

NEWS RELEASE



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NTI Calls EU Court Decision Fundamentally Flawed

(April 25, 2013 – Iqaluit, Nunavut) Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. President Cathy Towtongie today reacted to the decision of the General Court of the European Union to reject the application of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and other litigants to knock down the so-called Inuit exemption to the EU's general legislation banning the import of seal products into the EU.

The so-called Inuit exemption was adopted after only the most nominal of consultation with Inuit. It is based on complex and unworkable administration and proves to be of virtually no value in preventing the disappearance of seal product markets for Inuit in the EU.

The EU Court's decision and press release show that its reasoning is flawed and faulty on a variety of key points. Particularly odd is the Court's view that EU legislation banning seal products is a justifiable exercise in harmonizing markets in Europe, when in reality the ban kills the seal product market.

"It is offensive for the Court to state that Inuit did not suffer 'disproportionate' harm compared with the EU's own objectives, when the ban has directly and negatively impacted Inuit. EU countries claim to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but the EU court failed to show basic respect for Inuit rights of self-determination," said Towtongie.

"Respect for Indigenous Peoples in the contemporary world means accepting that Indigenous Peoples are best positioned to know their self-interests. It is arrogant and condescending for an EU court to claim to know better particularly when it is abundantly clear that the seal ban adds to the difficult economic and social challenges being faced by Inuit. It amounts to an attack on our way of life," said Towtongie.

Two days prior to the Court's decision, NTI met with EU officials in Iqaluit to discuss the seal ban and the EU's application to be granted permanent observer status on the Arctic Council. Until the EU revokes their seal ban, Towtongie said NTI remains strongly opposed to their application and called on the Government of Canada to reject their application.

NTI will take part in an ITK Board of Directors meeting next week to review the EU Court decision in detail to determine what steps to take next in the campaign to insist on respect for fundamental Inuit rights in relation to wildlife, wildlife products, and Inuit economic, social and cultural well-being.

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