

**Speaking Notes**

**For**

**The Honourable Paul Quassa**

**Premier of Nunavut**

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
17<sup>th</sup> Session**

***Plenary Session: Discussion on the theme “Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources”***

**UN Headquarters  
New York, New York  
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Excellencies, Elders, Indigenous representatives, Heads of Delegation.

My name is Paul Quassa, and I am the Premier of the territory of Nunavut. It's an honour to speak on behalf of Canada.

Some of you may not be familiar with Nunavut. We are Canada's newest territory, and are located in the Canadian Arctic.

Twenty-five years ago, the Indigenous peoples of my region — the Inuit — signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement with the Government of Canada.

Inuit — who comprise over 85% of the people living in Nunavut — wanted to assert their rights over the use and development of lands, waters, wildlife and resources, and the right to self-determination to enhance and promote the social and economic well-being of Inuit.

Through negotiations with the federal Government of Canada, Inuit were successful in signing the most comprehensive land claim in Canadian history.

The Nunavut Agreement forever changed the map of Canada.

Nunavut — which means “Our Land” in the Inuit language — became one of three territories and ten provinces in Canada.

We also created our own public government to represent all citizens within the territory, with a mandate to incorporate Inuit Societal Values and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit Traditional Knowledge) into all government decisions, policies and legislation.

I’m proud to say that I was a signatory to the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement 25 years ago. I’m equally proud to be the elected head of state for our territorial government, now 25 years later.

Nunavut’s story serves as an example of successful negotiations between the federal government and Indigenous peoples to recognize and implement the right to self-determination.

We are encouraged by the Government of Canada’s interest in facilitating the development of new federal laws, policies and practices to support the advancement of Indigenous self-

determination and self-government for other Indigenous communities and nations within Canada.

We are also very supportive of the Government of Canada's commitment to the *United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the work taking place to reform laws to ensure its full implementation.

I would like to thank our Head of Delegation, Minister Carolyn Bennett, for ceding her time to me and other Indigenous leaders the opportunity to intervene at the UN proceedings this week.

This simple act speaks loudly of the federal Government of Canada's commitment to listen to, and work with, Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Merci, Thank you, Meegwetch, Qujannamiik, Marsi and Mahsi Cho.