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**Climate Change
and Arctic Sustainable Development :
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KEYNOTE: Circumpolar indigenous peoples

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Facing the impact of global climate change: Recommendations from the Arctic

In the coming decades, the effects of climate change in the Arctic will include faster rises in sea levels, more frequent and extreme storm winds and flooding, a decrease in the extent of the sea ice, higher temperatures, and increased erosion due to higher waves, melting sea ice and thawing permafrost. Already, Inuit villages in Canada and Alaska are being destroyed by erosion. And Greenland hunters tell us that their traditional knowledge is not as reliable as it was in the past for predicting safe ice conditions.

Across the Arctic, Inuit are studying the effects of climate change and proposing many strategies for adaptation. The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has done much lobbying internationally, especially through the Arctic Council, to try to limit climate change and lessen its impact on indigenous peoples and their lands.

This past October, under the auspices of the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council, ICC organised the "Symposium on Arctic Indigenous Languages" in recognition of the importance of language, culture and traditional knowledge to the health and sustainability of Arctic communities.

Inuit communities are very aware of the need for education and awareness-raising, among our own people and among global peoples, about sustainable development and climate change. In collaboration with our university in Greenland, Ilisimatusarfik, ICC Greenland is currently coordinating the establishment of a new "Centre for Indigenous Studies." Canadian Inuit have proposed the establishment of an Inuit Knowledge Centre and an Inuit Language Development Institute.

The ICC is seeking a post-Kyoto-2012 process that includes international cooperation to support urgent action on adaptation to climate change, and the engagement of Inuit in the development of a circumpolar Arctic science and research infrastructure. Next month, the ICC is hosting in Anchorage, Alaska a Global Summit on Climate Change that will bring together indigenous delegates and observers from around the world to exchange their knowledge and experience in adapting to the impacts of

climate change.

Notwithstanding such involvements, Inuit recognise that their capacity to achieve sustainable development in the face of climate change is dependent on their progress toward autonomy and self-government. Yet Inuit and their interests are being excluded from national and international deliberations on Arctic sovereignty. In acknowledgement of the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, we believe that Inuit must be included, as active partners, in all future international and domestic policy making for the Arctic, and in all future deliberations on Arctic sovereignty.

Indigenous peoples are looking forward with courage and hope to a future filled with effective partnerships that will allow us to make our own contributions to the solutions of world problems and at the same time to protect our ways of life as unique groups of people. How should we work together, as partners, to solve the world's problems?

First, we need to forge meaningful and mutually respectful relationships among scientists, policy-makers, business leaders, funders and indigenous peoples. Second, we need to consult each other at the early stages of our research. Third, we need to share our knowledge and the results of our research with each other. Fourth, we need to make a commitment to each other as partners, recognising that we all have knowledge and skills that we can bring to our joint enterprises.

The magnitude of the climate change challenge is such that a response of a higher order is needed. Given the overwhelming extent to which the earth, and certainly the Arctic, have already changed, and the seemingly desperate situation in which we find ourselves, I dare say that something very strong and spiritual must happen if we are to survive. I think we need to find the ethical principles at the core of our humanity and create solutions to this very grave problem of climate change. Without these solutions, sustainable development in the Arctic will be impossible.