



News Release

For Immediate Release

Government of Nunavut, NTI and ITK pleased with progress of EU seal ban appeal hearing

IQALUIT, Nunavut (November 20, 2012) The Government of Nunavut (GN), Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) were pleased today with the progress of the appeal hearing on the Inuit-led legal challenge on the European Union (EU) seal ban.

Officials representing the three organizations, along with other plaintiffs, were in Luxembourg today to attend the hearing of the appeal of a September 2012 decision of the EU General Court. The September decision held that ITK and the other appeal applicants are not affected by the EU seal ban under EU law, and therefore cannot challenge the ban. Officials of the three organizations are also taking part in meetings with sealing industry stakeholders from around the world.

“The Government of Nunavut is and will remain a strong advocate for the sealing industry,” said GN Environment Minister James Arreak. “We hope today’s hearing will allow us to proceed with this application to cancel the EU seal ban. Sealing in Nunavut is both humane and sustainable. Inuit throughout Canada continue to rely on seals for food and for income through participation in the international fur trade. We look forward to working with our international group of sealing nations and stakeholders to ensure that we are communicating our message to the world in a clear, efficient and effective way.”

“The impact of the seal ban on Inuit was direct, swift and harsh. NTI is hopeful that this injustice will be recognized by the European Court of Justice on this appeal, and that ITK and the other Applicants will be granted access to the EU courts to make the case on the merits,” said NTI Acting President James Eetoolook.

“The ban betrays the unchecked arrogance of the EU in seeking to cast judgment on centuries-old cultural traditions in the face of evidence that proves its actions to be unwarranted, unethical and offensive,” said National Inuit Leader Terry Audla, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. “This hearing was one step in a much larger process and we are happy to have had the opportunity to represent Inuit on this matter and present our position.”

Seals are hunted primarily for the fresh, nutritious food that they provide in Inuit communities where other food is expensive or unavailable. The estimated cost of replacing seal meat as a food staple in Nunavut is estimated to exceed \$5 million annually. Seal pelts, the useful byproduct of this subsistence hunt, are sold to offset the costs of harvesting activities and the high costs of northern living. All seal species found and harvested in Arctic waters are healthy and abundant.

The Brussels meetings may now focus on creating a communications framework for sealing that includes all sealing nations around the world. Other notable meeting participants include the Greenlandic Association of Fishermen and Hunters, the International Fur Trade Federation, the Fur Institute of Canada and a range of international sealing industry representatives.

###

Media Contacts:

Jacque Pepper-Journal
Manager Communications, Education & Outreach
Department of Environment
(867) 975-7721
jpepper@gov.nu.ca

PJ Akeeagok
Assistant Director of Communications
Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
(867) 975-4939
pakeeagok@tunngavik.com
www.tunngavik.com

Patricia D'Souza
Acting Director of Communications
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
(613) 292-4482
dsouza@itk.ca