



Naalakkersuisut (the Government of Greenland), attn. Nunanut Allanut tunngasunut
Naalakkersuisoq (the Minister of Foreign Affairs)
Foreign Minister of Denmark
The Folketing Committee on Greenland

The Parties of Inatsisartut (the Greenlandic Parliament)
The Parties of Folketinget (the Danish Parliament)

Considerations, recommendations and input regarding The Kingdom of Denmark's Arctic Strategy 2021-2030 from Inuit Circumpolar Council, ICC Greenland.

Introduction

To ICC Greenland, which is the only indigenous peoples' organization in the Kingdom of Denmark, it is of paramount importance to make ICC's considerations and key recommendations known before the designing of the Kingdom's new Arctic Strategy. With this open letter we hope that these considerations and recommendations may reach a wider circle of decision makers.

ICC Greenland has a real desire that all relevant authorities, institutions, organizations and individuals from all parts of the Kingdom will be involved in the preparation of the new Arctic Strategy. At the same time, it should be clear that the strategy is a unified and common strategy drawn up with equal participation from the three countries of the Realm.

SDG as a framework

Like the *Naalakkersuisut*, ICC Greenland believes that the coming strategy should, overall, rest on the *UN Sustainable Development Goals* (the 2030 goals), which means that all of the goals both will have an overall dimension for the entire Realm and two more specific dimensions for the Faroe Islands and Greenland. At the same time, we would like to point out that the Arctic Strategy must address the specific environmental conditions and the climate change that affect both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Indigenous Peoples Rights – UNDRIP

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should be included as an integral part of the Kingdom's Arctic Strategy.

An important passage in UNDRIP and, for example, ILO 169 is that all legislation on development projects must include the right to *Free, Prior and Informed Consent* (FPIC), which also includes the '*right to say no*' to projects that hinder or restrict the indigenous peoples in developing their own economies and cultures in their respective homelands.

This principle is also applicable to people who do not define themselves as indigenous peoples. The principle is that all processes are democratic and transparent with actual participation.

Arctic Council

The most important intergovernmental body in the Arctic is the *Arctic Council*. The ICC and the other indigenous peoples organizations in the Council that have the status of *Permanent Participants (PP)*, believe that the Arctic Council must undergo a renewal. The Council is generally too bureaucratic and should be able to be slimmed without degrading its work. At the same time, there is a real desire for the Arctic inhabitants, including the indigenous peoples, to get real co-determination and co-responsibility for how the Arctic is governed and used. The indigenous peoples' organizations should therefore become equal members of the Arctic Council, with the same rights and obligations as the nation states.

Living conditions in the Arctic

A special focus should be paid to the living conditions in the Arctic, which is currently generally much lower than in the nation states southern parts. The new Arctic Strategy necessarily must incorporate this fact and contribute with economic models for how the general state of health, incl. lifestyle diseases, and the educational situation at all levels can be raised.

Analyses of the living conditions have been carried out over the past decades, in the *Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SliCA)* project, which clearly shows that living conditions are, on average, unacceptable. Given that the Arctic Council member states all belong to the some of the world's richest states, it is striking that the living conditions of several of the Arctic indigenous peoples are below the acceptable level.

Health

Like other indigenous peoples, the indigenous peoples of the Arctic suffer from a number of health-related problems and challenges. To this may be added insufficient and malfunctioning health services. A common health policy must be established, which must be long-term and must be based on prevention and respond to existing and potential new lifestyle diseases.

Organizationally and educationally, local health institutions must be established, which are to a greater extent based on resources and people already present. Some of the most basic prerequisites for better health and better health care are establishing better sanitation and access to clean water.

Among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, there is deep and widespread nervousness/concern that an extensive pandemic may hit the small isolated communities. In addition, how can a preventive preparedness be build up? The current Covid-19 pandemic will hardly be the last!

Education

Similar to other of the SDG goals, education is given high priority in all Inuit communities. The level of education should be increased and adapted to the communities in which the programs are to be used/functioning. Therefore, it is important that all educational programs are performed on the communities own terms and reflect the geographical, ecological, historical, cultural and linguistic realities of the Arctic indigenous peoples.

On behalf of the ICC, ICC Greenland held a seminar on education issues with participation from all Inuit regions. One of the key recommendations was that education should take place on Inuit's own terms and should be promoted, this way education can be adapted to the communities in where it is to be used and because it will achieve the best results.

(The Outcome Document from the Seminar i Nuuk is attached)

Environment

The Arctic environment is threatened by the drastic consequences of climate change throughout the Arctic. There is a great deal of international political and scientific attention to the environment and nature, focusing on how quickly the ice melts and when the polar bear will become extinct as well as how the changes in the Arctic will affect the rest of the globe. However, far less attention is paid to the consequences of climate change affecting the people living in the Arctic. Especially the indigenous peoples and others who are living of the renewable resources are experiencing great changes.

The Realm should in the strategy attach decisive importance to international cooperation and not at least to the Arctic cooperation on the environment. At the same time, focus also should be on how the Realm could contribute to the world community with clean energy, clean drinking water and knowledge.

Therefore, the Realm should set common and very specific goals in the Kingdom's Arctic Strategy. Thus, the strategy should involve local indigenous peoples' knowledge on nature and the environment.

Economy

Many Arctic communities have major economic problems and challenges. Especially in the outermost regions and small communities, there is great poverty and unacceptable living conditions.

The eight member states of the Arctic Council all rank at the top of the most affluent and powerful countries. Nevertheless, there is still a great deal of poverty and uneven distribution of income, both within the southern states and between the southern regions and the Arctic regions.

It must be a common goal, both for the nation states, the Arctic Council, the Inuit and other indigenous peoples to achieve, as much as possible, the same living conditions as the average in the nation states they are citizens of.

Many Inuit communities heavily rely on aid from the "outside" through state subsidies. This is done at the same time, as there is a growing focus on the potential for economic development through the exploitation of Arctic resources.

The new strategy should also reflect the desire for greater trade opportunities between indigenous peoples across state borders in the Arctic. The desire for a higher degree of economic self-sufficiency should be supported in the Arctic Strategy.

Infrastructure

Adequate and stable infrastructure is a basic prerequisite for maintaining, and not at least, for developing the Arctic communities. The task is extensive and costly, and large investments in business development and further economic activity are needed, which often is prevented by a lack of basic and stable physical and digital infrastructure.

The Kingdom's Arctic Strategy should therefore include investment opportunities in sustainable infrastructure.

The Arctic as a peace zone

The ICC notes with concern that the nation states obviously find it necessary to further militarize the Arctic. This is in violation of the principles of the *Ilulissat Declaration* (Arctic Five) of 2008, and confirmed in 2018.

The reason seems to be the fear of possible hostile activities from countries like China and Russia, and speculations on that these states, for example will subjugate Greenland or more likely parts of the country. Several nation states, including Denmark, have announced that they will invest in more military equipment to strengthen their ability to enforce their sovereignty.

Inuit live in four nation states, three are members of NATO and one is Russia, which is not a NATO member; the Saami live in four countries, one being Russia, one NATO member and two neutral; The Aleutians live in respectively the United States and Russia. The indigenous peoples of the Arctic do not want a militarized Arctic, which is why the new Arctic Strategy must concretize the Arctic as "a peaceful and stable Arctic" that "continues on the track of dialogue and cooperation".

Specifically, ICC Greenland suggests that the Arctic Strategy points out that the *Arctic Five* should be expanded and being subject to a modernized Arctic Council with equal participation by the eight nation states and the six indigenous peoples organizations. ICC Greenland does not find it necessary for observers in the Arctic Council to attend meetings that deal with security policy issues.

Essential for the ICC is that the Arctic Council returns to its core work on environment and sustainable development, with the human dimension as a core value.

At the ICC General Assembly in 2018 in Utqiarvik, Alaska, the requirement for the Arctic as a peace zone was included in the final document. (*Attached*)

ICC Greenland wishes to participate in designing the Kingdom's Arctic Strategy

The above are some of the central and basic conditions for the long-term survival of the Arctic indigenous peoples and their capability to preserve their languages and cultures.

The nation states and the Arctic Council must together with the indigenous peoples articulate their goals and visions for the conservation of endangered Arctic cultures and languages.

In general ICC Greenland calls for the Kingdom's Arctic Strategy to be designed in a holistic view and based on the principle of all things internal consistency. This is in line with the basic philosophy of the Inuit and is a necessity if the strategy shall be effective, both for the Realm and the people of the Arctic.

ICC Greenland is ready to participate in the process of designing the strategy and has a strong desire to get involved before the final version of the Kingdom's Arctic Strategy is signed. ICC Greenland is available to further elaborate on the above.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Hjalmar Dahl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Hjalmar" and the last name "Dahl" clearly distinguishable.

Hjalmar Dahl

President for ICC Greenland