



INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL JOINS GLOBAL EFFORTS IN TACKLING PLASTIC POLLUTION AT THE FOURTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

30 April 2024- Ottawa, Canada/ Traditional, Unceded Territory of The Algonquin Anishinaabeg

People- Negotiations finished Monday night at the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Discussions began in 2022 and, after two years, there is a lot of work ahead to reach the goal of a final treaty by the end of 2024.

ICC Vice-Chair Lisa Koperqualuk led a strong delegation that included Gerald Inglangasuk of the Inuvialuit Fisheries Joint Management Committee, Liz Pijogge, Northern Contaminants Researcher for the Nunatsiavut Government, and several ICC staff. The Government of Canada's Northern Contaminants Program has provided support for ICC's work related to plastics and our participation in INC-4.

ICC advocated for human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be included in the treaty's language, "When the text acknowledges human health and the environment, it needs to include the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. This does not create new obligations, but adds continuity, clarity, and alignment with the existing human rights framework" said Vice-Chair Koperqualuk.

Delegates attended dialogues, hosted side events in an open "Plastic Action Zone", sat on panels, and met with high-level officials to bring Inuit priorities to these key discussions. Despite this, Indigenous Peoples and other observer organizations experienced a lack of meaningful participation in the negotiations. There were very limited possibilities for observers to intervene in plenary and in contact groups. ICC Vice-Chair Koperqualuk highlighted this in plenary discussions last week: "Indigenous Peoples are rights holders, not stakeholders, and the lack of space for our full and effective participation violates the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Ultimately, it will lead to a treaty that creates more issues, rather than solving them."

"Our advocacy and presence at negotiations like these is of immense importance. It is through our contributions, and based on the collective work we do at numerous venues and negotiations year round, we ensure treaties and documents like this uphold the promises of states to implement the rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are concerned that the end product will not be strong enough, nor compliant with the rights of Indigenous Peoples as affirmed in the UN, when we are not able to

contribute meaningfully. Currently, it is not clear if and how we can participate in the intersessional work to help move the process forward and we call on states to ensure Indigenous Peoples are fully and effectively participating in these negotiations.” says ICC Chair Sara Olsvig.

ICC was and continues to be very concerned about the conflation of Indigenous Peoples and the term local communities throughout the draft treaty text. This is a threat to the distinct rights of Inuit as rights holders and this distinction needs to be made clear in the final treaty.

The distinct recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, without conflation with non-legal terms such as local communities or groups, is fundamental in this endeavor.

ICC and other organizations advocated throughout the week that the treaty needs to include the full lifecycle of plastics and not only plastic waste. Inuit communities have long witnessed the impacts of plastic pollution on their homelands and waters, where pristine Arctic environments face increasing threats from plastic waste and Inuit ways of life.

Microplastics have been found in Arctic ice, marine species, and traditional foods harvested by Inuit communities, highlighting the urgency of action. Efforts were also made to have the Arctic added as a sensitive and unique environment in the preamble text.

ICC hopes to be able to actively participate in intersessional work engaging with our expertise and to ensure a final treaty is robust, effective, and upholds a rights-based approach as we go into final negotiations in Busan, Republic of Korea later this year.

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ICC is an international Indigenous Peoples' Organization, founded in 1977 to strengthen unity among Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka. ICC promotes Inuit rights and interests at the international level, develops and encourages long term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment, and seeks full and effective engagement participation in the political, economic and social development of the Arctic region.

ICC holds Consultative Status II at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, is a co-founder and Permanent Participant at the Arctic Council, an Observer at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and holds Provisional Consultative Status at the International Maritime Organization alongside other advisory and consultative roles across numerous international fora.

