO status.

1984: ICC participated in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in Panama City and assisted in drafting the principles of self-determination later adopted in the UNDRIP.

1985: The ICC together with five other Indigenous Peoples' Organizations proposed draft declarations on the rights to self-determination, and the recognition of the rights to lands, territories, and resources.

1992: ICC Chukotka was formed and gained official membership of ICC.

1990s and 2000s: ICC actively took part in the deliberations in the UN, with among others, previous ICC Chair Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough as a strong advocate and representative.

2007: On the 13th of September 2007, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by a majority of 143 states in favour, 4 votes against and 11 abstentions. Denmark and Greenland endorsed the Declaration while Canada and the US votes against. Canada and the US have since endorsed the Declaration. Russia abstained from voting in 2007.

Links to the UNDRIP

English: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

Russian: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2019/06/UN-Declaration-Rights-of-Indigenous-Peoples_DGC-WEB-RU.pdf

Kalaallisut: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_greenlandic.pdf

Danish: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_danish.pdf

French: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_F_web.pdf

Other languages: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>