

**11th session of the
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
7-18 May 2012
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Arctic Caucus intervention on:

Item 6: Rights to food and food sovereignty

Thank you Mr. Chairman;

This is an Arctic Caucus intervention on behalf of the Saami Council and Inuit Circumpolar Council.

It is hard to determine which global issue may change the future of our planet and our collective ways of life. One thing is certain, without enough to eat-regardless of why - we will forever restrain the individual and societies' ability to reach our potential let alone the minimal human rights of adequate nutrition. The issue of food security remains a high profile priority on the international community's agenda, and also for Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. Food insecurity in the circumpolar Arctic is directly linked to the health of both the Inuit and Saami peoples. As climate change and environmental degradation occur in our homelands food insecurity is increasing and with it, all the ills that are associated with it.

The concept of the right to food is not new. The right to food has been formally recognized since the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Nevertheless in a time of plenty, an estimated 800 million people, primarily in developing countries, and more and more in certain communities of developed countries communities, are undernourished and food insecure. More disturbingly, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reports that the number of undernourished people in is no longer falling-rather, it is climbing. Food security, therefore, could be deemed the most important issue of our time. This is also true in the Arctic.

Mr. Chairman;

The Inuit Nunaat and Sámi land has sustained us for thousands of years. We are subsistence harvesters, gatherers, and herders. The unique Arctic environment supports the natural living resources - those animals which sustain us often called traditional or country food and the herds of Sámi reindeer are nutritious and important for our health, culture and wellbeing. We would not have survived in our environment as a people without the Inuit and Sámi knowledge of the animals, fish and plants for food. Today, we are faced with many challenges that threaten our health and existence as a peoples. Remoteness, limited transport infrastructure, difficult climatic conditions, high global prices for food commodities and oil, contaminants, globalization, resource development, animal rights, changing demographics and the transition to wage earning economy and the impact on the social structure of the subsistence household - all combine to make the availability, quality, access, cost of food and its distribution a significant driver of food insecurity for many Arctic communities. Arctic peoples who are food insecure are at an increased risk of chronic health conditions, mental health challenges and lower learning capacities - our children cannot realize their potential when they are hungry. Research in the Arctic has associated food

insecurity with mental illness, anemia, diabetes, poor iron levels and high levels of trans-fats in individuals' diets from southern market food.

The Inuit and Saami peoples have identified food insecurity as a foundation crisis that is impacting the ability of our cultures to rise to our potential and participate in the opportunities of the emerging new Arctic.

As an example Greenland authorities are yearly importing lifegiving food for approx. 260 mio. Dkk. (approx. 44 mill. US\$). The political will to change this is there. The current government of Greenland has created a policy to change this food insecurity and be more selfsufficient with our own natural living resources and decrease the importing of food from the outside world by 50% in the future to come. The result will be a more healthy society and growing economy to our hunters and fishermen.

Mr. Chairman;

To conclude, food security or rather food insecurity continues to be a major priority for action for Arctic Peoples. As the international community's concerns about the future of global food security persist, so too does ICC and the Saami Council's concerns about how this translates into the food security situation for us across the Arctic. As a result, food security will remain a top priority for action.

The Arctic Caucus recommends following to the members of the Permanent Forum:

Assessing the problem : We ask for support to develop standard indicators and methodologies to assess food insecurity to ensure appropriate response measures are implemented - currently international agencies have a variety of indicators and methods to determine food insecurity so it is difficult to ensure policies are directed at an appropriate response and difficult to assess the effectiveness of these responses.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.