



# Climate Change: An Inuit reality is now a global reality

## UNFCCC COP 27 Position Paper

### Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)

7 November 2022

*The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an Indigenous peoples' organization, founded in 1977 to promote and celebrate the unity of 185,000 Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka. ICC works to promote Inuit rights, safeguard the Arctic environment, and protect and promote the Inuit way of life. As the international voice of Inuit, ICC is calling upon global leaders at the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (CoP 27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, to listen, support, and act upon climate issues identified by Inuit and other Indigenous peoples.*

*The recommendations in this statement are based on commitments in the ICC Declaration passed at its General Assembly in July 2022.*

#### **Inuit call on states, the science community, private industry and others to advance the following recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1:** Inuit led adaptation and mitigation to climate change remain priorities, and we call upon the world to take immediate action necessary to address the inequity of climate impacts by respecting our inherent right of self-determination in decision-making.

**Recommendation 2:** Inuit knowledge and experience have a key role to play in determining the future. Inuit experience, approaches and leadership must be at the forefront of national and global discussions and decisions to support the adaptive and holistic approaches and decision-making needed in today's rapidly changing environment.

**Recommendation 3:** Any engagement with Inuit must be equitable and ethical and guided by the protocols for engagement put forward by Inuit internationally and locally. ICC recently developed the Circumpolar Inuit Protocols for *Equitable, Ethical Engagement* and aims at ensuring a paradigm shift within institutions and forums that engage with the Arctic and Inuit, to guarantee that *nothing about us is done without us*.

**Recommendation 4:** Inuit are an integral part of the Arctic environment. The global community must recognize that our environment, especially our ocean and ice, plays a critical role in global temperature regulation, biodiversity and overall health and wellbeing of the world. The Arctic environment must be protected through partnership with Inuit.

**Recommendation 5:** We urge governments to recognize the false dichotomy between the developing and developed world, and advocate for and pursue opportunities to establish a fund that Inuit may equitably access similar to climate vulnerable communities in non-G20 countries. We also seek an Indigenous focal point within the Global Environment Facility for financial assistance.

Inuit are acutely aware of the diverse human rights, cultural, health and social and economic impacts related to climate change. Our knowledge, adaptation and mitigation strategies and management practices are critical to addressing the challenges we face. It is crucial that the world community take immediate action to address the inequity of climate impacts by respecting our inherent right of self-determination in decision-making processes in the Arctic.

Inuit have been warning about the realities of climate change for decades – the ways it is affecting the ecosystems we rely on, what this means for the rest of the interconnected planet, and how action must be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the rapid changes already occurring. This urgent message is knitted into all of our international work – through our provisional consultative status in the International Maritime Organization, our Observer status in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the development of the Coalition of Indigenous Peoples Food Systems within the Food and Agriculture Organization, among others.

Inuit have been involved in the UNFCCC negotiations for decades with little change, however we hereby reaffirm that commitment and will continue our efforts to convince the Parties to increase their ambition to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. As part of our work at the UNFCCC, and in solidarity with other disproportionately impacted global Indigenous communities from the north to the south, we will continue to emphasize the importance of the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform (LCIPP) in order to recognize and advance the need for Inuit leadership and Inuit knowledge in climate governance, assessments, and policy and decision-making. We will continue to seek allies among other regions facing the brunt of climate change, such as Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

### **Inuit reality/Global reality**

The urgency of the situation was underlined recently when the remnants of a Pacific typhoon pounded the western coast of Alaska and communities like Nome where our Alaskan Inuit relations live. Homes were torn from their foundations and other infrastructure was damaged. Seawalls crumbled and drinking water compromised as the storm flooded streets with seawater and filled houses with silt. More than 20,000 people were affected along 1600 kilometres of coastline.

Following the disaster in Alaska, tropical storm Fiona hit townships, homes and critical landscapes already at risk of erosion along the edge of the Canadian Atlantic coast. Hurricane Ian closely followed

Fiona, tearing through Florida and eastern United States, leaving more than 100 people dead in its wake, along with devastating toll on people and resources.

These disasters happened during a year of multiple climate generated fires and floods. Over the last few months, glacial melt and heavy rains have killed more than 1700 people and forced 33 million from their homes in Pakistan.

Since the Rio Summit 30 years ago, Inuit have stated that our Arctic homeland — Inuit Nunaat — is on the frontline of climate change. Now these disasters, combined with heatwaves and fires in North America, Australia, Asia, Europe and elsewhere, show that an Inuit reality has become a global reality.

### **Global community must act now in partnership with us**

Our experience with, and observations about, climate change have consistently been supported by Inuit knowledge and science. A number of reports this year explicitly connect the disasters that are affecting the planet with the fact that human beings have altered the planet's climate.

There is a link between the current climate crisis and potential ecological collapse and the challenges of poverty, rising inequality and global instability. Inuit have seen signs of this complex crisis coming for more than a generation. Our elders, harvesters and knowledge holders have been observing changes in the ecosystem that sustains and feeds us and we have sounded the alarm in every UNFCCC COP since the beginning. Now our alarm bells are joined by others around the planet.

Nevertheless, we bring to COP 27 a positive message – that together there is hope for the future. We have the knowledge and will to turn things around. Human beings, working together to meet the current challenges, can create a more equitable and just world.

There is no more time to waste. Once again, Inuit will bring their unique voices and perspectives to the climate change negotiations in Egypt.

We need long-term, multi-generational thinking – and immediate action – if we are not to exceed the 1.5°C global temperature threshold and further destabilize the climate. Even this threshold means continued and dramatic changes in our Arctic world. While we need swift action on mitigation, we need even swifter action to adapt to the changes locked into the climate system. This action needs to be global in nature and that requires determination and working together.

**Recommendation 1:** Inuit led adaptation and mitigation to climate change remain priorities, and we call upon the world to take immediate action necessary to address the inequity of climate impacts by respecting our inherent right of self-determination in decision-making that impacts the Arctic.

### **Inuit Knowledge is Key**

ICC has a longstanding commitment to elevate Inuit Knowledge in decision making through our work and advocacy to inform local, regional, national, and international climate research, knowledge synthesis, and policy development in all climate governance actions. This effort is taking place in many international fora. For example, we are using our Observer status within Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to galvanize support for Inuit knowledge holders to serve as substantive authors

and contributors, and to advocate for an Indigenous Peoples' Expert and Indigenous Knowledge Holder Advisory Body to the IPCC.

We also advocate for more support for community-driven research and promote the use of Inuit monitoring systems. Any engagement with Inuit must be guided by ICC's recently developed protocols for the *Equitable, Ethical Engagement of Inuit in the Circumpolar World* aimed at all decision and policy makers, researchers and others operating in the Arctic.<sup>1</sup> These new protocols are the product of an extensive three-year process that involved Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Chukotka and will ensure respect for our inherent right of self-determination in decision-making.

All across the Arctic there are discussions about climate change, increased resource development and expanding research initiatives, while international negotiations on issues such as biodiversity, shipping and food security are underway that affect the Arctic and our livelihoods.

**Recommendation 2:** Inuit knowledge and experience have a key role to play in determining the future. Inuit experience, approaches and leadership must be at the forefront of national and global discussions and decisions to support the adaptive and holistic approaches and decision-making needed in today's rapidly changing environment.

**Recommendation 3:** Any engagement with Inuit must be guided by ICC's recently developed protocols for the *Equitable, Ethical Engagement of Inuit in the Circumpolar World*.

### **New Partnerships**

Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples never make decisions without considering the impact on our children's children. This way of thinking has been lost in many parts of the world dominated by an economic system that provides for immediate consumption and personal fulfilment at an unsustainable cost. Without planning for a sustainable future, our children's children suffer and are the ones left to clean the mess we are responsible for today.

**Recommendation 4:** Inuit are an integral part of the Arctic environment. The global community must recognize that our environment, especially our ocean and ice, plays a critical role in global temperature regulation, biodiversity and overall health and wellbeing of the world. The Arctic environment must be protected through partnership with Inuit.

We need to transform the global economic system to one built upon multi-generational thinking and does not deplete the Earth's ever scarcer resources. Governments need to move beyond measuring value only in terms of GDP growth. We need other indicators that measure the value of intact ecosystems, healthy oceans, clean air and sustainable, secure food systems within a new, more holistic paradigm.

### **Sustained financial support**

Inuit knowledge, voices, approaches and authority are the forefront of discussions and decisions to support the adaptive and holistic approaches and decision-making needed in today's rapidly changing

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<sup>1</sup> ICC 2022. Circumpolar Inuit Protocols for Ethical and Equitable Engagement.  
<https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/project/circumpolar-inuit-protocols-for-equitable-and-ethical-engagement/>

environment.<sup>2</sup> In order that the voices and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples are included, there is a need for capacity and support.

To make this happen, financial support is required for Inuit-defined and led climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies to ensure that we can address present and future challenges as well as gaps that exist within our communities. Inuit are pushing for governments to recognize the false dichotomy between the developing and developed world that excludes Arctic Indigenous Peoples from many international funding mechanisms.

**Recommendation 5:** We urge governments to establish a fund that Inuit may equitably access similar to climate vulnerable communities in non-G20 countries. We also seek an Indigenous focal point within the Global Environment Facility for financial assistance.

### **A new social contract**

What is abundantly clear from this year's litany of disasters is that the burden has fallen on those countries and peoples least able to withstand the onslaught of a rapidly changing climate. The most affected have contributed the least to historical greenhouse gas emissions yet they have insufficient resources to cope with disasters. This burden is inequitable and unjust.

Climate change is no longer a buzzword at conferences or a policy that can change with party political leadership - it is real, it is happening and we - the collective human species - are the only ones who can make the unprecedented and massive efforts to cap global temperature rise.

As Inuit have said many times - protecting the Arctic protects the planet.

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<sup>2</sup> ICC 2022. Policy Paper: Climate Change and Inuit Food Sovereignty  
<https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/project/policy-paper-climate-change-and-inuit-food-sovereignty/>