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Inuit Call on Global Leaders at CoP 16: Help us Sustain our Homeland – Take Immediate Action on Climate Change

The Inuit Circumpolar Council supports the Arctic Council Statement to the UNFCCC CoP 16 that states, “Combating climate change is an urgent common challenge for the international community and requires immediate global action”. The Inuit Circumpolar Council welcomed the UNFCCC Copenhagen Accord, supporting the urgency for Action but is disappointed that not enough “action” has been taken since Copenhagen to address the urgent needs of Arctic communities facing the immediate effects from climate change.

Inuit are urging global leaders to support us in sustaining our ice-dependent lands and livelihoods by taking the following actions:

1. **Set strict GHG emission reduction targets.** We need binding emission reduction targets that will limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C to minimize future impact on Arctic sea ice, Arctic ecosystems, and Inuit subsistence and overall food security.
2. **Support Inuit adaptation to climate change.** Inuit and other indigenous peoples in Annex 1 countries need urgent and immediate assistance with adaptation mechanisms, programs and policies. Global leaders should adopt a mechanism for adaptation assistance that:
 - a. Provides financial support and technical assistance to communities, such as Inuit, that are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts;
 - b. Devolves funding and decision-making to the lowest possible level (i.e. communities instead of states) and incorporates the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent as adopted by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
 - c. Makes available adaptation assistance to indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities living within developed nations (Annex 1 countries).
3. **Recognize the role of the Arctic in sustaining global climate systems.** Because Arctic ecosystems and sea ice play a crucial role in global climate regulation, global leaders should designate avoidance of further climate change impacts on the Arctic as one of the key benchmarks for effectiveness of a Post-2012 process.
4. **Integrate traditional knowledge into IPCC reports.** The important role of Inuit and other forms of traditional and local knowledge in understanding the impacts of climate change on local and regional systems should be recognized by integrating traditional and local knowledge into the IPCC reporting process.



5. **Provide support for appropriate technology and clean energy.** Global leaders can help Inuit and other local communities in benefitting from and participating in appropriate technology development by incorporating assistance for appropriate, small-scale, green energy technology as part of adaptation and mitigation financing in support of healthy, local economies.

About the Inuit Circumpolar Council:

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an indigenous peoples' organization, founded in 1977 to promote and celebrate the unity of 160,000 Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia. ICC works to promote Inuit rights, safeguard the Arctic environment, and protect and promote the Inuit way of life. As the international voice of Inuit, ICC is calling upon global leaders at the December UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (CoP 16) to listen to this Inuit voice.

ICC is deeply concerned about the current and potential impacts of climate change on the cultural, spiritual, and economic health of Inuit throughout the Arctic. We are concerned about the health of the Arctic environment, which not only sustains us, but also plays a vital role in keeping the earth's systems healthy as a whole.

In 2008, ICC convened an International Polar Year climate change policy workshop aboard the vessel CCGS *Amundsen*, which brought together climate change scientists and Inuit leaders to address the effects of climate change in the Arctic region and led to the "Amundsen Statement: 2012 Climate Change Roadmap" (available at www.inuitcircumpolar.com), which highlighted our strategy for addressing the global threat of climate change.

In July 2010, Inuit leaders from around the world gathered in Nuuk, Greenland, to identify priorities and affirm a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges that we face in our respective countries and communities. In the "Nuuk Declaration," we observe that Arctic change, including the melting of ice in the Inuit homeland, continues to disproportionately impact our communities. We affirm our commitment to combatting human-induced climate change and to drawing on the historic resilience of Inuit peoples to identify new solutions and new ways to adapt.

CoP 16 Action Point #1: Set strict GHG emission reduction targets that will limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C at a minimum.

We urgently need a new climate agreement that includes *binding emission reduction targets*, backed by science, that will limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C to avoid catastrophic change in Arctic systems.

Inuit and scientists agree: human-induced climate change is causing significant changes in physical, biological, and social systems in the Arctic. The Arctic has warmed at nearly twice the rate of the rest of the world over the past century, and scientists predict that warming trends in the Arctic will continue to outpace other regions. Even if we reduced global emissions dramatically, current concentrations of greenhouse gasses will lead to a rise in Arctic temperatures of 6-10° C according to recent scientific published projections.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 2010 *Arctic Report Card* reports that the last four years have seen the four lowest September Arctic sea ice extents of the past 30 years, and that record-setting warming trends are likely to continue. This past summer set record-breaking warm air temperatures in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic.



Losses to Greenland ice cover are accelerating, and in 2010, the Greenland inland ice sheet melt was 1 month longer in duration than the average melt of the last 30 years. In 2008, both the northeast and northwest passages were ice-free for the first time in recorded history. Scientists project that the Arctic will be ice free in the summer in 20 years, with most of the melt occurring in the next decade.

Although scientists have predicted changes to Arctic systems for decades, the pace of change over the past several years has surprised many. It is clear that global leaders must do everything in their power to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C at a minimum to protect the viability of Arctic sea ice, ecosystems, and cultural traditions.

CoP 16 Action Point #2: Support Inuit Adaptation to Climate Change.

Inuit communities in the Arctic are among those most affected by climate change. We need sustained, long-term adaptation assistance to respond to changing conditions in our homeland.

Inuit have long been admired for our ability to live in harsh climatic conditions. For thousands of years, we have thrived in our Arctic homeland, drawing on our Traditional Knowledge for subsistence hunting, and to maintain our cultural and spiritual connection with the land, ice, and animals. Although Inuit are resilient and adaptive, the scale of changes in the Arctic will require significant investment in new and updated infrastructure, as well as investment in land skills and practices. These adaptations are significantly beyond the reach of Inuit communities without outside assistance.

Wealthy nations have a moral responsibility to assist *all* vulnerable peoples in adapting to climate change. As such, any adaptation framework adopted by the global community should recognize the responsibility of wealthy countries towards communities within their borders that are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts, including indigenous peoples. The adaptation framework should designate funding that will be available to indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations in Annex I countries. In order to ensure that adaptation funding is effective and appropriate to local needs, the framework should enable community projects and initiatives to apply directly for funding. The new agreement should also recognize the vulnerability of peoples, rather than nations, to the impacts of climate change to highlight the differential impact at the regional and local, rather than national level, and to help designate priorities for adaptation assistance.

CoP 16 Action Point #3: Recognize the role of the Arctic in sustaining global climate systems.

The Arctic's unique importance in regulating earth systems and illustrating the impact of climate change should be reflected in the next global agreement on climate change.

The Arctic plays a uniquely important role in helping to support the ecological adaptations on which our global human civilization depends. Arctic ice and snow help to keep the earth cool by reflecting sunlight back into space. As sea ice and multiyear ice and snow melt, the darker ocean and earth below absorbs more heat, thus amplifying the rate of climate change. Scientists have established a link between recent changes in the Arctic and the severe cold weather of December 2009 and February 2010 in the eastern North America, northern Europe, and eastern Asia.



Arctic glaciers are melting at increasing rates due to climate change; their melt-water will lead to sea level rise and may also impact ocean circulation, impacting temperature and rainfall patterns around the world.

Arctic peoples have played an essential role in helping humanize climate change. From the community of Shishmaref, Alaska, forced to relocate due to climate change, to the community of Tuktoyaktuk in the western Canadian Arctic, where the government is experimenting with wind power, to Inuit elders in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Chukotka struggling to find new, safe routes in sea ice and weather that is less predictable than in the past, voices from the Arctic have become part of the moral and ethical foundation demanding strong leadership on climate policy.

Because of the Arctic's unique importance in climate change, ICC calls on world leaders to designate avoidance of climate change impacts on the Arctic as one of the key benchmarks for effectiveness of a post-2012 process.

CoP16 Action Point #4: Integrate Inuit and Traditional Knowledge into IPCC Reports.

Inuit Traditional Knowledge has provided critical information about climate change impacts in Arctic ecosystems, complementing scientific knowledge. Traditional Knowledge should be incorporated into – and made a focus of -- future assessments by the IPCC.

Inuit Traditional Knowledge has provided a wealth of information for researchers and policymakers seeking to understand the rapid pace of Arctic climate change, and its impact on ecosystems and communities. Inuit contributed Traditional Knowledge as part of the expert knowledge incorporated into the Arctic Council's *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment*, a state-of-the art report when it was published in 2005, and a model for integrating "two ways of knowing."

Documenting Inuit Traditional Knowledge about environmental change was also a major emphasis of several research projects funded through the International Polar Year (IPY). The *International Polar Year - Circumpolar Flaw Lead System Study* is undertaking an intensive scientific study of the unique flaw lead system located in the Beaufort Sea. As a major partner in the three-year *Circumpolar Flaw Lead System Study*, the Inuit Circumpolar Council is undertaking a comprehensive traditional knowledge study of the Inuit communities who have occupied and used this area of the Arctic for thousands of years. The integration of these "Two Ways of Knowing" will help determine the long-term implications to the Arctic and the global climate system of the current impacts due to the changing climate.

The incorporation of Inuit knowledge as a major component of these research programs demonstrates that the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples holds great value for understanding climate change and its impacts worldwide. As such, ICC calls upon the IPCC to develop a future assessment on climate change and Indigenous Peoples and the important role of traditional knowledge in informing policy decisions, and to integrate Inuit knowledge into the IPCC Assessment Reports.



CoP16 Action Point #5: Provide support for technology and clean energy.

Fostering resilience and the capacity to adapt means working towards healthy, sustainable, self-governing communities.

Numerous studies have shown that the best way to ensure that communities can adapt to change is to support resilience, health, and economic well-being at the household and community levels. Alongside other peoples that continue to practice subsistence traditions, Inuit struggle with issues of food security, a lack of jobs, housing shortages, and many chronic health issues. In addition, the cost of living in Arctic communities is among the highest in the world.

It makes sense in this context to provide adaptation and mitigation assistance that will help to foster resilience, independence, and health at the community and household level. Support for appropriate, small-scale energy technology is one mechanism for fostering economic well-being and decreased energy costs for communities and households. ICC recommends incorporating support for small-scale, green energy technology as part of adaptation assistance. This assistance should be available not only to communities in developing countries, but also to Inuit, other Arctic indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable populations living in wealthy nations.

Inuit Circumpolar Council: Working to Combat Human-Induced Climate Change

ICC recognizes the ongoing need for Inuit to engage with the circumpolar and international processes including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and the Arctic Council to ensure the Inuit knowledge and perspective is considered and reflected in these processes. ICC is working to ensure that the ultimate text of the Post-2012 process recognizes the unique issues faced by Inuit in adapting to climate change.



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