

Towards a sustainable and resilient Arctic through cooperation

Moderator: Mr. Mike Sfraga, Director of the Polar Initiative, Wilson Center, USA

Opening remarks

Rapid change, we are all interconnected, cooperation is the key

Finland: H.E. Mr. Kimmo Tiilikainen, Minister of the Environment, Energy and Housing

Canada: Mr. Adam Vaughan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

The Russian Federation: Mr. Sergey Kononuchenko, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

The Arctic Athabaskan Council, Mr. Bill Erasmus, International Chair

Singapore, Mr. Albert Chua, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources

Panel discussion with a Q&A session

Arctic cooperation – a model for sustainable development?

The Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG): Mr. Pekka Shemeikka, Chair

The Saami Council: Ms. Gunn-Britt Retter, Head of Arctic and Environmental Unit

The World Meteorological Organization: Mr. Wenjian Zhang, Assistant Secretary-General

Conclusions by the moderator

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Key messages

Rapid change: Globalization and climate change are creating rapid change in the Arctic. Communities' ability to adapt to this change is critical for the sustainable development of the region. It could provide lessons that are valuable for the rest of the world.

We are all connected: Sustainable development in the Arctic depends on the activities of the rest of the world. Many of the drivers of Arctic change have roots in more southerly latitudes. But what happens in the Arctic also affects the rest of the world.

Cooperation is sustainable: The Arctic leads the world as a region in which cooperation thrives between governments, indigenous peoples, and the scientific community.

The Arctic is experiencing rapid environmental and social change because of globalization and climate change. The Arctic is one of the most important bellwethers of our changing climate around the globe. Indeed, the warming that we see elsewhere is taking place roughly twice as fast in the Arctic. But the region's relevance to its people and to the wider world is much more than this.

The Arctic could be a model for inclusive sustainable development that other regions of the world can look to in the decades to come. It can provide an example of how governments, indigenous peoples and the scientific community can work together for innovative sustainable solutions.

The Arctic region has many faces, it is characterized by cultural diversity, differing socio-economic and political conditions, and varying degrees of remoteness. For generations, Arctic indigenous peoples have succeeded in maintaining their indigenous knowledge and practices, including valuable approaches to sustainable development.

This is the first time that the Arctic Council presents its work at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Why now? For two reasons:

Firstly, because the Arctic is of local and global relevance today. What happens in the Arctic does not stay within the Arctic. The Arctic increasingly impacts the rest of the world, and vice-versa. Activities outside the Arctic region are the main

contributors to climate change and to pollution. This calls for more sustainable solutions and collaboration between the Arctic and the rest of the world.

Secondly, because the Arctic Council has contributed to sustainable development for 20 years. It has done so by promoting social, economic, and environmental well-being in the region in countless ways. The Arctic States, indigenous peoples and many other Arctic stakeholders are working side by side for this. Perhaps this could provide inspiration and best practices instructive for those outside the Arctic.

Pollution mitigation, biodiversity conservation, language preservation, suicide prevention, delivering early warnings about emerging contaminants such as microplastics, empowering communities and governments to better respond to emergencies, or establishing a circumpolar business forum (the Arctic Economic Council) are all examples of Arctic collaboration. This list is not exhaustive.

The Arctic Council's six Working Groups* and other bodies work together for sustainable development. For example, some Working Groups are engaged in building the knowledge base about the Arctic through scientific assessments and monitoring. Others work on policy instruments and strategies for an ecosystem approach to management, conservation of biodiversity, and safe use of Arctic marine and terrestrial environments. Still others pursue targeted projects and activities that provide practical knowledge and contribute to building the capacity of indigenous peoples and Arctic communities to respond to local, regional, and global challenges and opportunities promoting integrated sustainable development.

The implementation of Agenda 2030 provides new momentum to enhance sustainable development activities relevant to the future work of the Arctic Council. The lessons learned in Arctic cooperation could hopefully benefit everybody.

* The six Arctic Council Working Groups are ACAP (Arctic Contaminants Action Program), AMAP (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme), CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna), EPPR (Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response), PAME (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment), and SDWG (Sustainable Development Working Group).