



INUIT

**ICC POSITION PAPER**

**CLOSING THE GAP**

**INUIT CALL ON STATES TO ACCELERATE  
CLIMATE COMMITMENTS  
AT UNFCCC COP29 AND COP30**

**INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL**

**APPROVED 21 OCTOBER 2024**

# ICC POSITION PAPER—CLOSING THE GAP

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## 1 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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 in the Russian far east. As the international voice of Inuit, ICC is calling upon global leaders at the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (CoP29) to listen, support, and act upon climate issues identified by Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples globally.

The recommendations in this statement are based on commitments in the ICC 2022 Ilulissat Declaration, the Statement of the Arctic Peoples' Conference 2023 – Inuiaat Issittormiut Ataatsimeersuarnerat 2023, Indigenous Peoples Principles and Protocols for Just Transition, and the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat.

At the 29th and 30th Conference of Parties, Inuit call on States, governmental authorities, private corporations, research institutions, and civil society to advance the following recommendations:

1. **Recommendation** : Inuit need direct, equitable and ongoing access to climate finance and special consideration in setting finance targets, as they face an environment warming at nearly four times the global rate, to effectively mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
2. **Recommendation** : Inuit must have full and effective participation and meaningful engagement in all decisions that impact them, through processes that uphold the right to self-determination;
3. **Recommendation** : Recognize that Inuit hold a distinct status, as an Indigenous People of the cryosphere, and all climate change work must be based on a strong human rights foundation including the human rights affirmed through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
4. **Recommendation** : Ensure that all research and decision-making that impacts Inuit and Inuit homelands, the circumpolar Inuit homeland, includes the equitable and ethical engagement of Inuit and the utilization of Indigenous Knowledge<sup>1</sup>;
5. **Recommendation** : A *just transition* for Inuit must respect the inherent right of self-determination in decision- making processes in the Arctic. Inuit should not in any way bear the cost of transitioning to safe alternative fuel or energy sources and will determine their own political, social, economic priorities.

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<sup>1</sup>ICC utilizes the following definition – Indigenous Knowledge is a systematic way of thinking applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural, and spiritual systems. It includes insights based on evidence and acquired through direct and long term experiences and extensive and multigenerational observation, lessons, and skills. It has developed over millennia and is still developing in a living process, including knowledge acquired today and in the future, and it is passed on from generation to generation.

## 2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Inuit Circumpolar Council attended the Earth Summit in Rio of 1992, the origin of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and has been bringing Inuit Knowledge and perspectives on climate change to the annual Conference of Party meetings ever since. We have been sounding the alarm about changes in our homeland for decades, pointing out that, unless greenhouse gas emissions are dramatically reduced, the rest of the planet will experience what we are experiencing.

The Arctic region is experiencing unprecedented warming, with temperatures rising at roughly four times the global average.<sup>2</sup> This accelerated warming has profound implications, including increased coastal erosion which threatens vital infrastructure and coastal communities. In Alaska, for example, a study found that there was an average loss of 1.4 meters per year. Of those beaches that are eroding, the most extreme loss exceeding 18.6 meters per year.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that “permafrost degradation, flooding, and coastal erosion could add \$5.6 - \$7.6 billion in 2008 dollars to future costs for all public infrastructure statewide between 2008 and 2080 or an average of \$250 to \$420 million per year in 2015 dollars.”<sup>4</sup> Greenland is currently losing 234 billion tons of ice per year, including later ice formation and earlier melt, severely limiting hunting in areas such as Qaanaaq, resulting in increased food insecurity.<sup>5</sup> Many Arctic regions face significant financial and infrastructure gaps, hampering their ability to adapt to these rapid changes.<sup>6</sup> The current climate change challenges in the Arctic underscore the need for innovative solutions and a drastic increase in direct, equitable, and predictable funding.

In 2023, ICC was honoured to receive the Equator Prize, highlighting the success of the Pikialasorsuaq Commission. Through community consultation with youth, elders, men, and women, this groundbreaking initiative aims to preserve the ecological integrity of Pikialasorsuaq, the largest Arctic polynya, which lies between the Qikiqtani Region of Nunavut and Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). It also seeks to enable unrestricted movement between historically connected Inuit communities. This would mark the first international Inuit-led body to manage area such as this, setting a unique precedent for conservation and Indigenous rights internationally. The award emphasizes the importance of community-driven and Indigenous-led solutions and their role in addressing environmental challenges, including those faced in the Arctic. Such initiatives are crucial as they often provide adaptable and scalable models for resilience.

Politically, the Arctic's future hinges on continuity despite the uncertainty in current global politics. Greenland, for example, recently declared their intention to join the Paris Agreement, reflecting a

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<sup>2</sup>WWF, Climate Change. <https://www.arcticwwf.org/threats/climate-change/>

<sup>3</sup>Pacific, Coastal, and Marine Science Center. Climate impacts to Arctic coasts, 2022.

<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/pcmssc/news/northern-alaska-coastal-erosion-threatens-habitat-and-infrastructure>

<sup>4</sup>The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessment and Recommendations, January 2024. [https://www.anthc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Unmet\\_Needs\\_Report\\_22JAN24.pdf](https://www.anthc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Unmet_Needs_Report_22JAN24.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>UCAR Center for Science Education: Greenland's Ice Is Melting. <https://scied.ucar.edu/learning-zone/climate-change-impacts/greenlands-ice-melting>

<sup>6</sup>Nunavut's Infrastructure Gap, October 2020. [https://www.tunnngavik.com/files/2020/10/2020.10.20-Nunavuts\\_Infrastructure\\_Gap\\_Report\\_vf.pdf](https://www.tunnngavik.com/files/2020/10/2020.10.20-Nunavuts_Infrastructure_Gap_Report_vf.pdf)

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positive commitment to global climate action, aligning with broader international efforts to curb emissions and mitigate climate impacts. This move reinforces the necessity for persistent and stable climate policies, even as political landscapes shift. The recent global stocktake (GST) revealed mixed progress in climate action, with varying degrees of failure and success across different regions and sectors; however, the GST provided a warning heard around the world, that the international community is still far off track. This warning is similarly outlined in the findings of the IPCC's 6<sup>th</sup> Assessment Reporting Cycle. ICC's [Position Paper on the IPCC](#) highlights the progress that must be seen in this space and further emphasizes the urgency of addressing climate change impacts through comprehensive and collaborative efforts.

The outcome from the stocktake underscored the need for greater alignment between national policies and international climate goals. The integration of these elements— Indigenous-led climate action, political stability, and robust international frameworks—highlights the multifaceted approach required to effectively combat climate change and support vulnerable regions like the Arctic.

### 3 FROM COP29 TO COP30

As we head into COP29 and soon into COP30, several key decisions are on the horizon at the UNFCCC that will shape the future of climate action. Among the critical issues are the development of National Adaptation Plans, the new collective quantified goal on climate finance, updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the advancement of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. A significant focus must be on ensuring that these frameworks are grounded in human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as leaders in climate solutions must be followed through with creating direct pathways of access to climate finance and also ensuring that Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives are fully and effectively part of climate policies. This includes the ongoing support of Parties to financing the United Nations institutions to ensure the ongoing participation of Indigenous Peoples in these forums.

Recent discussions at both the Just Transition: Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives, Knowledge and Lived Experiences Summit and in the report of the UN Secretary General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals have emphasized the need for these frameworks to be rights-based and inclusive. We will work to hold the UN, states, governments and industry accountable to implementing the [CETM voluntary guidelines](#) as well as the [Indigenous Peoples Principles and Protocols for Just Transition](#). A truly just transition will not succeed without a systematic shift in thinking, consumption patterns, and approaches to development. This approach aligns with the broader goals of the UNFCCC to foster inclusive and effective climate action and upholds the rights outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Looking ahead, the next Arctic Regional Gathering of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, aiming to take place in Greenland during the next work plan, represents a pivotal moment for advancing Indigenous-led initiatives. Such gatherings are crucial for ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' experiences and solutions are incorporated into regional and global climate strategies and creates a space for Indigenous Knowledge Holders to share their Knowledge of and experiences with climate change. It is imperative for parties to actively engage in these initiatives.

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As we approach the next global stocktake in 2028/2029, Parties must strive for significant advancements in their climate policies and actions. The stocktake will assess the international community’s progress and determine whether we are on track to meet our climate goals and secure a livable future for generations to come. The coming four years are an opportunity to make bold decisions and implement changes that reflect a shared commitment to climate justice and sustainability. All decision making needs to take into account ongoing discussions on enhanced participation at the Human Rights Council that underscores the need for a recognition of the distinct status of Indigenous Peoples as rights holders, distinct from civil society and not to be conflated with terms such as “local communities”.<sup>7</sup>This includes ensuring that Indigenous Peoples’ free, prior, and informed consent is integral to climate decision-making processes. Such measures should be replicated across various platforms, such as the CBD, to guarantee that Indigenous voices are consistently heard and respected and to avoid siloing decisions that require a holistic lens in the fight against climate change.

### 4 CONCLUSION

Inuit have been involved in the UNFCCC negotiations since its inception, but we have seen little change. We have seen our land change drastically, with our climate warming almost four times faster than the rest of the planet, and we have seen little action from those in a position to create change. We have shared our Knowledge, but have not seen those who can act do so as quickly as they should.

We hereby reaffirm our commitment and will continue our efforts to convince 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 Peoples from the north to the south, we emphasize the importance of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, the constituency representing a unified voice for Indigenous Peoples at the UNFCCC, and of the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples’ Platform, a platform for Knowledge exchange and mobilization for Parties and Indigenous Peoples. These two forums, while very different and imperfect, play a crucial role in recognizing the need for and advancing Inuit leadership and Inuit Knowledge in climate governance, assessments, and policy and decision making as well as the need for building connections with Indigenous Peoples from around the world.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council will continue to advocate for Inuit and to build partnerships in these forums to fight for the rights and futures of generations to come.

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<sup>7</sup>Outcome Document, February 2024.<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/indigenouspeoples/sr/statements/outcome-document-rome-feb-2024-meeting-un-mechanisms-indigenous-peoples-rights.pdf>