



## ARCTIC REGION DECLARATION IN PREPARATION FOR THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

### PREAMBLE

We, the Indigenous Peoples of the socio-cultural region known as the Arctic, representing the Inuit of Chukotka, Russia; Alaska; Canada; and Greenland and the Sámi of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia have met, discussed, and finalized this Declaration in preparation for the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021.

At the international level, our organizations collectively represent over 180,000 Inuit<sup>1</sup> and 100,000 Sámi from across Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi -- our traditional territories. Prompted by the urgent need to inform and influence the outcomes of the forthcoming United Nations Food Systems Summit and to address current threats and challenges facing the Arctic, its peoples, and natural resources, we have gathered to share our perspectives and Indigenous Knowledge<sup>2</sup> concerning our food systems.<sup>3</sup>

Our natural food systems are unique. They are imperative to ensuring the vitality of our way of life, cultures, and survival as distinct peoples of the Arctic region. Our food systems are resilient and have been sustained and managed by our steadfast continuation of our traditional livelihoods, occupations, values, and practices.

The Arctic is our homeland. Our traditional territories cover nearly the entire Arctic region. 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, our values, our spirituality, and overall mental and physical wellness are tied to our total environment, of which we are an intimate part of. This is what makes up our food security<sup>4</sup> – our access, availability, stability, health and wellness, cultures, languages, and spirituality. Our governance and stewardship, proven sustainable practices, ownership, decision-making power, and management are all connected to our food sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> Our food sovereignty is tied to the health and wellness of the entire ecosystem and necessary to ensure our food security.

We reaffirm our interdependent, interrelated, interconnected, and indivisible rights as elaborated in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including our right to self-determination (article 3), our right to harvesting the food that we rely upon (article 20), and our lands, territories and resources (article 26), and underscore the significance of our unique knowledge, views, recommendations, and perspectives into the systems - local, regional, national, and international – that govern the use of our Arctic lands, waters, and

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<sup>1</sup> Inuit Circumpolar Council membership includes approximately 180,000 Inuit organized as 96 Tribal Governments in the United States; the four land-claims regions in Canada, including Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut; Inuit of Greenland; and approximately 2,800 Yupik in eight communities in Chukotka.

<sup>2</sup> Article 31, *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; and Definition for Indigenous Knowledge sourced through Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska. 2015. Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic From an Inuit Perspective. Technical Report. Anchorage, AK, p. 15 (hereinafter ICC-Alaska, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> Definition for Food System sources through ICC Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, 2015, p. 32

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, ICC Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, 2015, p. 31

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, ICC Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, 2015, p. 35



resources. We remind UN member States, private corporations, research centers and civil society, that they must obtain our Free, Prior, and Informed Consent before adopting any legislative or administrative measures (article 19), or pursuing development projects, programmes, and activities, that may impact our rights, lands, territories, or resources (article 28).

## OUR FOOD SYSTEMS

In contrast to the tracks identified by scientists that have largely defined food systems of the dominant society, for Inuit and Sami food is not just about calories or nutrients. It is a core part of our culture, identity, and pride. Our food systems provide the foundation of our existence and our holistic world view. Our distinctive and profound relationship with our lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources includes the understanding that we are an integral part of the environment. As such, we must uphold our responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

We are not farmers, we are primarily hunters, gatherers, herders, fishers, and mobile peoples, traversing our lands and waters to maintain our way of life and the systems we depend upon. Our food systems depend on a healthy environment and access to traditional resources and play an important role in maintaining our cultures, knowledge, and identities as well as our physical and mental health and well-being. Our food systems are practiced in a sustainable way, we take only what we need, and allow nature to restore itself. Our traditional languages, hunting tools, art, cultural expressions, clothing, cultural gatherings, spirituality, and knowledge reflect the richness of our cultures and the deep connections that we have with our territories. Our ways of life continue to this day. We need our food systems to survive in the Arctic. The World's food systems, through our efforts within the Food Systems Summit, will benefit from our equitable partnership to aid in bringing forward many of our approaches and innovative solutions.

The right of self-determination is recognized as the pre-requisite for the exercise and enjoyment of all other human rights, and it is fundamental to the maintenance of our unique food systems. Securing recognition of our rights to lands, territories and resources will ensure the continuation of our proven sustainable food system practices thereby safeguarding the Arctic and supporting biodiversity. Furthermore, we are uniquely positioned to ensure our own food sovereignty and security based upon centuries of accumulated knowledge, adaptation, resilience, and genuine respect for our natural world.

We have defined Indigenous Knowledge as “a systematic way of thinking and knowing that is elaborated and applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and linguistic systems. Indigenous Knowledge is owned by the holders of that knowledge, often collectively, and is uniquely expressed and transmitted through indigenous languages. It is a body of knowledge generated through cultural practices, lived experiences including extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons and skills. It has been developed and verified over millennia and is still developing in a living process, including knowledge acquired today and in the future, and it is passed on from generation to generation.”<sup>6</sup> Indigenous Knowledge is transmitted by practicing our traditional livelihoods and occupations, as well as our languages, all of which are essential to our food systems.

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<sup>6</sup> Ottawa Traditional Knowledge Principles at <https://www.arcticpeoples.com/knowledge#indigenous-knowledge>

## **CHALLENGES**

We express concern over threats to our traditional practices, customs, spirituality, and food systems, including state-imposed laws and regulations that hinder our rights and access to resources, as well as industrialized fishing, shipping, tourist fishing, aquaculture, and extractive industries. These threats reduce the conditions to practice our traditional livelihoods and limit our main sources of food. Also, environmental changes caused by competitive land usage are impacting our key food resources making our traditional livelihoods and maintenance of our Knowledge more challenging.

Climate change is 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 food security and food systems – our ways of life – by damaging and disrupting the natural elements of our lands and marine ecosystems that are at the heart of our food and water sources. Overcoming these diverse impacts requires adaptive, holistic management of the resources that we depend upon.

There is a fundamental and direct link between our food-systems, our right of self-determination and our rights to lands, territories, and natural resources. The lack of respect for and recognition of our rights to self-determination, to our management and co-management of our resources to ensure their productive capacity, and impediments to recognition of our Knowledge are resulting in adverse impacts upon our livelihoods, our ability to sustain ourselves, and our food production.

Transmitting our Knowledge to future generations and lack of respect for and recognition of Indigenous Knowledge based upon our long-standing sustainable way of life are also of increasing concern. The lack of equity, meaningful engagement, and real partnership in international and national processes and decision-making bodies is a persistent concern. Many intergovernmental actors and processes do not understand, support, or acknowledge the content of meaningful engagement from an Indigenous human rights framework or perspectives.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

We appreciate that FAO organized the Expert Seminar on Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' Fisheries in the Arctic Region in 2019 as well as the 2018 First High-Level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems, highlighting the need to support and strengthen Indigenous Peoples' traditional food systems.

We welcome the Arctic Regional Dialogues on Indigenous Food Systems in order to share the perspectives and concerns of the Inuit and Sámi of the Arctic Region held in June 3-4 and 24-25, 2021. We acknowledge and thank the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council, FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit, and UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for organizing regional dialogues with Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic in preparation for the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit and Summit.

We acknowledge and thank all the participants and appreciate their willingness to address the crucial issues that are increasingly affecting our livelihoods, homelands, and future well-being. We express our interest in cooperation with other organizations that are working on sustainable development of the Arctic region, including the Arctic Council.

We emphasize the fundamental and direct link between our food-systems, our right to self-determination, and our rights to lands, territories, and natural resources. Respecting our right to self-determination, securing land rights, and ensuring the continuity of our traditional livelihoods and occupations are fundamental elements to strengthen and maintain our food systems. Ensuring our full and effective participation of Inuit and Sámi is a key element, at national, regional, and international level. We underscore the fact that our traditional livelihoods are practiced in a sustainable way and as such allows nature to restore itself. Our proven sustainable fishing, hunting, and harvesting practices reflect the primary dimensions of Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ food security.

Our Indigenous Knowledge has sustained our peoples and our cultures for thousands of years, and our fishing, hunting, herding, and harvesting practices should be respected and used in relation to research and policy- and decision-making concerning the interrelated dimensions of our food systems as well as intergenerational sharing and transmitting our Knowledge to future generations in order to maintain and strengthen our Knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge and our practices are distinct from science yet complementary to such practices, and this needs to be recognized. We insist upon recognizing and respecting the role of Indigenous Knowledge in relation to our food systems and the opportunity for the ethical and equitable engagement of our Knowledge through genuine co-production of knowledge processes, research, and decision-making.

Our status, rights, and role have been recognized and affirmed in national law and policy as well as in diverse international human rights instruments and within regional institutions, including the Arctic Council, the United Nations, the ILO, and the Organization of American States. Therefore, we reject the use of the terms “local communities” and “peasants” in the context of our legal status, our distinct human rights, and our role as distinct peoples within diverse national and international political arenas and other intergovernmental fora.

Inuit and Sámi self-determination and self-governance, including management and co-management of our lands and natural resources will ensure our self-reliance as well as our capacity to define our own needs and values in order to achieve genuine food security. We insist upon the recognition of and respect for our own definition and characterization of our food systems within a rights-based framework, including our rights to our lands, territories, and resources as well as free, prior, and informed consent, and the rejection of the false dichotomy between the developed and developing world in the context of Indigenous Peoples.

**Recommendations to the United Nations Secretary General, United Nations Agencies Member States, and private sector.**

Considering the global challenges of climate change, the loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, impacts to our unique ecosystems, including our marine ecosystems, and the potential for diminishment of Indigenous Knowledge related to Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ food systems and subsequent impacts upon the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous Knowledge, we offer the following recommendations to the United Nations Secretary General, to UN Member States, and United Nations Agencies:

**Right to self-determination**

1. Consistent with international human rights instruments, UN Member States must recognize Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination, autonomy, and self-governance, together with their right to

determine their own priorities for their development, to define their food-systems, and to participate in governance and policy decision-making processes at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

2. We call upon UN Member States, the UN, and its agencies to engage in constructive partnerships with Arctic Indigenous Peoples to implement and achieve the ends of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in order for Inuit and Sámi to fully exercise our right of self-determination and our right to self-government.

3. We call upon FAO to recognize Food Security and Food Sovereignty as defined by Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

4. We call upon Member States to recognize, support, and enhance the management and co-management of the diverse elements of our food systems, based on our distinct status, role, and rights as well as Indigenous Knowledge as a central element of sustainable development in the Arctic.

### **Rights to land, waters, and natural resources**

5. Consistent with international human rights instruments, we urge UN Member States to recognize the integral connection between Indigenous Peoples' food systems and our collective rights to lands, waters, territories, and natural resources. In no case may an Arctic Indigenous Peoples be deprived of its own means of subsistence. The term territories must be understood to include the total environment.

6. We urge UN Member States to recognize the right of Indigenous Peoples to food security and food sovereignty, and to take positive actions to recognize, enhance, and facilitate the capacity of Indigenous Peoples to strengthen natural and traditional food systems, such as formally recognizing and demarcating Indigenous lands and territories to enable them to carry out productive food activities.

7. We call upon FAO, in cooperation with UN Member States, Arctic Indigenous Peoples, research institutions, and other stakeholders to study national experiences and legislation in the Arctic region to elaborate recommendations to strengthen Arctic Indigenous Peoples' governance over their traditional lands, livelihoods and food systems.

8. We call upon FAO and UN Member States to ensure respect for and recognition of the rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples in the context of international agreements that impact their unique food systems to ensure that their decisions, actions, and policies do not diminish or undermine such rights. Furthermore, we call upon all environmental and conservation-oriented UN Agencies and all international, regional, and national non-governmental organizations to respect and recognize the rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples to all elements of their food systems, including their lands, territories, and resources.

### **Climate change**

9. We recommend that FAO work with Arctic Indigenous Peoples to organize dialogues within Indigenous communities where the effects and impacts of climate change and Indigenous Peoples innovations and solutions can be shared, communicated, and mitigated.

10. We call upon UN 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 that are responsive to our concerns and that ultimately safeguard our food systems. We emphasize that global emissions must be curbed and significantly reduced by means of developing renewable sources of energy, but the measures taken to limit climate change must not bear a negative impact on the culture and living conditions of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

### **Capacity-building and research on our food systems and diets**

11. We recommend the FAO, in collaboration with Arctic Indigenous Peoples, continue its work through research and advocacy to support Arctic Indigenous food systems and traditional livelihoods such as fisheries, herding, hunting, harvesting, and overall food security, as well as assist in enhancing exchange of information across and between Arctic Indigenous Peoples' communities and organizations.

12. We call upon FAO, in partnership with Arctic Indigenous Peoples, and in cooperation with UN Member States, research institutions and other stakeholders to study Inuit and Sámi food systems, inclusive of diets and all other interrelated components, to increase and advance recognition and appreciation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' diets, food systems, food security, and food sovereignty, in particular in relation to the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit and to learn directly from Sámi and Inuit, including reviewing the literature and material produced by Sámi and Inuit.

### **Indigenous Knowledge**

13. We urge FAO together with Members States and Indigenous Peoples to start a process guided by Indigenous Peoples to develop a mechanism for the gathering and exchange of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge and scientific knowledge consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other relevant international law with regard to the food security of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

14. We recommend policy makers to include issues and concerns of Indigenous youth in policies related to Arctic Indigenous Peoples' food systems as well as support programs to preserve and transfer Indigenous Knowledge through generations, while increasing the participation and capacity of Indigenous youth in policy discussions in order to sustain our traditional food systems throughout the Arctic.

15. We urge FAO to initiate the process together with UN Member States and in full partnership with Indigenous Peoples to respect and recognize the ethical and equitable engagement of Indigenous Knowledge in research, policy and decision making in all governance systems that may impact Arctic Indigenous Peoples' food systems and to consider, in collaboration with Inuit and Sámi, the ways and means to achieve guidelines to do so.

16. We urge FAO and Members States, in collaboration and cooperation with Arctic Indigenous Peoples, to facilitate a process to develop principles and protocols regarding ethical and equitable coproduction of Indigenous Knowledge and science to ensure the best available knowledge is used in relation to FAO and UN Member State decisions concerning Indigenous food systems.

## **Traditional occupations and livelihoods**

17. We urge FAO and UN Member States in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to facilitate a process to develop guidelines for supporting Indigenous Food systems, traditional livelihoods, food producers in order to balance the sustainable management of resources with economic, social, and cultural benefits for Indigenous Peoples, consistent with the rights to self-determination and to development, as affirmed by *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other relevant international law.

18. We call upon UN 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, respect and support the distinct livelihoods and food systems of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

19. We call upon our respective Arctic UN Member States to explore and establish programs that facilitate the provision of Arctic Indigenous foods in school lunch programs and health care facilities, including those specific to elders, as a means of ensuring the physical and mental health of our children, youth, and elders as well as our own means of food production and self-reliance. Precedence for such programs presently exist and therefore, should be expanded.

20. We urge UN Member States and their political subdivisions to ensure that any and all laws, policies, and regulations concerning hunting, herding, fishing, harvesting and other traditional livelihoods, do not violate or infringe upon the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

21. We call upon UN Member States in collaboration with Arctic Indigenous Peoples, and Private Sector, to create market standards and regulations that protect and benefit Indigenous sellers of products, such as reindeer meat in order to protect against undercutting or undervaluing the Indigenous products sold to commodity markets.

## **Alliances and Enhanced Participation of Indigenous Peoples**

22. We urge FAO to continue to strengthen its engagement with Arctic Indigenous Peoples in its future work by organizing high level expert seminars on other relevant technical fields.

23. We urge FAO to implement the recommendations of the Indigenous Peoples Rome Declaration on the Arctic Region Fisheries and Environment, including establishment of a permanent method or mechanism that formalizes communication specifically between Arctic Indigenous Peoples and FAO specifically on the elements of our food systems.

24. We urge the FAO, IFAD, WFP, and other relevant Organizations based in Rome to organize an annual meeting with Indigenous Peoples from all seven socio-cultural regions in order to have a systematic dialogue with Rome based agencies to ensure coordination and coherence on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in relation to our food systems. The objective of the Indigenous led annual meeting is to discuss and



assess the diverse agencies, policies, and programmes of the Rome based UN agencies and to facilitate and ensure the direct, effective, and active involvement of Indigenous Peoples with all related UN agencies, programmes, and organizations. Such an annual meeting also promotes accountability by encouraging Indigenous Peoples’ representatives to provide direct feedback on policies, programmes, and activities of Rome based agencies and encourages policy dialogue between the Rome Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples themselves.