Statement of Arctic Yupik Indigenous Peoples

Igamsiqayugvikamsi, thank you Mr. Chair. We are from Sivuqaq in the northern Bering Sea of the Arctic and have relied on fish, marine mammals, and seabirds as the basis of our traditional diet that has sustained us physically, spiritually, and culturally for millennia as our Creator intended.

The Arctic is warming at a rate four times faster than the rest of the planet, intensifying the mobilization and transport of chemicals and microplastics into the Arctic and releasing them at an alarming rate as sea ice, glaciers, and permafrost melt. The concentrations of microplastics in the Arctic Ocean basin are higher than in any other ocean basin in the world. Microplastics carry toxic chemicals, additives, and absorbents into remote regions such as the Arctic. This threatens our food security, our lands, air and waters and the health of Indigenous peoples and our future generations.

The Arctic is both a source and sink for toxic chemicals produced throughout the cycle of plastics. We stand with our Indigenous, black and brown brothers and sisters where oil and gas are extracted, where plastics are manufactured, and disposed. We stand with the waste pickers and other workers who are harmed. We wholeheartedly support the statements of the Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus, the Society of Native Nations, and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. In addition to recognizing the harm to our Indigenous peoples throughout the world, we urge that you recognize the special vulnerability of our Arctic region and Indigenous peoples. Stop production and harm throughout the toxic death cycle of plastics. You must protect the health, well-being, and human rights of Indigenous Peoples and other disproportionately affected people everywhere. Qerngughulluta Iknaqataqaghaghtukut—together we are stronger.