Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Statement

Arctic Regional Meeting

2 December 2020

To be delivered by Hjalmar Dahl, ICC Greenland President

Thank you, Mr./Mrs. Chair

Throughout Inuit Nunaat, the coronavirus highlights the urgent need to remedy the profound infrastructure deficit that contributes to vulnerability and underlies the health challenges experienced by too many of our people.

Gaps in basic infrastructure continue to contribute to severe health risks. Overcrowding, food insecurity, lower life expectancy, suicide, and a high prevalence of tuberculosis are among the inequities experienced by our people that are linked to poor infrastructure. Many homes lack running water and a flush toilet. Covid-19 is very challenging in remote and rural areas of Inuit Nunaat. Spread could happen quickly if no appropriate, concrete responses are provided.

ICC calls on governments to close the infrastructure gaps throughout Inuit Nunaat by making major new investments in our communities, prioritizing basic infrastructures such as housing, water, and sewer. Furthermore, ensuring that this investment supports climate-resilient infrastructure is critical for our Arctic communities, which are impacted by climate change's most significant impacts. This is the only way to create and ensure the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Inuit. These steps are necessary to reduce vulnerability and to actually gain social and economic equity and to support Inuit health and well-being in the face of such viruses and diseases.

It must be noted that our leadership took early, decisive and determined action to safeguard our communities. We are acutely aware of the potential devastation of our villages based on our recent history of contact with respective colonizers and such diseases. Also, we know that this pandemic is far from over and that other viruses and diseases are surely going to impact us. Therefore, governments must acknowledge the challenges that Inuit communities face and take action in lock step with our leadership to secure our basic health, well-being and our overall cultural integrity.

We urge EMRIP members to review the work of the ICC within the Arctic Council and specifically the briefing on Covid-19 in the Arctic, which we contributed to. We have been able to catalog wise practices to protect our basic health and wellness that may be useful to others. We will also address these issues in a future Health and Wellness Summit, now rescheduled for 2021. We look forward to sharing the results of that gathering with EMRIP once it has been concluded.

Qujanaq, Thank you, Mr./Mrs. Chair