INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL
PRESS RELEASE

ICC POSITION PAPER – UPHOLDING THE DISTINCT STATUS AND RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT CBD COP17

22 October 2026 – Yerevan Armenia – The Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) 17th Conference of Parties (COP17) is taking place in Yerevan, Armenia this week. As global discussions on biodiversity intensify, particularly in the face of the triple planetary crisis, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) continues its mission to ensure the rights, culture, and knowledge of Inuit are fully recognized and respected. ICC's focus will continue to be upholding the distinct status and rights of Indigenous Peoples within the convention, and how the recognition of those rights contributes to the conservation of biodiversity.

ICC is committed to preventing the erosion of Inuit rights at international forums, including at the Convention on Biological Diversity. Specifically, the right to self-determination, is upheld and safeguarded, and to reaffirm the importance of the enhanced participation mechanisms that have been established in the informal working group and must be continued in the new Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) of the convention.

"As affirmed in the 2026 Iqaluit Declaration, Inuit are rights holders and should not be mistaken or conflated with stakeholders. We will continue to advocate for the full, effective, and meaningful participation of Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples at COP17" said Aluki Kotierk, ICC Chair. "Self-determination is a fundamental right and is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and ICC will advocate for the self-determined participation of Indigenous Peoples in all matters related to Article 8(j) of the convention."

ICC has raised concerns regarding the grouping of Indigenous Peoples with other groups, including local communities, at many multi-lateral forums and United Nations conventions for many years. Grouping these separate and distinct groups together has resulted in the slow, incremental erosion of the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This practice was enshrined in the Rio Convention in 1992 and has subsequently plagued all the United Nations conventions that were born out of Rio. This language undermines the distinct cultural and legal rights of Indigenous

Peoples, including Inuit, who have a unique relationship with the environment and biodiversity.

In preparation for COP17, ICC has identified several key priorities:

1. **Affirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples:** specifically to self-determination by maintaining and respecting the self-organization of Indigenous Peoples into the seven Indigenous sociocultural regions and respect their processes for selection and nomination of their representatives.
2. **Address and resolve conflationary language:** align the language in the convention to reflect the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
3. **Recognize the critical role of Indigenous Knowledge in the conservation of biodiversity:** recognize that Indigenous Knowledge is critical for the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable wildlife management, and for the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.
4. **Ensure the full and effective participation of Inuit:** and facilitate meaningful engagement of Inuit at the CBD regarding all decisions that impact us.

“Our goal is to strengthen and uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples and not diminish the role of local communities.” said Herb Nakimayak, ICC Vice Chair. “ICC has been advocating for Inuit and Indigenous rights for 50 years, and it is important that Indigenous Peoples are not grouped together with others, including local communities. This is something that needs to be addressed in the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j),”

ICC’s new position paper can be found on our website here:
https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/position-papers/upholding-the-distinct-status-and-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/

Also attached is a policy paper on addressing language that conflates Indigenous Peoples with local communities:
https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-ICC-Policy-Paper-on-matter-of-local-communities-2.pdf

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Founded in 1977, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an international Indigenous Peoples' Organization representing Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Kalaallit Nunaat, and Chukotka. ICC is dedicated to strengthening Inuit unity, advancing Inuit rights and interests internationally, and formulating long-term policies to protect the Arctic environment. It also strives for full and effective participation and meaningful engagement for Inuit in the political, economic, and social development of the Arctic.

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