

Inuit Reject Call For European Union-Wide Seal Ban, July 15,2008

Urging Canada to Step Up Actions

Ottawa, Ontario - Inuit are calling on the government of Canada to step up its actions against the European Union to avoid an EU-wide ban on the import of Canadian Seal products.

"We are clearly not on the same page with Europeans on this issue and I am not sure if we will ever be," stated national Inuit leader Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. "We will never culturally or politically defer to anti-sealing groups over our fundamental rights and practices, however, it appears European politics, which knows so little of our world and circumstances, deems it more important to incorporate political expediency into its decisions."

"We are fighting for our right to sustain our own way of life and to determine for ourselves how we can best do this, and an EU seal ban is a serious threat against our own sustainability options for the Arctic," said Duane Smith, President of Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada). "Without the threat of an EU seal ban, Inuit are already facing major challenges in the pursuit of basic livelihoods such as impacts from climate change and the soaring global costs of fuel and food hitting small Arctic communities."

Inuit leaders fear that this European based initiative to ban Canadian seal products will not only harken back to the impacts on Inuit communities in the 1980s, it will be compounded by the current down turn of the global economy.

"The Arctic is being hit on two fronts, environmentally and economically," warned Ms Simon. "While we are vulnerable to climate change impacts, we are also quite vulnerable to increasing economic costs of basic items such as fuel where the cost of living is already 2 to 3 times our national average, unemployment is high, and the costs of hunting, travel, transport, and heating is becoming more prohibitive."

Inuit view the actions of the European Union as the misguided response to the misinformation propagated by animal-rights activists. "Make no mistake, the animal rights lobby is well funded, making millions on the backs of the seal hunt. People in Europe are shown photographs of seals being harvested in the wild and recoil in shock at the images, and send what can only be described as 'guilt money' to the animal rights groups. They don't see the people, the communities, or the way of life they are ruining as a result of their misguided donations," said Duane Smith "Further, they don't question the information being presented, much of it incorrect."

National Inuit leader Mary Simon again commended the government of Canada for taking action in September 2007 at the World Trade Organization against any jurisdictions that legislate against Canadian seal products. "I urge Prime Minister Harper to again direct his government to continue its actions against the EU and to take swift and aggressive action against the EU at the Prime Ministerial level and at the WTO in the event of a ban on the import of Canadian seal products. Inuit will continue to hunt seals, develop modern sealskin fashions, and create new markets for these products. We will not have our way of life dictated by European leaders who we believe are being duped by animal rights activists who have little regard for rational, reasonable debate, or for the truth on this issue.

Quelle/Source: <http://www.itk.ca/media-release/inuit-reject-call-european-union-wide-seal-ban>