13 November 2023

Thank you Mr Chair.

I’m speaking on behalf of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents the around 180,000 Inuit living across the Arctic.

We are already impacted by contaminants undergoing long-range environmental transport, which make it into our Arctic ecosystem, our traditional diet, and affecting our health and well-being. Now, plastics are compounding the problem – not only that plastics have reached the Arctic, they are also an effective transport mechanism for other toxic compounds.

The contamination due to plastics and other contaminants is impacting our human right to live a healthy life and the protection of the environment. These rights are outlined in several documents, such as the UN General Assembly resolution (A/RES/76/300) in July 2022, the Rio principles (paras 1, 4, and 7), as well as UNDRIP (articles 20, 24 para 2, 29 para 1). The treaty should be built on human rights, and reference should be added to the preamble of the treaty text, but also in the operative paragraphs of the text.

This treaty needs strong provisions that clearly outline requirements to Parties and reference to annexes where baselines, timeframes and targets are specified, and the overall goal is to eliminate plastics and toxic additives. Annexes such as those of the Stockholm Convention and the Minamata Convention are good examples.

We call for a human rights approach throughout this treaty. This includes ensuring that the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected, and Indigenous Knowledge is recognized in the development and implementation of the treaty. Indigenous Peoples must fully and effectively participate in the process.

We are looking forward in being involved in the discussions this week and will be happy to provide additional input as possible.