

Plenary Intervention

**Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Elected Chair
Inuit Circumpolar Conference
Tenth COP to the UN Framework Convention on
Climate Change
Buenos Aires, Argentina
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Good morning. My name is Sheila Watt-Cloutier. I am the elected Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and represent internationally the 155,000 Inuit who live in Alaska, Russia, Canada, and Greenland.

Inuit have thrived in the Arctic for millennia. It is not wilderness, it is our home. Inuit hunters and elders know every square millimeter of it. We are challenged by social and economic change—globalization has reached us too—but we remain a hunting people. We hunt and eat marine mammals—walrus, polar bears, seals, whales.

Article 2 of the Framework Convention states the goal of avoiding “dangerous” anthropogenic interference with the climate system. In the Arctic, we are at that threshold **now**.

Climate change is “dangerous” in the Arctic **now**. We are not preparing for it, we are living through it, and it is getting worse.

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment prepared by more than 300 scientists from 15 countries, developed in equal

partnership between the eight Arctic States and six Permanent Participants representing the Indigenous Peoples of the Circumpolar region – which includes the Arctic Athabaskan Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference who are both present at this COP -- says climate change is happening first and fastest in the Arctic. The assessment projects massive depletion of sea-ice in the Arctic Ocean in summer, extinction of marine mammals we hunt, and the end of Inuit as a hunting culture. Think about that for a minute—the end of Inuit as a hunting culture. What does that say about the world in which we live!

I am **not** here to bear witness to the disappearance of my people. We are not going quietly into the night. We are not powerless victims. My purpose is to recommend action.

1. COPs should discuss the current and projected impacts of climate change on human rights – particularly the human rights of Indigenous Peoples who are particularly vulnerable to climate change. You can't ignore this dimension much longer. People around the world know that climate change affects their lives, and responding is not just about carbon sinks, emission trading schemes, and technology transfers. If you want to engage the world talk about the human rights of global climate change;
2. We have learned much from the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment that was not known when the UNFCCC was negotiated. Climate change does not discriminate. The Arctic and the Indigenous Peoples of the Circumpolar Region are particularly vulnerable

to climate change. The UNFCCC should be amended to reflect these scientific findings.

3. Make much larger reductions in greenhouse gas emissions—there is no way around this if we are to protect the planet;
4. Vulnerable regions—including the Arctic, Pacific Islands, low lying areas and others should talk about climate change strategies and even act together in COPs. I suggest UNEP facilitate this dialogue.
5. Use the circumpolar Arctic as the world's "barometer" or "early warning system" to warn the world of the magnitude and speed of climate change. UNEP has urged this action. Do it;

In conclusion, we the Inuit of the world have not only survived but thrived in our Arctic climate; we have thrived – always living in balance with our ecosystem. We will now protect our culture with whatever legitimate means available to us. In essence, we will defend our human rights to exist and our human right to be cold.

Thank you for your attention.