



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

International Polar Bear Forum

IQALUIT, Nunavut (December 9, 2013) – The Government of Nunavut is very pleased that the interests of Inuit played an important role in the international discussions on polar bear conservation and management last week in Russia.

“This is one of the first times traditional ecological knowledge has been formally recognized and acknowledged on the international stage as a source of information for guiding polar management decisions,” said Premier Peter Taptuna. “I am very encouraged to see that our progress has been made on our efforts to promote Inuit perspectives on polar bear conservation to our international partners.”

Representatives from the Government of Nunavut, including Environment Minister Johnny Mike, traveled to Russia as part of the Canadian delegation to the International Polar Bear Forum held in Moscow last week. The forum is commemorating the 40th anniversary of the signing of the *1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears*.

The *1973 Agreement of the Conservation of Polar Bears* was signed by the five Arctic nations - Canada, Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Russia, and the United States of America, all of whom share responsibility for the management of the world’s 19 polar bear populations. The agreement established the framework for international coordination of conservation measures to protect both polar bears and their circumpolar habitat, and helped polar bear numbers increase from a low of approximately 10,000 bears in the 1960s to approximately 25,000 today.

Ministers and other delegates from the five signatory nations, or “range states”, met this week to reaffirm their commitment to the 1973 agreement and to share new strategies to help address future management concerns, such as climate change, illegal trade, and increased resource development. An updated declaration was signed by all parties,

recognizing the need for further international cooperation and highlighting the important role polar bears play in the social and cultural well-being of Arctic indigenous people.

“I would like express my sincere thanks to the Russian Federation for hosting this important event, and to our fellow delegates from Canada and neighbouring Arctic nations for their continued dedication to responsible polar bear management,” said Minister Mike. “Polar bears do not recognize political borders. We all have a shared responsibility for the effective and sustainable management of the world’s polar bears.”

The Government of Nunavut and its partners, including Environment Canada, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Makivik Corporation, and the Nunatsiavut Government, remain committed to the effective management of polar bears.

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