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PRESS RELEASE

**Inuit Circumpolar Council Issues Position Paper on Arctic Council:**

**We must strengthen and safeguard the Arctic Council**

July 2024 - Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) issues a new position paper on the Arctic Council, highlighting a long list of recommendations for strengthening and safeguarding the Council.

Inuit are committed to the Arctic remaining a zone of peace. The future of the Arctic Council is crucial for continued peaceful cooperation in the region. As a founding member, ICC was instrumental in the establishment of the Arctic Council - a historic and important consensus-based body for Arctic cooperation.

“With this position paper, ICC wants to support a positive development in the Arctic Council. The current Norwegian Chairship, as well as the incoming Kingdom of Denmark Chairship hold crucial responsibilities on behalf of all Arctic nations and Peoples to safeguard the Arctic Council as a governance body, and ICC will continue to support these collective efforts” says ICC Chair Sara Olsvig.

“For ICC, it is important that the Arctic Council continues to evolve in a direction that further enhances the role of Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples and supports our inherent right to self-determination” the ICC Chair continues.

When the ‘pause’ in the Arctic Council was introduced by seven member states, ICC expressed concerns about the Arctic Council’s future, emphasizing its foundation of peaceful cooperation and mutual respect. ICC monitored the situation closely and supports the steps and modalities taken to allow the continuation of the work of the Arctic Council.

“ICC has over the past two years worked collaboratively and pragmatically with Arctic States and other Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations to support the resumption of work. Now it is time to strengthen the way the Arctic Council works, to ensure Indigenous Peoples’ full and effective participation and meaningful engagement throughout the Council’s work”, says ICC Chair, Sara Olsvig.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council Arctic Council Position Paper puts forward recommendations to strengthen the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Council under six themes as well as specific recommendations for action items under the current and incoming Arctic Council chairships.

## HIGHLIGHTED RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTION ITEMS

1. Arctic Council governance must be strengthened through member states' consistent support and accountability to Indigenous Peoples' Organizations that serve as Permanent Participants.
2. Continuously strengthen youth engagement in the Arctic Council.
3. Create a safe and welcoming environment for Arctic Indigenous Peoples and fully recognize Indigenous Knowledge in all Arctic Council Working Groups and Expert Groups.
4. Replace tokenism with full and effective participation and meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples throughout the Arctic Council.
5. Build a common understanding of why it is important that Indigenous Peoples are part of the Arctic Council.
6. Create space, capacity and secure funding for Inuit-led research initiatives.

### **Box: What is the Arctic Council?**

In 1996, the Arctic Council was established as a high-level forum to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states with involvement of Arctic Indigenous Peoples on common Arctic issues. The Arctic Council was established as a successor to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy from 1991.

The Arctic states are Canada, The Kingdom of Denmark including Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, The Russian Federation, Sweden, and The United States.

The Indigenous Peoples Organizations that are categorized as Permanent Participants are Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and Saami Council.

The Council's activities are primarily conducted in six Working Groups and one standalone Expert Group that cover a broad field of subjects, from climate change to emergency response, from mental health to sustainable development. The Working Groups and Expert Group provide a broad and scientifically-sound knowledge-base upon which informed decisions can be taken. They also develop best practices and recommendations for safe and sustainable operations in the Arctic.

Current status of work: There are currently no high-level in-person meetings. However, the Permanent Participants meet in-person and virtual working group meetings have resumed to advance the work in the Council. link: <https://arctic-council.org/news/arctic-council-advances-resumption-of-project-level-work/>

Link to full text of the ICC Arctic Council Position Paper: <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/position-papers/inuit-circumpolar-council-position-paper-safeguarding-and-strengthening-the-arctic-council/>

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