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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***ARCTIC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES – TIME FOR ACTION***

**Delegates representing the Arctic Council's Permanent Participants are pushing for greater action on the part of Arctic Governments to implement policies and programs to ensure the future vitality of the Arctic's indigenous languages.**

**Meeting in Tromsø, Norway from 19-21 October at the first-ever Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium, the delegates have unanimously supported a set of recommendations which urges and reminds states, international organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations to meet their responsibilities to maintain the Arctic's rich heritage of indigenous languages.**

**The symposium was an initiative of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group and brought together indigenous peoples representing the council's Permanent Participants from Canada, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA, together with representatives from the council's member states. Lead organizer for the symposium was the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) working closely with the local host, the Saami Council, both of which are Permanent Participants, a status reserved for indigenous peoples' organizations.**

**Chair of the symposium, Duane Smith who is president of ICC Canada, described this meeting as a very significant opportunity for indigenous peoples in the Arctic to highlight the critical connection between culture and sustainable development.**

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**“The symposium was the first time that there has been an Arctic Council meeting focusing on our indigenous languages and their importance in maintaining our cultures and supporting our development aspirations,” Mr. Smith said. “I am pleased we were able to achieve what we set out to do but it is only the beginning.”**

**Saami Council’s vice president, Mr. Olav Mattis Eira, agreed that the symposium had been very successful.**

**“This meeting has been the important first step in galvanizing action right across the Arctic by all the key players responsible for turning our hopes into reality. Our job now will be to work to ensure that our recommendations are acted on,” he said.**

**The next step will be consideration of the recommendations by the Sustainable Development Working Group also meeting in Tromsø on 24 and 25 October.**

**Mr. Smith said the Permanent Participants would be pushing hard to ensure indigenous languages stayed a priority for the Arctic Council and was on the agenda at next year’s Ministerial meeting.**

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