Declaration of the Arctic Leaders Summit III
Moscow, 16 September 1999

We, the leaders of the Aleut International Association, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Saami Council:

Being deeply concerned for the health and welfare of our peoples;

Noting the very high level of social pathologies among our peoples, as best illustrated by indigenous peoples of the Russian North, particularly alcohol and substance abuse, high infant mortality rates, low life expectancy and the very serious psychological and physical effects of these pathologies;

Noting that persistent toxic substances generated and used in industrial and agricultural regions of the globe enter the Arctic, contaminating the environment and food chain upon which we so intimately depend, raising serious concerns about public health;

Recognizing that environmental degradation in the Arctic has immediate and long-term effects on indigenous peoples through economic, social and demographic stressors;

Acknowledging the important sustainable development activities of the Arctic Council, including the "Children and Youth of the Arctic" initiative, and the results of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP);

Welcoming the recently agreed Memorandum of Understanding between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to enhance cooperation in the field of Environmental Health, with specific emphasis on collaborative projects in the Arctic involving indigenous peoples of this region;

Noting the recent decision of the Environment Ministers of the Barents Region to initiate programmes on environmental aspects of human health, particularly health of indigenous peoples of the region, as a matter of the highest priority;

Noting the crucial importance of maintaining the diverse lifestyles and cultures of Arctic indigenous peoples;
Taking into account ongoing national activities of the Arctic countries and bilateral co-operation among them to improve the health of the region's indigenous peoples and to promote sustainable development and environmental protection in this fragile and vulnerable region.

Hereby Declare:

1. We strongly support actions on global, regional and national levels to improve the state of health of Arctic indigenous peoples and their natural environment, and encourage our organizations to continue their valuable work in these processes;

2. We request governments of the Arctic countries to take legislative, economic and social steps to protect the natural environment and to improve the living conditions and health of the region's indigenous peoples and to promote their cultural diversity;

3. We support the Polar Task Force established by the United Nations Environment Programme and urge the task force to consult with us regarding its mandate, terms of reference and work programme;

4. Support the Arctic Council's implementation of a comprehensive circumpolar Children and Youth project under its Sustainable Development Programme;

5. Urge the Arctic Council, UNEP, and WHO to establish as soon as possible the proposed circumpolar co-operative programme: "Health and Environment of Indigenous Peoples", with active participation of the Indigenous Peoples Organizations;

6. Urge Arctic nations to act in mutual support in ongoing international negotiations toward a global convention to phase out the use of persistent organic pollutants that have shown to be of public health concern in the Arctic;

7. Express our support for the proposed Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded project: "Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North", noting this project will provide a valuable contribution to the human health sub-programme of AMAP and the proposed circumpolar co-operative programme to be implemented by UNEP and WHO;

8. Call upon the Government of the Russian Federation to reinstitute medical and health care programmes for nomadic indigenous peoples;
9. Call upon the World Bank to ensure that the rights and interests of indigenous peoples of northern Russia are fully considered in any projects in this region that are financially supported by the bank.

10. We urge the Government of Russia to work closely with the northern indigenous peoples to increase their capability and capacity to implement health care programmes.

11. We urge governments in the circumpolar Arctic to consult northern indigenous peoples to design health care programmes that incorporate traditional methods and practices.

President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference
Aqqaluk Lynge

President of the Saami Council
Lars-Anders Bær

Vice-President of the Aleut International Association
Vladimir Dobrynin

President of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
Sergey Kharyuchi