

ExCOP/Stockholm Convention COP 7, Geneva, Switzerland May 4 – May 15, 2015 Indigenous Caucus Collective Statement for Agenda Item 5 (e) Presented by Erika Apatiki of the Native Village of Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, May 7, 2015

Thank you Madame President.

My name is Vi Waghiyi and I am a tribal member of the Native Village of Savoonga in the Arctic. I am making this intervention on behalf of Alaska Community Action on Toxics, International Indian Treaty Council, and the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus.

Indigenous Peoples continue to bear a burden that we did not create because POPs reach us from global sources, and we do not have the capacity to deal with this on our own. In the Arctic, the levels of POPs contamination in breast milk are amongst the highest of any population on earth. Indigenous children all over the world are harmed by POPs from conception and throughout their lives. The preamble of the Stockholm Convention highlights the special vulnerability of Arctic Indigenous communities.

We know that PCP is found in our traditional foods. It can affect our learning and development. It is passed from mother to her child through breast milk. We suffer many health disparities including high rates of cancer and birth defects.

Our hunters are now out in small open boats along the Arctic sea ice edge. The bowhead whale gives its life so that we have the food that enriches our bodies and spirits. If we cannot hunt, our culture will die and we will lose our identity. Our traditional foods have high levels of persistent chemicals such as pentachlorophenol. This is a terrible injustice and a violation of our human rights.

We respectfully offer that these issues have severe and lasting impacts **now**. The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent is important for Indigenous Peoples not only under the Conventions, but also under other international mechanisms including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For the health and well-being of our Indigenous Peoples and all peoples of the earth and our future generations, please support the initiative to list PCP in Annex A with no exemptions; and HCB and CNs in Annexes A and C.

Igamsiqayugvikamsi. Thank you.