



Indigenous People's Dialog – Food Security in the Arctic

Introductory question: How does Greenland contribute to food security in the region and globally, and what challenges does it face in this front?

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I would like to express sincere thanks to organizers on the Dialog on Food Security in the Arctic.

I appreciate very much that focus has been given to food security in the arctic as we are very dependent on our own resources, but also to our seafood export to other countries.

Greenland - relies its societies on fish and animals, much more than other countries because we have limited agriculture and other industries. Fish and marine mammals are our food and basis for food security. It should be emphasized that especially marine mammals have special importance for the society and its development in Greenland when it comes to food security and self-sufficiency. We cannot live without marine mammals, they are our food, identity and culture and important supplement to earning from fisheries and fish industry.

Government of Greenland set quota for walrus, polar bear, beluga and narwhal, caribou and muskoxen in order to make it possible for families to be self-supplying for local food and to allow local trade of catch of the day. We also receive annual quota for large whales from the International Whaling Commission – IWC, which can contribute up to 570 tons of whale meat annually. Furthermore, we have some other marine mammals like harp and hooded seals, ringed seals, bearded seals, which plays great contributors to food security locally and regionally.

Greenland's income from exports comes from fish and shellfish. In 2021, 98% of the value of the exports are attributable to the fishing industry. The Greenlandic exports on species in 2021 are shrimp, halibut and cod, which accounted for 82% of the value of total Greenlandic exports (80% in 2020).

I have stressed before that in our effort of implementing self-governance in Greenland full utilization of all available resources is necessary. All raw materials have to be utilized in an effective manner and high level so we can limit the import of western food, and in that way participate in the reduction of CO2 emissions. By a higher level of utilization and increased manufacturing of our own resources, we will also reduce and limit modern life style deceases that are occurring more often in Greenland.

Our traditional food has been evaluated by medical doctors and other scientists. The scientists recommended Inuit not to reduce or stop eating traditional food because these products are healthier than industrialized and imported food.

I would also like to express my understanding to fishermen and hunters concerns that there might be violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights, and particularly on their economic and social development. The economics of seal hunting is very vulnerable.

Naalakkersuisut has decided to continue subsidizing the seal hunt so that sealers can continue with earnings from the catch, although the sale of seal skin in the world is destroyed. Sealing has a significant socio-economic importance for the whole of Greenland, which provides us with fresh meat and winter supplies. The EU Regulation on Trade in Seal Products has proved that the Inuit exemption has not helped as intended.

Let me name a few examples on solemn principles which some in the outside world some time forget:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966. It says that all peoples may freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources, and that in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.
- The Rio Declaration from Earth Summit in 1992 which says that unilateral trade policy measures to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country should be avoided. It is also more than 30 years ago, and the situation has not progressed.
- Thirdly, I would like to name WTO. Some countries' and EU and UK ban on sealskin and other products from other marine mammals which are not endangered is clearly a contradiction to WTO, even with the Inuit Exemption.
- UN's 2nd Sustainable Development Goal "Stop Starvation" is very relevant here. Marine mammals can cover a large part of the lack of food in some areas. Marine mammals contain proteins and other important nutritional values. They are also a source to make gourmet dishes, which means well-being for the families.

The biggest challenge I see is that our messages about the importance of marine mammals as food security are not taken into account, that we are not heard, even with dialog initiatives like this. Many decisions taken in the industrialized countries are based on feelings not on facts.

I hope that our meeting here in Nuuk will generate a new inspiration in our unity towards the outside world which has forgotten something very important, namely that marine mammals are source of food, cultural heritage and important contributor to food security in the Arctic and a potential food security to some part of the world where starvation is a daily struggle for many families in developing countries, if not trade barriers exist.

I wish you all a good Dialogue.

Qujanaq - Thank you.

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