

## **European Commission Intervention Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – Discussion on the Arctic- 21 May 2009**

Dear Madame Chairperson.

Thank you for giving me the floor in the context of today's discussion on the Arctic region. I would like to thank the panelists for their comprehensive presentation and take this opportunity to recall the Communication of the European Commission to the Council of the EU and the European Parliament issued last November proposing an EU strategy for the Arctic region. This Communication is an indication of renewed attention towards this region, which is under threat as scientific evidence shows that climate change is much faster in the Arctic than in the rest of the world.

The first objective of the proposed strategy towards the Arctic is to contribute to the protection and preservation of the Arctic, fully involving its peoples, including indigenous peoples, in debates and decisions about the future of the region. The other objectives are to promote the sustainable use of resources and to contribute to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance.

Madame Chairperson,

Some of the interventions we heard previously have also referred to a ban on seal products introduced by the EU. I would like to clarify this matter. On May the 5 the European Parliament voted to adopt an EU Regulation banning the trading of seal products within and into the European Union. The aim of the regulation is to ban products derived from seals hunted for commercial purposes. The new EU measure eliminates the disparate national rules already in force.

However, I would like to stress that trade in seal products will be allowed for seal products derived from hunts traditionally conducted by Inuit and other indigenous communities and which contribute to their subsistence.

I thank you very much for your attention