For Immediate Release

Circumpolar Inuit Call on Global Leaders to Act on Arctic Climate Change at COP15 in Copenhagen

13 November, 2009 – Copenhagen, Denmark -- Inuit leaders, through the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), today released a document calling on global leaders to adopt a meaningful agreement at December’s UN Climate Change Convention (UNCCC) Conference in Copenhagen – one that will safeguard the future of the Arctic. The Inuit homeland in the Arctic has been identified by scientists as a climate change region of concern, and ICC’s Call on Global Leaders notes the Arctic’s important role in moderating the global climate and controlling world-wide ocean currents.

ICC Chair, Jim Stotts, was in Copenhagen today to meet with senior government officials of the Arctic Council and to launch ICC’s call for action by global leaders. He said, “the Arctic is at the epicentre of climate change. Inuit traditions and subsistence practices have already been assaulted.” The December Conference of the Parties (CoP) will be its 15th. “CoP 15 is the most critical climate meeting thus far”, added Mr. Stotts. “Our message to global leaders is simple: there is no more time to waste.”

Aqqaluk Lynge, ICC Vice Chair for Greenland, also in Copenhagen, said that as indigenous hosts to the COP15, Inuit will send a clear message to policymakers about the importance of action. “Government leaders at COP15 must take the strongest possible measures to protect our Arctic homeland”. He noted that the Greenland icecap’s rapid melt shows the world that Inuit are among the most vulnerable. “We need resources and technology to help us adapt.”

The Inuit Call to Global Leaders outlines six elements that a successful CoP 15 agreement must contain. Inuit leaders from across the Arctic made public these elements yesterday. Commenting on the call to action, Edward Itta, ICC Vice Chair for Alaska, noted that adaptation assistance will be a key benchmark for success in Copenhagen. “We Inuit live in so-called developed countries. Yet we are getting ready to relocate entire communities and rebuild our infrastructure as our permafrost melts and our shorelines erode”, said Mr. Itta, who is also the Mayor of the North Slope Borough, the most northerly community in the USA.

Inuit leaders also offered their help to the global leaders. Tatiana Achipirgina, ICC Vice Chair for Chukotka, said in Anadyr, Russia, “we offer our traditional knowledge, which is based on living closely with the land and sea over many generations, and is passed down from grandmother to granddaughter, grandfather to grandson”. Because traditional knowledge has contributed to groundbreaking research on climate change, Ms. Achipirgina said that UN member states and their scientists should “draw upon this knowledge as they tackle climate change impacts and adaptation challenges”.

Duane Smith, ICC Vice Chair for Canada, said in Inuvik, Canada that the development and transfer of small-scale, appropriate technologies to Inuit communities is essential for moving forward. “Many Arctic communities want green technology to help offset the high cost of living. But access to green energy is still expensive here.” He stressed that a successful climate change agreement would “incorporate mechanisms to assist local communities with green technology.”

Inuit leaders will also be present in Copenhagen in December to remind UN member states of the elements of ICC’s global call for action. Mr. Stotts concluded, “we hope that the world’s political leaders will listen.”

The Call to Global Leaders is available on ICC’s website: www.inuitcircumpolar.com. For more information:
In Copenhagen:
Chester Reimer
tel: +1 613 355 7765
reimer@crcionline.com

In Greenland:
Aqqaluk Lynge
tel: +299 32 36 32
aqqaluk@inuit.org

In Canada:
Corinne Gray
tel: +1 613 563 2642
cgray@inuitcircumpolar.com

In Chukotka, Russia:
Tatiana Achipgina
tel: +7 42 722 24504
dareva44@mail.ru

In ICC Chair Office (Alaska):
Jim Stotts
tel. +1 907 274 9058
jimmy@iccalaska.org