

Association of World Reindeer Herders

PRESS RELEASE

What will happen to Sámi reindeer herding in the light of the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on climate change in the North?

While the Association of World Reindeer Herders (WRH) is pleased that the IPCC, established by UNEP and the WMO, are taking the issue of climate change in the North seriously, we are extremely concerned that the very basis of livelihoods in the Arctic is threatened by global warming, both economically and culturally. The WRH Yakutsk Declaration of 2005 makes pointed reference to this.

In Norway, inner Finnmark is likely to experience the most serious impacts from global warming over the next 30-50 years. It is predicted that the average winter temperature will increase 0.7 degrees C every decade. Precipitation may increase by 10 %, and vegetation will change, influencing the very basis for reindeer husbandry. Predicted climate change patterns include rapid fluctuations in temperature throughout the course of Winter, alternating between frost and milder weather.

While the international community continues to discuss the reasons for climate change, it is imperative that we ask how Indigenous Peoples and reindeer husbandry shall meet and handle these coming changes while at the same time safeguarding their values and cultural integrity.

Reindeer herding is an arctic livelihood with ancient origins that represents a model for sustainable utilisation of the North. It is based on an accumulated knowledge over generations which is developed in adaptation with climate and local management systems, making it the very hallmark of the circumpolar North. There needs to be a sustained effort in documenting how traditional knowledge in reindeer husbandry may assist in ameliorating the worse impacts of climate change. How can science and traditional knowledge go hand in hand for the benefit of the coming generations? These challenging issues will be discussed during the opening of the Indigenous Peoples International Polar Year (www.ip-ipy.org), on the 14 February, 2007, where Norwegian Environment Minister Helen Bjørnøy and Dr. Robert Corell, leader of the Arctic Council's ACIA report, will be in attendance, among other dignitaries. The Opening also includes a number of climate seminars and is organised by the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry, The Sámi University College/Sámi Institute, The Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the WRH and the Kautokeino Municipality.

Press Contacts:

Director Anders Oskal: International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry +47 99 45 00 10

Professor Svein D. Mathiesen, Sámi University College +47 90 52 41 16

Director Magne Ove Varsi, Resource Centre for the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples +47 95 96 25 12

Robert Corell, USA +1 443 994 3643