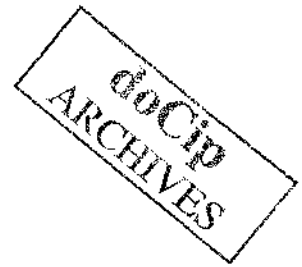


Item 4b 18/05 #k

**3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
UN Headquarters New York City, May 10-21 2004**



Joint statement of the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference

Item 4 b: Environment

Thank you Mr. Chairman;

This is a joint statement of the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

Today, more than ever, it is crucial that the holistic indigenous perspective be brought to the international talks about the environment. Too often international negotiations get bogged down in technical discussions that do not reflect the inter-connectedness of this magnificent world. State representatives and the scientists that support them are trained to look at the world as a kind of clockwork mechanism that can be taken apart and fixed. As Indigenous Peoples, living in the Arctic, we have been trained for millennia to understand that the world around us is all connected. We know that it is only by acknowledging these connections that true solutions can be found.

To illustrate this point, I will refer to two concrete examples: the Stockholm Convention for the control of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**The Stockholm Convention**

We, in the circumpolar world, are very fortunate to be able to celebrate the coming into force of the Stockholm Convention this May 17, 2004. We celebrate not only because this Convention will reduce the toxins that are being introduced into our homelands from afar, but also because, in the process that led up to the creation of the Stockholm Convention, nation states made room for Indigenous People's participation. And, that participation was central to the Convention's rapid conclusion and to its coming into force.

Of course, we know that the work of implementing the Stockholm Convention is just beginning. And, our indigenous perspective must continue to influence this process. We must never let the participants forget that the toxins that the Convention regulates affect real people. Implementation must never become detached from the human context, from the indigenous perspective that constantly reminds that all actions are connected.

**Recommendation:**

*That the Permanent Forum recommends that the Stockholm Convention ensure meaningful indigenous participation in the implementation of the Stockholm Convention. The Permanent Forum further recommends that the Stockholm Convention reports back to the Permanent Forum on the implementation process of the Stockholm Convention, on a regular basis.*

**The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**

Climate change is the biggest challenge ever to face the circumpolar region. We do not come to this dramatic conclusion lightly. The Arctic Council will soon be releasing one of the most comprehensive regional environmental impact assessments ever undertaken: the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. While this assessment will be released next fall, we know that it will be making some very stark conclusions. Depletion of summer sea-ice to a remnant around the North Pole will, by the middle to end of the century, push marine mammals—polar bears, walrus and some species of seals—to extinction. These are the animals we hunt and eat!

The United Nations is attempting to come to grips with climate change through the UNFCCC. The UNFCCC came into force in 1994. 188 Parties have signed on the UNFCCC. It is under the UNFCCC that the Kyoto Protocol was developed in 1997. As you probably know, the Kyoto Protocol is not yet in force with the most notable holdouts being the Russian Federation and the U.S.

The UNFCCC is crucial to the future of Indigenous People. If the UNFCCC process does not succeed, our cultures may well disappear. Yet, at the most recent Conference of the Parties, CoP 9 held in Milan last December, negotiations bogged down on technical issues while discussions on the broader issue of stopping the release of greenhouse gases

were paralyzed. Despite the fact that some Small Island States will soon be sinking into the ocean and that climate change may be the death knell of several indigenous cultures, the human element and the indigenous perspective appears to have been completely forgotten. As such, we make the following recommendation.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. The Permanent Forum reiterates its recommendation that a Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change be established.*
- 2. The Permanent Forum reiterates its recommendation that necessary funding be provided to support indigenous participation in the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change as well as in the follow-up to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changes' processes.*

Qujanaq siulittaasoq.

I thank you for your attention.