

United Nations  
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
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New York

Agenda Item 3 (a) Economic and Social Development  
Arctic Caucus Statement

Thank you, Madam Chairperson

My name is Aqqaluk Lynge, and I am the Chairperson of the Inuit Circumpolar Council. This statement is made on behalf of the Arctic Caucus.

We welcome the opening of the Tenth Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and congratulate you, Madam Chair, for your appointment as Chair of this important forum.

The Arctic Caucus further wishes to thank Mr. Lars Anders Baer for his good work the last 3 years and congratulate Dr. Dalee S. Dorough and the other Members of the Forum on appointment as Forum members. We look forward to work with you the next three years, and will assist you in any way we can to improve the working methods and effectiveness of the Permanent Forum.

As many of you know, the Arctic is in these years the centre of attention due to the Global Climate Change and the race to extract the natural resources in our territories. Locally, we see and feel the changes on a daily basis, and we, as Indigenous Peoples' Organizations of the Arctic worry about the impacts of Climate Change.

As the Arctic is melting, we see an increase in activities such as oil and gas exploration, mining, other industrial development, and shipping in the Arctic. Last week, the inter-governmental organization Arctic Council, held its Seventh Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk, Greenland. The Arctic Council consists of eight member Arctic states, and is unique in its structure, as six Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, including the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Council, are Permanent Participants. We actively participate in the Ministerial Meetings, and the Working Groups and Senior Arctic Official Meetings.

At its Seventh Ministerial Meeting, the Arctic Council for the first time developed a legally binding agreement, as the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland agreed on an Arctic Search and Rescue agreement. The agreement is stated in the Ministerial Meeting result; the Nuuk Declaration signed on May 12, just a few days ago. The declaration also calls for a strengthening of the Arctic Council and establishes a standing secretariat of the Arctic Council. We welcome this decision and the placement of the secretariat in the Arctic region, rather than in a capital. We see this as a recognition of the fact, that the Arctic should be governed by the people *in* the Arctic. As more legally binding instruments are negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council, and as the Council expands from being mainly a research institution into the principal decision-making body of the Arctic region, we, as Permanent Participants, also foresee that we are allowed to be part of such negotiations on an equal footing with the states.

We also want to bring your attention to the "Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat" which was presented in Nuuk on May 11<sup>th</sup>. The declaration was developed at an Inuit Leaders' Summit on Resource Development held in Canada in

February this year. In our declaration, we, inter alia, call for a responsible development of the Arctic, prioritization of Inuit involvement in decision-making, greater Inuit economic, social and cultural self-sufficiency and self-determination. We will welcome our indigenous colleagues to join us at the presentation of the declaration at a side event Wednesday this week.

In the Saami part of the Arctic, we welcome the establishment of the World Heritage Site of Laponia. This implies that an area of 9400 square kilometers will now be managed by a board where a majority comes from the Saami reindeer herding communities in the area.

The Arctic Caucus recommends the Permanent Forum to study the indigenous participatory mechanisms in the Arctic Council, the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles and the Laponia management system as examples of good practice.

Qujanaq. Thank you.