

## Inuit Sue European Union (EU) to Overturn Seal Product Import Ban, Defending Inuit Rights and Upholding the Rule of Law

Wednesday January 13, 2010 - Ottawa, Ontario - Canadian Inuit have filed a lawsuit in the European General Court to overturn EU legislation which would ban the import of seal products into EU countries. The lawsuit seeks annulment of Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 of the European Parliament and Council of September 16, 2009 on trade in seal products.

A number of organizations that represent Inuit, as well as a number of Inuit individuals, are plaintiffs in this action. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Inuit Circumpolar Council (Greenland) are plaintiffs. Both Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit are taking part.

In 2009, the EU buckled to a shrill pressure campaign mounted by anti-sealing lobby organizations, despite warning by their own lawyers. That campaign ignored realities that there are no valid conservation or humane harvesting arguments to justify a ban in seal products trade.

On the occasion of the filing of this lawsuit, Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, said "Inuit have been hunting seals and sustaining themselves for food, clothing, and trade for many generations. No objective and fair minded person can conclude that seals are under genuine conservation threat or that Inuit hunting activities are less humane than those practiced by hunting communities all over the world, including hunters in Europe. It is bitterly ironic that the EU, which seems entirely at home with promoting massive levels of agri-business and the raising and slaughtering of animals in highly industrialized conditions, seeks to preach some kind of selective elevated morality to Inuit. At best this is cultural bias, although it could be described in even harsher terms. It should also be more than a little disturbing to all the citizens of the EU that, despite advance warning by their own lawyers, its EU lawmakers registered no inhibitions about adopting laws that are legally defective."

Mr. Aqqaluk Lynge, President of Inuit Circumpolar Council (Greenland) stated, "It is important for Inuit across the Davis Strait to unite and fight this

unethical legislation. On top of the climate change issue, we must contend with animal rights extremists who fundamentally do not respect our way of life, and who use disinformation to further their cause at our expense.”

“It is unfortunate that the EU chose to bend to the skillfully orchestrated pressure of those who would satisfy their own self-serving interests while ignoring the clear double standard and dubious legal nature of their decision,” stated Nellie Cournoyea, Chair and CEO of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation.

ICC Canada president, Duane Smith, who is also a hunter, said his organization will continue to press the EU to come clean on what they mean by the so-called Inuit exemption, because, “until now the EU has demonstrated more interest in keeping non-Inuit out of the market than finding ways of including Inuit. As such, it is hard to support such an unclear, flawed, and unfair regulation. They left us with no alternative but to sue.”

“The exemption in the Regulation is uncertain and was adopted without the participation of Inuit, and the EU is proceeding with implementing measures, also without the participation of Inuit,” said Raymond Ningeocheak, Vice-President of Finance for Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. “Not surprisingly, the Regulation does not reflect the reality of the Inuit commercial seal harvest, which is both humane and necessary to the survival of the Inuit.”

In adopting its seal products trade legislation, the EU held out the possibility of a partial exemption for seals hunted by Inuit. While the prospect of this exemption may have persuaded many EU Parliamentarians to vote for the ban, legislation was developed without the involvement of Canadian Inuit, and the EU continues to develop implementation measures affecting Canadian Inuit without the fair and informed participation, let alone consent, of Inuit.

The events surrounding the EU seal products trade ban have contributed to a sharp drop in seal pelt prices in markets relied upon by Inuit and in turn a reduction in the ability of Inuit to provide for their families in the challenging economic climate of their homelands.

The Government of Canada is currently challenging the EU seal products trade ban under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. The new Inuit lawsuit does not detract from that challenge and Inuit continue to support the Government of Canada's initiative in that regard.

Quelle/Source:

<http://www.itk.ca/media-release/inuit-sue-european-union-eu-overturn-seal-product-import-ban-defending-inuit-rights-an>