

PRESS RELEASE

“1.5 Degrees is More Than Enough”

Arctic and Island States Call on Leaders to Agree to Deep Cuts to Greenhouse Gas Emissions

December 9, 2015 – Paris, France – Voices from some of the world’s coldest and hottest regions were raised in unison today calling for ambitious greenhouse gas emissions targets that would limit the average global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The call was issued by Indigenous Peoples’ representatives from the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council, the Pacific and the Government of the Seychelles after the release of the latest draft negotiating text at the climate change negotiations underway in Paris.

“We are seeing significant climate related impacts in the Arctic at one degree Celsius so 1.5 degrees is more than enough,” said Okalik Egeesiak, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents Inuit in Canada, Greenland, Chukotka (Russia) and Alaska. “Since the Arctic

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is warming at least twice as fast as the rest of the world, the two degree limit being discussed here in Paris will lead to dramatic and irreversible effects on Arctic communities.”

“Arctic and island peoples have much in common,” said Ronny Jumeau, Seychelles Ambassador for Climate Change and Small Island Developing State Issues. “We are on the front lines of climate change. Science tells us that 2 degrees is a threshold after which climate change effects will become even more severe. Even 1.5 is too high but it will buy us some time to adapt.”

“We are calling on the states here in Paris to have the political will to commit to this target,” said Aile Javo, President of the Saami Council. The Saami are Indigenous Peoples who live in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and northwest Russia.

“This is not a technical question of when or if climate change is affecting our communities. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change all countries have committed to upholding their common but different responsibilities. Now we need to see some action and fast.”

“As islanders and Pacific Indigenous Peoples, we do not want to lose our home islands, any more than anyone would want to lose their home in any part of the world. So we’re here fighting and we’ll continue to fight, and we call upon everyone else to join us,” said Milañ Loeak, who is from the Republic of the Marshall Islands and is a member of the Pacific Indigenous Network.

“We are a pragmatic and adaptable peoples, but 2 degrees Celsius will be an insurmountable challenge not only for Indigenous Peoples. As the Arctic melts and the sea level rises one billion people living in low lying areas are at risk of becoming the new environmental migrants,” said Eegeesiak.

The Arctic and island leaders pointed to the Government of Canada, which recently adopted the position of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and announced it supports the 1.5 degree target, as an example of the kind of commitment that countries at COP21 need to demonstrate for the negotiations to succeed.

“It has been clearly identified by Indigenous Peoples for many years from our respective homelands and here at COP21 that there must be an immediate, concerted effort by the global community to address climate change,” said Maatalii Okalik, President of the National Inuit Youth Council in Canada. “History proves that when parties work together for a common goal that objectives can indeed be met. Youth call on all states to commit to 1.5 degrees -- for this generation and the many to come in the future. Our future depends on it.”

“Canada recently joined the chorus that has been building here in Paris,” said Jumeau. “I call on all my fellow leaders to commit to the 1.5 C target.”

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