

**DALEE SAMBO DOROUGH, PHD  
INTERNATIONAL CHAIR  
INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2021, AT 10:00 am EST  
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber  
Title: National Security Implications of Climate Change in the Arctic**

On behalf of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, I am pleased to share our perspectives with this Subcommittee. At the international level, our organization represents approximately 180,000 Inuit across Inuit Nunaat -- our traditional territories, which cover nearly half of the Arctic region throughout Chukotka, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland.

The Arctic is our homeland. Over thousands of years, we have nurtured reciprocal symbiotic and respectful relationships between our peoples and the Arctic environment, and we have transferred our knowledge through countless generations. Our cultural identities, values, spirituality, livelihoods, and overall mental and physical wellness are tied to our total environment, of which we are an intimate part.

Climate change is of primary concern. Its multiple impacts are adversely affecting our societies, threatening our overall cultural integrity, from threats to our food security and food systems to relocation and displacement to adverse impacts on our health and well-being to the biodiversity of our ecosystems – essentially our entire way of life. Climate change is damaging and disrupting the natural elements of our lands and territories, including our marine environment.

Climate change impacts are also compounded by state-imposed laws and regulations that hinder our rights and access to resources, and exacerbate issues such as atmospheric pollution; substandard and unreliable infrastructure; increased vessel traffic and shipping; industrialized fishing; unsustainable development; and energy solutions framed as “green”, all of which are driven by others far from our homelands, without our consent.

Yet, we remain optimistic because we ourselves have solutions. We are prepared to contribute. We simply demand respect for and recognition of our distinct status, rights, and role as well as our own governance structures, including our right to maintain, own, and control our knowledge systems to effectively contribute to research and the co-production of knowledge. Upon this foundation, we can provide Indigenous knowledge that will ensure that you, as policy and decision-makers, have the best available information to base your decisions upon.

Regarding the subject matter of this hearing, our overall collective security is threatened. Our security includes diverse elements, from the Arctic Ocean, its coastal seas, and the cryosphere, which are critical ecosystems must be protected through partnership with Inuit. And our future security depends upon our direct involvement in all matters concerning the dynamic relationship that we have with our homelands.

We were organized in the midst of the Cold War, to adopt Bernard Baruch's use of the term in 1947. Baruch's original interest is aligned with our hope that "the world can renew itself physically or spiritually."<sup>1</sup> As far back as 1977, we addressed Arctic security by adopting a resolution specific to the peaceful use of the Arctic. These actions are reflected in the ICC Arctic Policy<sup>2</sup> as well as a 1983 resolution, and more recently, within the *2018 Utqiagvik Declaration*<sup>3</sup>. The latter directs ICC leadership to lay the foundation for diplomatic dialogue on the establishment of an Arctic zone of peace. Indeed, the UN mechanism<sup>4</sup> that crafted the Antarctic Treaty, the Seabed Treaty, and other nuclear weapon free zones has been explored by the ICC. We urge all Arctic states, including the US, to consider this constructive mechanism.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/bernard-baruch-coins-the-term-cold-war>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/project/inuit-arctic-policy/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://iccalaska.org/wp-icc/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/FINAL-Utqiagvik-Declaration-2018.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwzf/>

Furthermore, we have adopted the *Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty*, which underscores internationally affirmed human rights standards, including the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. It also calls for close cooperation among Arctic States and Inuit on all matters of Arctic sovereignty. Significantly, the ICC chose to launch this Declaration at the Foreign Ministers gathering that coincided with the *MELTING ICE conference*<sup>5</sup> in April 2009.

In conclusion, we view these matters as interrelated. We respectfully request that the US adopt the same perspective and specifically, to seriously consider how climate change is impacting Inuit. We ask that you ensure that Inuit have the financial means to address adaptation and mitigation on our own terms, as well as the intellectual and political space to make substantive contributions in favor of ourselves and the United States.

Our direct participation should be afforded in relation to every issue that impacts Inuit lands, territories, and resources, from national security to so-called green energy solutions to priorities for development to safeguarding the marine environment, and ultimately our pathway toward ensuring our own cultural integrity. We are an essential force in all of these questions. In my estimation, we are the central bastion of protection of the Arctic, and we urge the whole of the US government to recognize the substantive contributions that we are willing to make.

Quyanaq. Thank you.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/1643>