

## **Keynote speech to the Arctic Future Symposium**

**Brussels, November 28-29**

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My name is Hjalmar Dahl an Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Vice-Chair and President of ICC Greenland. I am happy to join this Arctic Future Symposium replacing our ICC Chair, Sara Olsvig. I am extending her greetings to you all, with a wish, that this symposium will be a successful gathering with clear results, which we can work on further.

ICC's work spans across our homeland Inuit Nunaat, including Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Arctic Canada, Alaska and Chukotka in the Russian Federation. We are approx. 180.000 Inuit.

The Arctic is on focus, no doubt about it, especially because of the climate change situation, where the melting ice is very visible and influencing the living conditions all around. This situation is known all over, also by the eight Arctic states, who since 1996 have been in close collaboration with us in the Arctic Council (AC). ICC co-founded the Arctic Council, and along with five other Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Organizations is Permanent Participant to the council.

During the recent Arctic Circle gathering in Iceland our ICC Chair, Sara Olsvig said in her speech: "The Arctic Council brings together the eight Arctic states and six Indigenous Peoples' Organizations in a unique governance structure – a governance structure we must protect and further develop. As we have stated before, there is no Arctic Council, without Arctic Indigenous Peoples."

I fully agree with Sara, that we must protect and further develop the Arctic Council. We commend the states for their continued commitment to the Arctic Council, and we note with satisfaction, that the Council is intact, although nothing is currently business as usual.

In my mind, we should pursue a more equality based cooperation. As permanent participants of the council, we have the right to speak but no vote. We have to start thinking and talk about the issue of vote, if we should reach full equality cooperation within the council in the future.

In regards of the knowledge systems used within the council - Indigenous Knowledge must be fully integrated into the work. To us, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge will create an important and respectful approach to research in the Arctic, which we have emphasized so many times in SAO sessions and included in multiple reports by AC working groups. But we still see a lack of implementation of this approach and I hope that this lack of respect be eliminated in the future to come.

Whenever talking about the necessity of doing arctic strategies etc., special focus should be paid to the living conditions in the Arctic, which is currently generally much lower than in the

nation states in the south. This has to be changed, and the full integration of Indigenous approaches to development must be ensured to better the human living conditions.

If any Arctic strategy should or will be developed by any arctic states, ICC want to be part and be included in all levels. It is important to develop an Arctic strategy – but without participation by Arctic indigenous peoples – no Arctic strategy.

For your information, at the ICC General Assembly in 2018 in Utqiarvik, Alaska, the requirement for the Arctic as a zone of peace was included in the final document, which I think is important to consider seriously for the arctic policy makers, and this was reiterated in our 2022 General Assembly Declaration, when we reaffirmed our 1977 founding meeting resolution calling for the Arctic to be used exclusively for peaceful and environmentally safe purposes.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should be an integral part if considering any Arctic policy.

An important passage in UNDRIP and, for example, ILO 169 is that all legislation on development projects must include the right to *Free, Prior and Informed Consent* (FPIC), which also includes the '*right to say no*' to projects that hinder or restrict the Indigenous Peoples in developing their own economies and cultures in their respective homelands.

This principle is also applicable to people who do not define themselves as Indigenous Peoples. The principle is that all processes are democratic and transparent with any participation.

I want to echo the youth delegates who attended this summer's Arctic Peoples' Conference, when they said, "nothing about us without us". This term may be used a lot. That is because manye policies and decisions continue to be developed and taken without us, and that must be turned around. We strongly believe that our involvement results in stronger outcomes, not just for us, but for all.

Qujanaq/Thank you very much