News Release

EU Proposal to Ban Seal Products Inconsistent with Request to Arctic Council

IQALUIT, Nunavut (April 14, 2009) – Based on the European Union's (EU) proposal to ban seal products, Nunavut Premier Eva Aariak strongly objects to the EU application to become a permanent observer at the Arctic Council.

"The European Union's proposed ban on seal products ignores the very real negative impact their discussions already have on the market for all Canadian seal pelts and on the people of Nunavut," said Premier Aariak. "The proposal to ban seal products is harmful to Inuit interests, demonstrates a lack of knowledge of its impacts on Arctic indigenous peoples, and is inconsistent with the type of partnership we need at the Arctic Council. I call on Canada to oppose the EU's application for permanent observer status at the Arctic Council."

The Commission of the European Communities proposed that the Commission apply for permanent observer status as a first step to enhance input to the Arctic Council "in accordance with the Community's role and potential".

"I have very real apprehensions about the role and potential of an applicant for permanent observer status who has so little regard or appreciation for the impact of its actions on the Inuit of Nunavut and other indigenous peoples of the Arctic," said Premier Aariak.

The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum for Arctic governments and peoples. It promotes cooperation, coordination and interaction among member states. Canada is one of eight member states. There are six permanent participants, including the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

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