

Inuit challenge seal ban in EU's highest court

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to present its case in Luxembourg Tuesday

[CBC News](#)

Posted: Nov 20, 2012 8:57 AM CST

Last Updated: Nov 20, 2012 9:48 AM CST

Canada's national Inuit organization is gearing up for its biggest fight against the European Union's ban on seal products.

Representatives from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and other groups will present their case against the ban in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg Tuesday.

ITK's initial court case was rejected, so now it's taking its arguments to the highest court in the European Union.

"The basic regulation prevents any seal products from being put on the market in the European Union," said Hendrik Viaene, ITK's European lawyer. "This means that no seal product can be sold in the European Union in any member state."

Representatives from organizations such as Nunavut Tunngavik and the Fur Institute of Canada will be in court to lend their support along with five hunters from Canada and an Iqaluit businesswoman.

They are arguing in legal documents that they have been affected personally by the seal ban.

"Even though Inuit were exempt from this ban, we are highly affected," said Paul Irgaut, wildlife communications advisor with Nunavut Tunngavik.

"It's a token gesture of the EU, so that is why the plaintiffs took EU to court to combat the seal ban."

Karliin Aariak, an Iqaluit sealskin designer and retailer, said she always promotes the sustainable use of seal skins.

"I really want to do all that I can to ensure that Inuit have the right to market a product that they can maintain sustainably, and continue their traditions," she said. "I believe that we need to speak up."

Aariak is urging Nunavummiut to help promote the use of seal skins on Tuesday by changing their profile pictures on social media sites. She has already changed her profile picture to a pair of sealskin boots.

"And I'm hoping more people will follow suit by changing their profile photos on social media, whether it be through Facebook or on Twitter, to showcase a sealskin — either something that someone has made, whether it be sewing, or an actual seal skin."