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WORKING GROUP ON REDUCTION OF
GHG EMISSIONS FROM SHIPS
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**FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND FINALIZATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
DRAFT REVISED IMO STRATEGY ON REDUCTION OF GHG EMISSIONS FROM SHIPS**

Recognizing the contributions of Indigenous Peoples in global climate action

Submitted by Inuit Circumpolar Council

SUMMARY

Executive summary: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) AR6 report recognizes that Indigenous Peoples' territories and livelihoods are greatly impacted by climate change through a complex web of colonial, social, historical, and institutional processes that have excluded and marginalized us from decision-making. This submission aims to introduce the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) report *Recognizing the Contributions of Indigenous Peoples in Global Climate Action - An Analysis of the IPCC Report on Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, which analyzes the contributions of Indigenous Peoples in global climate action. The findings in this report, in alignment with the understanding of Indigenous Knowledge, such as Inuit Knowledge and rights, are a crucial tool to guide the revision of the *Initial IMO Strategy on Reducing GHG emissions from ships* and further consider the scope of an equitable, just, fair, and inclusive transition.

*Strategic direction, 3
if applicable:*

Output: 3.2

Action to be taken: Paragraph 11

Related documents: MEPC 80/7/11; MEPC 78/7/27; ISWG-GHG 13/3/3

Introduction

1 Documents MEPC 80/7/11 (CSC et al.) and MEPC 78/7/27 (WWF et al.) both highlight the findings from the IPCC publication *Mitigation of Climate Change*, the third report of the Sixth Assessment Cycle (AR6) as further evidence of the need for urgent actions. The IPCC AR6 was also noted in document ISWG-GHG 13/3/3 (IMarEST) as a guide to align the IMO level of ambition of the Revised Strategy.

2 The IPCC AR6 is conclusive about climate change's increasing and accelerating impacts on people, particularly for Inuit who are facing changes and impacts happening at a much faster rate than in many other parts of the world. However, the IPCC AR6 goes a step further and recognizes that striving to prevent severe risks in highly vulnerable contexts alone is insufficient. The IPCC AR6 acknowledges the importance of involving a range of stakeholders, especially Indigenous Peoples as right holders, such as Inuit, in climate change governance and promoting collaboration between diverse knowledge systems. These findings represent a marked turn in how Indigenous Peoples are portrayed in the global climate change discourse.

3 Taking adaptation and mitigation actions that prioritize equity, climate justice, rights-based approaches, social justice, and inclusivity are crucial for achieving more sustainable outcomes, reducing trade-offs, supporting transformative change, and advancing climate-resilient development. Working across scales, sectors, and regions is essential to ensure that everyone benefits from these actions. Additionally, cooperation and inclusive decision-making with Indigenous Peoples, such as Inuit, are integral to the success of climate actions. Recognizing the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples is also necessary to achieve these goals and we can create a more just and sustainable future by prioritizing equity and inclusivity.

4 This submission aims to introduce the IWGIA report *Recognizing the Contributions of Indigenous Peoples in Global Climate Action - An Analysis of the IPCC report on Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* as the Organization revises its Initial Strategy on the reduction of GHG emissions from ships and to further consider the scope of an equitable, just, fair and inclusive transition.

5 In addition to implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Revised Strategy must ensure equitable weight is given to Indigenous perspectives, approaches, ideas, decisions and knowledge.

Recognize Indigenous Knowledge and self-determination in its own right

6 The IPCC acknowledges the importance of diverse knowledge systems, including scientific and Indigenous Knowledge, such as Inuit Knowledge. This recognition is crucial in comprehending and assessing climate adaptation processes and actions to mitigate risks from climate change.

7 Inuit Knowledge encompasses the practices, wisdom, and understanding of Inuit communities' past, present and future.¹ On a broader scale, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) encompasses a systematic way of thinking about phenomena across biological, physical, cultural, and spiritual systems. It incorporates insights from direct, long-term experience and extensive, multi-generational observation, learning, and skill development. This knowledge has been developing for millennia and continues to evolve as a living process, encompassing current and future knowledge passed on from generation to generation. While the Inuit Circumpolar Council currently uses this definition of IK,² it is important to recognize that other definitions and applications also exist.

¹ Inuit Knowledge definition based on Inuit Pikiilasorsuaq Commission. Available at <http://pikiilasorsuaq.org/en/Inuit-knowledge> (last accessed May 10, 2023).

² Indigenous Knowledge definition based on Circumpolar Inuit Protocols for Equitable and Ethical Engagement published (2022). Available at: <https://hh30e7.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/EEE-Protocols-LR-WEB.pdf> (last accessed May 10, 2023).

8 Under our definition, IK extends beyond observations and ecological knowledge, offering a unique and valuable "way of knowing". IK involves multiple methodologies, evaluation and validation processes, and ways of storing and sharing information. It offers a holistic approach that can contribute to a fair, equitable, and just transition. IK aids in identifying research needs and can inform decision-makers. The Organization must embrace both Indigenous Knowledge and scientific knowledge, as both benefit people, lands, waters and species.

9 Partnering with Indigenous Knowledge has the potential to foster more human-centric and place-based approaches to climate adaptation policies. This approach recognizes the unique perspectives and experiences of Indigenous Peoples, such as Inuit, leading to policies that promote identity, dignity, Indigenous self-determination, and Indigenous Peoples' rightful role in participating in decision-making processes impacting and relating to Indigenous Peoples' homelands.

10 The Inuit Circumpolar Council urges the Organization and its Members to agree to the following as a matter of urgency:

- .1 bring the levels of ambition in the Initial Strategy unambiguously into line with the Paris Agreement's goal of keeping warming below 1.5°C, including a target of halving ship climate impacts by 2030 and full decarbonization of shipping well before 2050;
- .2 make deep cuts to Black Carbon emissions from shipping in and near the Arctic, e.g.: via an immediate mandatory switch to distillates, urgently develop mandatory targets and measures to reduce Black Carbon emissions from international shipping; and include BC in CO₂e-metrics;
- .3 raise the level of ambition in the recently agreed Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) to 6 to 7% per annum to ensure a 1.5°C-compatible improvement in the carbon intensity of ships;
- .4 ensure that climate vulnerable nations and Indigenous Peoples, such as Inuit, are equitably and ethically involved and supported in participating in all aspects of the shipping industry's equitable, just, fair and inclusive transition;
- .5 enhance collaboration between UN agencies and between the UN and other national and international agencies (polycentric governance) to speed up climate action, make it more effective, and in alignment with the Circumpolar Inuit Protocols for Equitable and Ethical Engagement³ (see footnote) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to participate in decision-making and the governance of all things related to them, including shipping; and
- .6 recommend that the Organization dedicate a special report led by Indigenous Peoples, such as Inuit, academics, scientists, and knowledge holders, to assess the opportunities and threats for Indigenous Peoples in the IMO GHG Strategy; and request that this assessment be undertaken with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.

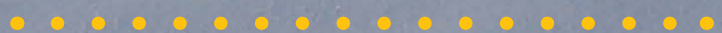
³ Key elements of equitable and ethical engagement based on Circumpolar Inuit Protocols for Equitable and Ethical Engagement (2022). Available at: <https://hh30e7.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/EEE-Protocols-LR-WEB.pdf> (last accessed on May 10, 2023).

Action requested of the Working Group

11 The Group is invited to consider the information from the IWGIA analysis of the IPCC report on impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability as linked above and to welcome the approaches outlined in paragraphs 7 to 10 and take action as outlined in paragraph 11 of this document.

Recognising the contributions of Indigenous Peoples in global climate action?

An analysis of the IPCC report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability



On 28 February 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a groundbreaking [report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#), a contribution of the Working Group II (WGII) to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). This IWGIA briefing analyses the IPCC report's findings with regards to Indigenous Peoples and critically assesses how Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is regarded in broader global climate action.

In the new report, the IPCC claims to have made a major effort to integrate natural, ecological, social and economic sciences, and among its principles is the recognition of the interdependence between climate, ecosystems and biodiversity, and human societies. Linked to this, the report recognises

"...the value of diverse forms of knowledge such as scientific, as well as Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge in understanding and evaluating climate adaptation processes and actions to reduce risks from human-induced climate change"

As a result, in addition to being informed by more than 35,000 scientific papers, the IPCC explains that the new report has paid increased attention to the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous scholars, and strengthened the focus on social justice. In line with this, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) [reports](#) that it gained IPCC observer status in 2021. In addition to participating

as an expert reviewer and a contributing author of the new report and the *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, now as the first Indigenous Peoples' organization to achieve this observer status, the ICC can participate autonomously in IPCC meetings and provide direct interventions.

Vulnerability to human-induced climate change

The IPCC report concludes what we already know: Indigenous Peoples are among the most vulnerable to climate change. Particularly affected are the Arctic communities, which perceive and experience changes and impacts more accelerated than in the past, such as ocean acidification and loss of permafrost and associated impacts of methane release. Vulnerable Indigenous communities from the other socio-cultural regions –Africa; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; North America; and the Pacific– are also exposed e.g. to severe droughts, extreme flood, fires and persistent organic pollutants. Like in the Arctic, the situation is particularly difficult for remote communities with high levels of endemism, whose territories face severe disruption.



Asháninka woman harvesting cocoa in Peru. Credit: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA



Reindeer herder in Russia. Credit: Alexander Afansev /IWGIA

According to the IPCC, the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples is produced and exacerbated by the intersection of multiple constructions that produce inequity –like gender, income, class–, and by the marginalisation that historically has excluded them. This marginalisation stems from patterns of inequity which have been shaped since colonial times and are reinforced in different forms today.

The impacts of human-induced climate change faced by Indigenous Peoples are daunting. The report highlights: malnutrition; water scarcity and food insecurity; mental health effects; exposure to fires; livelihoods losses and rising costs; and rising mortality and morbidity from climate-sensitive diseases, increased respiratory problems and greater exposure to floods and droughts. Further to this, the IPCC recognises that Indigenous Peoples are experiencing irreparable damage to their languages, knowledge systems and livelihoods due to loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services with their cascading effects.

Maladaptative practices

The IPCC report further finds that all these biophysical impacts and cultural losses diminish the otherwise strong adaptive capacity of Indigenous Peoples. In addition to this, many Indigenous communities are

affected by adaptation practices that fail to consider adverse outcomes and indeed reinforce inequalities and exposures to risks. The IPCC report recognises that such ‘maladaptative practices’ further increase the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples. The risk of maladaptation is most significant when approaches fail to be interdisciplinary and do not include Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge. Particular emphasis is given to cultural and financial consequences of the relocation of Indigenous Peoples that distress cultural and spiritual bonds to the territories, disrupting their livelihoods and sense of place. Another maladaptive practice highlighted is the planting of unsustainable tree species that affect Indigenous Peoples’ rights, ecosystems, land tenure and adaptive capacity.

Rethinking global climate action

Current institutional arrangements and practices have been ineffective in reducing risks, reversing dependency, preventing maladaptation, and facilitating climate resilient development. Although the new report proposes justice approaches to avoid maladaptation and decrease vulnerability, the IPCC recognises that efforts to prevent severe risks in highly vulnerable contexts will not be sufficient, especially in relation to water. Accordingly, the report calls for the inclusion of diverse actors, especially Indigenous Peoples, in climate change governance, and collaboration between diverse knowledge systems.



Collaborating with Indigenous Peoples in climate governance

The IPCC indicates that collaborating with Indigenous Peoples, promoting dialogue with [non-Indigenous] sciences, and strengthening their decision-making and leadership capacities, increases the chances of sustainable adaptation and climate resilient development. Furthermore, the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge holders in climate governance has several positive outcomes related to justice and equity. Such involvement and recognition demand the strengthening of self-determination, the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights, and the support of Indigenous knowledge-based adaptation. This in turn requires more flexible climate governance systems that challenge the values and interests that have underpinned hegemonic adaptation and mitigation practices to date. In this way, policy makers gain the best available information upon which to base their decisions, with potential for wider and more equitable outcomes for all.

The report recognises the calls for justice by Indigenous Peoples' movements. Furthermore, it points out that climate action is interdependent with sustainable development. Both processes must be based on a justice and equity approach that reduces barriers and strengthens Indigenous Peoples' agency in decision-making.

Evidence also shows that processes of maladaptation can be prevented by paying attention to recognitional, procedural and distributional justice, and by facilitating the conditions for communities themselves to adapt in order to avoid harm. This calls for more flexible climate governance that aims for long-term goals and assesses the risks and trade-offs of potential responses. The report importantly concludes that rights-based approaches,

participatory methodologies, the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, consultation and informed consent are essential elements for this to be achieved.



Moving forward

In comparison with previous IPCC reports, the new report is a definite step forward with regards to recognising Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems. That said, this recognition seems to be mainly attributed to local actions. The effectiveness of many practices by Indigenous Peoples is acknowledged, but the values and worldviews that underpin them –and contribute to rethinking the social and cultural causes of climate change– are not explored in depth. Diminishing the contribution of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge (or 'knowledges' to express the full range and diversity) and customary institutions to their specific territories, fails to recognise their contribution to addressing the crisis of climate change on a global scale and from a holistic perspective.

Similarly, although the IPCC acknowledges processes of knowledge co-production, the report speaks primarily of the integration of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge. This is somewhat odd in that the IPCC also recognises that integration is generally interpreted as the mere inclusion of Indigenous peoples' knowledge in strategies guided by [non-Indigenous] science, rather than as horizontal collaboration. This approach towards Indigenous Peoples' knowledge reproduces the compartmentalisation that has long characterised adaptation policies. Imposed on Indigenous Peoples, these measures fail to comply with Indigenous Peoples' protocols and indeed their rights. They perpetuate the marginalisation and rejection of entire knowledge systems deeply linked to the ecosystems that suffer the adverse impacts of climate change.



Indigenous knowledge holders at COP 26. Credit: Harlem Mariño / ONAMIAP



Maasai woman in Kenya. Credit: Espen Wæhle / IWGIA

This shortcoming is closely related to how IPCC reports are produced. They are primarily informed by non-Indigenous scientific knowledge that considers relative evidence, i.e. peer-reviewed articles. Although this evidence refers to Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, this does not ensure that Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge holders contribute equitably and horizontally to how a report is shaped.

Furthermore, the collaboration with Indigenous authors and organisations, and their particular contributions, are not appropriately acknowledged in the report. Indigenous authors are represented only by the countries where they live or work, rather than by their peoples or socio-cultural regions. This infringes their right to self-identification.

Therefore, although the contributions of Indigenous authors were recognised and more attention was paid to Indigenous Peoples' knowledge during this 6th IPCC Assessment Report cycle, recognition of this knowledge as holistic and broader systems, rooted in and distilled through interaction with the territories, remains an outstanding debt.

The report notes that the barriers that marginalise Indigenous Peoples from decision-making processes, and contribute to their vulnerability, can be traced back to structures of inequity forged during colonial times. However, there is no in-depth analysis of how these colonial processes influence how climate change

and especially adaptation is addressed. Nor does the report include a proper reflection on how the IPCC may contribute to reinforcing or contesting these patterns.

IWGIA recommends that the IPCC looks more closely at the relationship between climate vulnerability, inequality, and colonialism for its next cycle while examining the diverse and contextualised responses that Indigenous Peoples are deploying to overcome the feedback loops of these barriers. The IPCC can also explore further, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, potential approaches to better assess the impacts of climate change on the interrelated rights of Indigenous Peoples and their communities, as yet incomplete in the absence of the recognition of their knowledge.

Further to the above, the IPCC also falls short of considering the diversity and the intersectionality among Indigenous Peoples. The references are often presented without acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous Peoples from the seven socio-cultural regions of the world. Also omitted are specific groups within Indigenous Peoples themselves. This is especially the case for women, who tend to be pushed to decide between identifying themselves as "women" or "Indigenous" in adaptation policies. Their omission may increase existing inequalities within the same communities. Also missing is a more substantial mention of elders, who along with children are central to the intergenerational transmission of this knowledge.



Recommendations

Following the IPCC WGII assessment, and seconding the declarations of ICC, IWGIA calls for recognition of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge (or knowledges) in national and global climate action to ensure climate resilient development and true climate justice. States must acknowledge all the evidence that shows that strengthening and implementing Indigenous knowledge-based adaptation practices, as well as the rights of Indigenous Peoples at the national, regional and local level, including the right to self-determination, goes hand in hand with the transformative change required to effectively and comprehensively respond to climate change. Based on this evidence, it is possible to provide following specific recommendations for States:

1. Strengthen the direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in the design and implementation of all instruments and plans that address climate change, considering territorial diversity and an intercultural and gender approach. All based on processes of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and effective empowerment of Indigenous Peoples consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Meaningful recognition of Indigenous Peoples also necessitates recognition of the particularities that affect each people, noting how structural inequalities can be reproduced even within the same communities. The particular situation, and concrete contributions, of different Indigenous Peoples and particular groups among them, should be examined more closely in the next cycle.

To avoid compartmentalisation of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, it is necessary to involve Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge holders in a permanent and differentiated way in IPCC processes. This can be addressed by including more Indigenous authors – especially Lead Authors– and generating formal mechanisms for informed, sustained and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, and especially knowledge holders, in IPCC meetings and discussions.

Accordingly, it would be expected that in its next cycle, the IPCC examines how horizontal collaboration between plural knowledge systems can facilitate co-production of knowledge. It would also be necessary to look more deeply into how these collaborative processes translate into adaptation policies and promote transformative change. Addressing these gaps will strengthen the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' contributions to climate change adaptation.



Indigenous woman farming in Peru. Credit: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA.

2. Establish permanent mechanisms for the participation of Indigenous Peoples in national climate governance that is inclusive of territorial diversity and specific cultural contexts.

3. Strengthen monitoring and reporting systems that allow for the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge holders, and establish grievance mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and understanding of climate change impacts upon them and their communities.

4. Secure meaningful and respectful recognition of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, promoting the horizontal collaboration with non-Indigenous knowledge systems and the co-production of knowledge – consistent with the protocols and guidelines of the Indigenous Peoples concerned, and always taking into consideration recognition of and respect for Indigenous Peoples' interrelated rights.

5. Include Indigenous representatives in national delegations in climate change conferences and intergovernmental fora, and strengthening both the capacities of UN member states and Indigenous Peoples for such participation.

6. Affirm, acknowledge, welcome, and provide the resources to strengthen Indigenous communities' capacity, based on the Indigenous knowledge systems and customary institutions of the Indigenous Peoples concerned.

7. Consistent with the desires of Indigenous Peoples' organisations, include Indigenous representatives in the national delegations of IPCC plenary meetings, including sessions concerning potential creation of a durable mechanism to ensure direct Indigenous peoples' participation in the IPCC processes.



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International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) is a non-governmental human rights organisation promoting, protecting and defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples for more than 50 years. We support Indigenous Peoples' advocacy at the international climate negotiations at the UNFCCC.

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Indigenous man farming in Peru. Credit: Pablo Lasansky / IWGIA.