

September 24, 2019

### **Indigenous Peoples Rome Declaration on the Arctic Region Fisheries and Environment.**

We, Indigenous peoples of the Arctic, from three of the seven socio-cultural regions - the Arctic, North America and Russia - representing the Inuit, Saami, Sakha, Itelmen, Yukaghir, Ulchi, Evenki, Golgan and Chickaloon peoples, have travelled from Finland, Greenland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and USA to meet in Rome on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at the headquarters of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Prompted by the urgent need to address current threats and challenges facing the Arctic, its peoples and natural resources, we have gathered to share our perspectives and knowledge with researchers, FAO and Government officials from the region.

We declare that the Arctic is our homeland. Our territories cover nearly the entire region. Over thousands of years we have nurtured symbiotic and respectful relationships between our peoples and the Arctic environment and **have transferred our traditional knowledge through countless generations.** We have developed fishing, hunting, herding, farming and harvesting systems that have allowed us to feed our communities, while at the same time maintaining and sustaining the biodiversity of the region. **Our traditional languages reflect the richness of our cultures and the deep connections that we have with our territories.** Our ways of life continue to this day and, through our efforts, they will continue long into the future.

We reaffirm our interdependent, interrelated and indivisible rights as elaborated in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including our right to self-determination (article 3), and to our lands, territories and resources (article 26), and underscore the need to integrate our unique knowledge, views, recommendations and perspectives into the systems - local, national and international – that govern the use of Arctic lands, waters and resources. **We remind Arctic States that they must obtain our free, prior and informed consent before adopting any legislative or administrative measures, or realizing and development projects, that will impact our rights, lands, territories or resources.**

Our food systems and livelihoods play a vital role in poverty alleviation, food security and in realizing the objectives of *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG's 2, 13 and 14.

We express concern over threats to our traditional practices, customs, spirituality and food systems, including laws and regulations that hinder our rights and access to resources, **as well as industrialized fishing, shipping, tourist fishing, aquaculture and extractive industries.**

Climate change is also of primary concern. Its multiple impacts are adversely affecting our societies, triggering migration and displacement, impacting the health and well-being of youth, and threatening our ways of life and disrupting our marine ecosystems

We welcome the First Expert Seminar on Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' Fisheries in the Arctic Region, and thank the FAO, the Government of Finland, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Government of Canada for organizing this important event.

We acknowledge and thank the presence of UN member states, the European Union and the involvement of FAO, UNPFII and other key stakeholders, appreciate their willingness to address the crucial issues that are increasingly affecting our livelihoods, homelands and future well-being, and express our interest in

cooperation with other organizations that are working on sustainable development of the Arctic region, including the Arctic Council.

We appreciate that FAO hosted the 2018 First High-Level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems, highlighting the need to support and strengthen indigenous peoples' traditional food systems.

We acknowledge that in some regions of the Arctic, traditional fishing, hunting and other harvesting activities reflect the primary dimension of Indigenous communities' food security and that food security has multiple dimensions, including health and wellness, language, and identity, which requires holistic approaches and the direct involvement of Arctic Indigenous peoples in policy, dialogue and actions in order to safeguard our overall cultural integrity, and ensure respect and recognition of our rights at both the national and international levels.

Considering the global challenges of climate change, the loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, impacts to our marine ecosystems, and the potential for diminishment of Indigenous knowledge related to Arctic Indigenous fisheries, hunting and subsequent impacts upon the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge, we offer the following recommendations:

#### **To the Member States**

1. We urge Member States to reform the agreements of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization to comply with the rights affirmed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other relevant international law. In no case may an Arctic Indigenous people be denied its own means of subsistence.
2. We call upon Members States to include representatives of Indigenous peoples in their delegations to FAO governing bodies and technical committees
3. We urge other Arctic Members States to join the Rome Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples announced by Canada and joined by Norway.
4. We urge the Arctic Member States to request FAO to establish a working group on Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, from three of the seven socio-cultural regions - the Arctic, North America and Russia.
5. We call upon Member States to increase and advance the recognition and appreciation of Arctic Indigenous food systems, Arctic fisheries and food security, in particular in relation to the outcomes of the High-level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems.
6. We call upon Member States, in collaboration with Arctic Indigenous peoples, and with their free, prior and informed consent, to create national laws, policies, regulations and governance

mechanisms that are inclusive of the necessary components to recognize and respect the distinct livelihoods, natural resources and management role of Indigenous peoples of the Arctic Region.

7. We call upon Member States, in collaboration with Arctic Indigenous peoples, and with their free, prior and informed consent, to develop national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.
8. We call upon Member States to recognize, support and enhance the management and co-management, based on Indigenous traditional knowledge, of fisheries resources by Arctic Indigenous peoples as a central element of sustainable development.
9. We recommend policy makers to include issues and concerns of Indigenous youth in policies related to Arctic fisheries as well as support programs to preserve and transfer indigenous peoples traditional knowledge through generations, while increasing the participation and capacity of Indigenous youth in policy discussions in order to sustain traditional and other Indigenous fishing practices throughout the Arctic.
10. We urge member states to include disaggregated data on indigenous knowledge and data on Indigenous peoples' participation in processes relevant to FAO when reporting to FAO.

#### **To the FAO**

1. We urge FAO to initiate the process together with Member States and in partnership with Indigenous peoples to draft guidelines on incorporating Indigenous knowledge into state governance systems.
2. We urge FAO and Members States in partnership with Indigenous peoples to facilitate a process to developed principles and protocols regarding ethical coproduction of Indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge.
3. We urge FAO to ensure the Blue Growth Initiative and other global initiatives led by FAO on fisheries and Indigenous peoples issues should balance the sustainable management of aquatic resources with economic, social and cultural benefits for Indigenous peoples, consistent with the right to self-determination and to development, as affirmed by *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other relevant international law.
4. We urge FAO to continue to strengthen its engagement with Indigenous peoples in its future work by organizing high level expert seminars on other relevant technical fields.

5. We urge FAO together with Members States and Indigenous peoples to develop a mechanism for the gathering and exchange of Indigenous peoples' knowledge and scientific knowledge consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other relevant international law and with regards to indigenous peoples' fishing and the food security of indigenous communities in the Arctic region.
6. We urge FAO to include disaggregated data on Indigenous peoples into its publications.
7. We call FAO in cooperation with Member States, Arctic Indigenous peoples, research institutions and other stakeholders to study national experiences and legislation systems in the Arctic region to elaborate collated recommendations to strengthen indigenous peoples' governance over traditional fishing.
8. We recommend the FAO, in collaboration with Arctic Indigenous peoples, continue its work through research and advocacy to support Arctic Indigenous fisheries, hunting, harvesting, and overall food security, as well as assist in enhancing exchange of information across and between Arctic Indigenous peoples' communities and organizations.
9. We recommend that FAO work with Arctic Indigenous peoples to organize dialogues within Indigenous communities where the effects and impacts of climate change can be shared and communicated.