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## **Former Vice-president Albert Arnold Gore**

### **Invitation to a Roundtable Discussion in Norway about Knowledge, Climate Change and the Future of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Societies.**

Sámi University College, University of the Arctic and the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry would like to congratulate you with winning the Nobel Peace Prize this year. We acknowledge your efforts to inform our global society about the critical challenges that humanity faces as a result of climate change and the consequences it holds for our planet. As you are well aware, these challenges are particularly stark for indigenous peoples in the Arctic. Climate change threatens to overturn traditional livelihoods and cultures that have developed over millennia, with a speed and severity that is unknown in their history.

**We would therefore like to invite you to be our guest of honour at a roundtable discussion about knowledge, climate change and the future of Arctic indigenous peoples' societies in Kautokeino, Norway - December one day in the period December 7<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2007.** If this period is inconvenient we would in cooperation with the Nobel Peace Prize Committee be delighted to invite you to a such event in January/February 2008. Warming of the Arctic is occurring now and the rate of warming is faster and more elevated than previously anticipated. Thus, there is an urgent need to document and communicate both the changes to which indigenous peoples are being subjected and how their traditional knowledge can assist in the development of adaptation strategies for these unique communities in the Arctic, as they face an uncertain future.

The Sámi are an indigenous people living in four Arctic countries - Sweden, Finland, Russia and Norway. The Sámi University College in Norway is an indigenous institution that preserves and promotes the Sámi language, culture,

livelihoods and community life and is located in Kautokeino, Finnmark Norway. This area is also the centre of reindeer husbandry in Fennoscandia, which represents an important traditional livelihood of the indigenous Sámi people.

Oral traditions, a nature-based understanding of the world and tradition-based customary practices are prerequisites for our intellectual heritage and underlie the spiritual foundation of our existence. At the forefront of innovative indigenous scholarship is the understanding that scientific and tradition-based knowledge, hand in hand, will offer up the most effective tools for the coming generations. Finnmark is the region in Norway where the effects of warming are going to be the most significant over the next 30-50 years. Increased climate variability, climate change and the societal/cultural transformations associated with these elements *and* globalisation have been, and will continue to be, responsible for major changes in the physical environment, the biota and the cultures and resilience of indigenous and other communities in the Arctic.

Sámi reindeer herding practices, ancient in origin, represent models in the sustainable exploitation and management of northern terrestrial ecosystems. These practices reflect an episteme that is based on generations of accumulated experience, conserved, developed and adapted to the climatic and administrative systems of the North. We recognise that reindeer husbandry's ability to cope with climate variability and change is based on knowledge embodied in the language, the institutions of herding and in the actions of individual herders. As a result, the documentation of elders' knowledge, particularly in light of current events, in relation to climate, local weather conditions, pastures and the responses of herders and herders' institutions to variation in these parameters, becomes an ethical imperative. As the older generation decreases, the sum of non-written knowledge stored in peoples' memories and, thus by extension, remaining in the Sámi society, is also declining. This knowledge is effectively irreplaceable.


**With these challenges in mind, and in recognition of the critical role you have played in bringing these discussions to a wider audience, we would be honoured to host a roundtable discussion on future aspects of climate change and arctic indigenous societies with you as our guest of honour.** Your presence in Sámi society in Kautokeino coupled with a roundtable focus on issues of knowledge and climate change would engender a regional, national and international focus on the dramatic consequences of climate change locally, and the major challenges it presents for the sustainable development of Arctic indigenous peoples societies.

Yours sincerely

  
Steinar Pedersen  
Rector  
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[www.samiskhs.no](http://www.samiskhs.no)

[In English](#)

  
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