

ICC questions oil industry safeguards

by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference is deeply concerned about the recent oil spill of the *Exxon Valdez* which continues to extensively damage the marine environment and shoreline in Alaska.

The accident raises serious questions about the adequacy of transporting oil by tanker in the Arctic.

The ICC is an international organization representing the Inuit from Alaska, Canada and Greenland and is actively involved in a wide range of environmental, economic and cultural policy issues affecting the Arctic.

Mary Simon, president of the ICC, indicated her concern in a recent statement.

"We are particularly alarmed about the lax operating practices that apparently have been tolerated within Exxon regarding super tanker transport.

"We are also shocked at the inability of government and Exxon officials to effectively react to the disaster in a timely fashion, based on a proper contingency plan," she said.

Simon said that the ICC does not op-



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pose development in the Arctic.

"However, we insist that Northern development must be both sustainable and equitable. It must fully consider our environmental and social concerns in the North and provide adequate safeguards.

"In the *Exxon Valdez* case, it appears that safe navigation and respect for the Arctic marine environment were not a priority.

"The fact that the oil spill could not be contained and cleaned up clearly underlines the need to develop and

strengthen policies for safe oil transport in the North."

The Exxon oil spill seems to highlight the fact that federal, state and local authorities are in need of greater coordination in order to properly regulate and monitor oil development in Alaska.

"In particular, proposed oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should be re-evaluated from an environmental perspective," Simon said.

"Similar concerns about oil

development and transport are presently being raised by Greenlandic Inuit in regard to Jameson Land (Greenland).

"Through full evaluation, some concrete positive results from the Exxon catastrophe could be realized. The crucial lessons of the Alaskan oil spill must not be lost."

Questions relating to Arctic marine transport, particularly in relation to oil, will be the subject of in-depth discussion at the General Assembly in Sisimiut, Greenland, in July.