



March 28, 2023

Mr. Kitack Lim  
Secretary-General  
International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

During the thirty-fourth extraordinary session of the Council held remotely November 2021, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) was granted provisional consultative status. The Council decided at this session to also review the status, and based on engagement to date and the value ICC is bringing to the discussions and deliberations at the IMO, ICC is requesting at this time the Council grant ICC full consultative status.

Founded in 1977, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is a major international Indigenous Peoples Organization (IPO) representing approximately 180,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia), and holds Consultative Status II at the United Nations. To thrive in their circumpolar homeland, Inuit had the vision to realize they must speak with a united voice on issues of common concern and combine their energies and talents towards protecting and promoting their way of life. The principal goals of ICC are, therefore, to strengthen unity among Inuit of the circumpolar region; promote Inuit rights and interests on an international level; develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and seek full and active partnership in the political, economic, and social development of circumpolar regions.

Shipping is an integral part of the Inuit communities in all the circumpolar regions. Our way of life is intricately tied to the Arctic ecosystem and our culture and knowledge systems, and the region's biodiversity are bound together. As such, we depend upon the Arctic sea ice, floe edge, and polynyas for food security.

The Arctic Ocean and its coastal seas serve as highways for Inuit over the ice in winter and in the open water season. Inuit rely on marine transportation for the delivery of necessary goods and services. In many diverse ways, shipping and the ocean are the lifelines for Inuit remote communities. Inuit are bound to the marine environment and to the shipping industry— it is an essential service. The complexities between economy and environment require careful measurement and balance. These strategies, therefore, must include the distinct voices of those within communities – the Inuit of the Arctic circumpolar region.

We know Arctic shipping traffic levels are increasing and will increase significantly as the ice melts. An Arctic Council report looking at ship traffic from 2013-2019 showed a 75% increase in distance sailed and 25% increase in unique ships. This trend is expected to continue.

The importance of shipping to Arctic communities, increases in vessel traffic, and the role the IMO plays in setting standards for shipping are all compelling reasons to have a circumpolar Arctic Indigenous voice at the table to help shape the future of shipping. For these significant reasons ICC applied for consultative status to make concrete contributions to the important work of the IMO.

Since the granting of ICC's provisional consultative status in November 2021, ICC has participated virtually and in person at SDC 8 & 9, PPR 9, MEPC 78 & 79, the Polar Seminar sponsored by the IMO in Oct/Nov 2022, ISWG 11, 12 & 13, MSC 106, and Council 126 and 128. ICC has participated in both the Underwater Noise and Air Pollution (Black Carbon) Correspondence Groups and submitted and sponsored/co-sponsored a

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variety of papers: MEPC 78/INF.25, MEPC 78/7/19, MEPC 79/5/3, MEPC 79 5/5, SDC 9/5/3, MSC 106/10/3. Additionally, as in person meetings resumed, ICC hosted and participated in side events at MEPC 78 & 79 and the Polar Seminar. ICC has been very active over the past years, showing a solid commitment to the IMO and its work.

Under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other international covenants, Inuit and Indigenous peoples worldwide - in particular, those with a direct, profound, and spiritual relationship with oceans, coastal seas and the marine environment - have inherent rights to these territories and resources. Inuit relationships with the marine ecosystem is critical to wellbeing and a sustained way of life. It is ICC's hope to find meaningful and creative ways to bring UNDRIP to all aspects of global governance, and it's our view that the IMO and its member organizations will benefit greatly from this approach.

ICC is also interested in the human element and promoting safe operations for seafarers, particularly Indigenous community harvesters and sea lift operations. Inuit are ship owners and operators themselves, and have an interest in ensuring a working environment which benefits people and maintains cultural practices and livelihoods. Of additional importance are relationships with Indigenous Peoples and other citizens of Small Island Developing States who share many challenges with Inuit. These include a dependence on the global shipping fleet for re-supply, economic development, and transportation. Shipping is critical infrastructure in our respective worlds, and ensuring that it is sustainable is a shared concern. The vulnerability of communities both in the north and south bring powerful voices for change and jointly aligning and putting forward an ambitious climate agenda at the IMO will hopefully increase the urgency of member states to act.

ICC has been encouraged with the IMO's support in facilitating dialogue within IMO deliberations and outside the organization to bring awareness to the common causes of climate vulnerable communities. It's significant that the IMO is now an observer to the Arctic Council, which will facilitate ongoing dialogue with Indigenous Permanent Participants at the Council and issues of shared concern on shipping. ICC continues to be encouraged by the potential to include Indigenous voices in IMO discussions and decision making. Granting ICC full consultative status will ensure this happens in the future.

ICC looks forward to a positive outcome during the discussions at the 129th meeting of the Council in July. We sincerely hope that we have demonstrated to the Council over the past years ICC's willingness to engage consistently and constructively with all aspects of the IMO's work, and that ICC's provisional status will be made permanent and subsequently become the first Indigenous People's organization to achieve this designation.

On behalf of the Inuit Circumpolar Council,

Sincerely yours,



Sara Olsvig  
International Chair



Lisa Qiluqqi Koperqualuk  
Vice Chair