

TEXT FOR RECORDED STATEMENT

Inuit Circumpolar Council - Dalee Sambo Dorough, International Chair - UNEA 5 - 14 Feb 2022

Inuit across our homelands and coastal seas continue to be highly dependent on the Arctic ecosystem, which provides our sustenance – more specifically all our traditional foods. However, these vital foods and the Arctic Ocean are increasingly being contaminated. The source of contamination, such as a variety of chemicals, often, arrive from the south. Plastics and microplastics have now made it up to the Arctic.

For this reason, the ICC is urging all countries to support a comprehensive, legally binding agreement on plastics. We want to see a comprehensive INC process with a mandate to discuss the full life cycle of plastics, including sources, and all transport pathways and associated issues, including micro plastics in the food chain.

The ICC has consistently stated that a healthy environment is required for sustainable development in all its interrelated dimensions – in the Arctic and elsewhere. The well-being of all humanity depends on a healthy state of nature, and on the services that it provides for poverty eradication, resilience, our health, economy, and our collective existence.

In the process to develop resolutions and the Ministerial Declaration, the ICC provided several comments, which are also directly relevant to the potential INC process on a global treaty on plastics.

1. Both the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants highlight the Arctic and Indigenous Peoples. In the same way, a treaty on plastics must note the distinct vulnerabilities of Arctic ecosystems and Indigenous peoples and their communities since plastics compound existing chemical pollution threats and add to diminishing the integrity of the overall Arctic environment.
2. Consistent with international human rights law, the significant role of Indigenous Knowledge must be recognized by parties and included in any treaty. There is precedent for such recognition in the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean where Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Knowledge as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are explicitly included.
3. There must be a human rights-based approach to global plastics management. To quote Marcos Orellana, the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes:
“A human rights-based approach to global plastics management, focusing on human rights principles as well as mechanisms for accountability and access to remedy, is vital to ensuring that any global agreement on plastics is effective and legitimate. Human rights principles should be reflected not only in the architecture and text of the agreement, but also in the negotiation process.”

ICC hopes these suggestions will be incorporated by parties in the design of a negotiation process and a comprehensive, binding global treaty on plastics. Inuit are ready to be a part of this vital work. Thank you.