



Press Release

Russian Rocket debris will not fall in no-man's land

June 2, 2016 – The rocket scheduled to drop into Canada's Arctic waters this weekend is a concern for Inuit. "There are questions regarding the environmental impact of the fuel hydrazine in Arctic waters and the metal debris field could pose a danger to Arctic wildlife and Inuit", stated Okalik Eegeesiak, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council and International Commissioner of the Pikialasorsuaq Commission.

The North Water polynya, or Pikialasorsuaq is an area of open water surrounded by sea ice. It lies north of the Arctic Circle in northern Baffin Bay between Greenland and Canada's Ellesmere Island near Smith Sound and Nares Strait. The Pikialasorsuaq is a biologically and culturally unique region and is a breeding ground and migration area for animals such as narwhal, beluga, walrus, bowhead whales and migratory birds. "This rocket will not be falling into no-man's land. This is a vital body of water that is integral to the food supply of Inuit communities in Greenland and Canada" Eegeesiak said. "Inuit live here, Inuit use the animals in these waters to feed our families, this is our home".

The Pikialasorsuaq Commission was established in January 2016 to consider the unique nature of the region and listen to the Inuit who use, depend on and occupy it about their vision for the future of Pikialasorsuaq. The Commission is led by three Commissioners, ICC Chair, Okalik Eegeesiak (International Commissioner); former Nunavut Premier, Eva Aariak (Canadian Commissioner); and, former Greenland Premier, Kuupik Kleist (Greenland Commissioner).

The Commission is presently conducting community hearings on both sides of the North Water polynya or (Pikialasorsuaq) regarding community concerns and aspirations for this critical ecosystem. "Everywhere we go, we hear that communities want to be involved in maritime management decisions in this region", noted Eegeesiak.

"The North Water is an area vulnerable to change whether it is climate related, tourism or industrial activities and to toxic waste and metal debris falling from the sky", commented Eva Aariak. "You would not be allowed to dump this material from a ship or from the land so the same thing should apply from space".

Inuit who use and occupy this region have expressed a desire to explore locally-driven management options in advance of increased shipping, tourism, fishing, and non-renewable resource exploration/development. "The Arctic should not be seen as a global dumping ground for anyone's waste", stated Kuupik Kleist.

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