

Arctic Council Secretariat

Vision for the Arctic

Kiruna, Sweden, 15 May 2013



ARCTIC COUNCIL

Vision for the Arctic

We, the eight Arctic States together with the six Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, have met today at the end of the first round of eight successive chairmanships of the Arctic Council.

We have many accomplishments to celebrate since the signing of the Ottawa Declaration in 1996, and it is timely for us to set out a vision for the future of our region.

Guided by the Ottawa Declaration, the Arctic Council has become the pre-eminent high-level forum of the Arctic region and we have made this region into an area of unique international cooperation.

We have achieved mutual understanding and trust, addressed issues of common concern, strengthened our co-operation, influenced international action, established a standing secretariat and, under the auspices of the Council, Arctic States have concluded legally binding agreements. We have also demonstrated the importance of science and traditional knowledge for understanding our region and for informed decision-making in the Arctic.

The Arctic is changing and attracting global attention and as we look to the future, we will build on our achievements and will continue to cooperate to ensure that Arctic voices are heard and taken into account in the world.

A peaceful Arctic

The further development of the Arctic region as a zone of peace and stability is at the heart of our efforts. We are confident that there is no problem that we cannot solve together through our cooperative relationships on the basis of existing international law and good will. We remain committed to the framework of the Law of the Sea, and to the peaceful resolution of disputes generally.

The Arctic home

We are committed to demonstrating leadership in regional and global forums to address challenges affecting our home. The well-being of all Arctic people is fundamental as the region develops.

We will continue to exercise our responsibility for safeguarding indigenous peoples' rights, including by creating conditions for the preservation and development of social structures, cultural traditions, languages and means of subsistence.

A prosperous Arctic

The economic potential of the Arctic is enormous and its sustainable development is key to the region's resilience and prosperity. Transparent and predictable rules and continued cooperation between Arctic States will spur economic development, trade and investments.

We will continue to work cooperatively to support the development of sustainable Arctic economies to build self-sufficient, vibrant and healthy Arctic communities for present and future generations.

Economic cooperation will be on the top of our agenda.

A safe Arctic

To meet the needs of an ever-changing Arctic we will further strengthen our cooperation in the fields of environmental and civil security. Aware that maritime safety requires broad regional and international cooperation, we will continue to develop best practices and other measures for the Arctic region.

A healthy Arctic environment

We recognize the uniqueness and fragility of the Arctic environment, and the critical importance of healthy environments to sustainable communities. We are aware that the Arctic environment continues to be affected by events outside of the region, in particular climate change, and that resulting changes in the Arctic have global repercussions.

We are concerned with the growing effects of climate change, and the local and global impacts of large-scale melting of the Arctic snow, ice and permafrost. We will continue to take action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants, and support action that enables adaptation.

We will strengthen our work, both within the Arctic and globally, to address the environmental challenges facing the region. We remain committed to managing the region with an ecosystem-based approach which balances conservation and sustainable use of the environment.

Arctic knowledge

We will continue to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the Arctic, both inside and outside the region, and to strengthen Arctic research and transdisciplinary science, encourage cooperation between higher education institutions and society, and synergies between traditional knowledge and science.

A strong Arctic Council

Membership in the Arctic Council is and will remain for the Arctic States with the active participation and full consultation of the Arctic Indigenous Peoples Organizations. Decisions at all levels in the Arctic Council are the exclusive right and responsibility of the eight signatories to the Ottawa Declaration.

The Arctic Council is open to observers who can contribute to the work of the Arctic Council and share the commitment of the Arctic States to the peaceful resolution of disputes and abide by the criteria for observers established by the Arctic Council.

As we embark on the second round of chairmanships, we will continue our work to strengthen the Arctic Council to meet new challenges and opportunities for cooperation, and pursue opportunities to expand the Arctic Council's roles from policy-shaping into policy-making.

The founding values, objectives and commitments of the Arctic Council will continue to be the North Star that guides our cooperation.