



## INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

### **ICC: The rights of Indigenous Peoples must be recognized in the Global Plastics Treaty**

August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Geneva, Switzerland - The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is in Geneva for the INC 5.2 session of the Intergovernmental Negotiations Committee (INC) on a legally binding global treaty on plastic pollution from August 5 – 14. Plastic pollution has been increasing exponentially over recent years and threatens the health of Arctic ecosystems, and thereby Inuit.

*“The plastics treaty must be rooted in a rights-based approach, and it must be centered around the health of humans and the environment. On this day – the UN International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples - we are working hard in Geneva for UN member states to fully recognize the inseparable relation between the plastics treaty and our rights as Indigenous Peoples”,* says ICC Chair Sara Olsvig, who leads ICC’s delegation in Geneva.

The negotiations on a global plastics treaty are taking place under the auspices of the UN Environment Programme and based on a resolution passed in 2021. With the resolution the INC was mandated to convene to develop an instrument, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic.

ICC has been involved in the INC since the negotiations started in 2022. The meeting in Geneva is a continuation of the fifth INC meeting. The negotiations were supposed to conclude at INC-5 in December 2024, but states could not agree. Therefore, another session is now taking place in Geneva, Switzerland.

### **The rights of Indigenous Peoples currently omitted**

A new treaty draft text was presented in late 2024 but a human rights approach, including affirmation of the rights Indigenous Peoples, were not included in the text.

*“The negotiations on a legally binding global plastics treaty are at a critical moment. We call on states to recognize the core principles that this treaty should be based on, including that it must entail a human rights-approach and that the life cycle of plastics must be addressed”* says Olsvig, and continues:

*“Actions to combat plastic pollution must not infringe on the distinct rights of Inuit, including the inherent right of self-determination. These negotiations take part as we commemorate the decades of work Indigenous Peoples have done in the UN, for the recognition of our rights. On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is ample opportunity for states to we affirm their recognition the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the plastics treaty”.*

### **Arctic Indigenous Peoples involvement is critical**

Microplastic has entered the Arctic through both long-range transport pathways and from local sources. It persists in the Arctic environment and has been found in the Arctic snow, sea ice and seawater and find their way into every part of the food chain. Plastics pollution is expected to worsen with climate change and observations from Inuit and scientific research report plastic pollution in the Arctic, including in animals that are part of the Inuit traditional diet, have been found with plastics in their stomachs. The problem is expected to worsen, as sea ice melts and human activities increase.

### **Strong global Indigenous cooperation at INC 5.2**

*“Plastic pollution is a complex issue that affects us in the Arctic, and Indigenous Peoples from all over the world. During the negotiations in Geneva, ICC is actively engaging and contributing to strengthening the cooperation of Indigenous Peoples from all regions of the world. We applaud the formal establishment of the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Plastics which is collectively representing the Indigenous Peoples involved in the negotiations. The global cooperation of Indigenous Peoples is what has made it possible to achieve landmark results in the UN and beyond and strengthening our participation and collaboration through a global Indigenous caucus is extremely important”, says Sara Olsvig.*

The International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Plastics delivered a statement at the opening of the INC 5.2, calling on states to, among other things “Affirm and actively promote Indigenous Peoples’ rights, including our right to self-determination, ensuring the full, effective, equitable and direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making and implementation of the Treaty, as collective rights holders, not to be conflated with other stakeholders as affirmed within the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”.

The ICC delegation at INC 5.2 include Chair Sara Olsvig as head of delegation, Marine Governance Advisor Aviaja Tindbæk Jørgensen (ICC Kalaallit Nunaat), Senior Research and Policy Advisor Eva Kruemmel (ICC Canada) and Inuit Youth Engagement Programme participant Bibi Rask Lynge (Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland).

ICC is attending the negotiations to ensure Indigenous Peoples rights are upheld and included in the final plastic treaty text.

Links:

[International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Plastics website:](#)  
[UN Web live stream of INC 5.2 opening:](#)

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