

# Arctic Council

DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE GOVERNMENTS  
OF THE ARCTIC COUNTRIES ON THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Ottawa, Canada

September 19, 1996

# DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

THE REPRESENTATIVES of the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America (hereinafter referred to as the Arctic States) meeting in Ottawa;

AFFIRMING our commitment to the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic, including recognition of the special relationship and unique contributions to the Arctic of indigenous people and their communities;

AFFIRMING our commitment to sustainable development in the Arctic region, including economic and social development, improved health conditions and cultural well-being;

AFFIRMING concurrently our commitment to the protection of the Arctic environment, including the health of Arctic ecosystems, maintenance of biodiversity in the Arctic region and conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;

RECOGNIZING the contributions of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy to these commitments;

RECOGNIZING the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people of the Arctic and their communities and taking note of its importance and that of Arctic science and research to the collective understanding of the circumpolar Arctic;

DESIRING further to provide a means for promoting cooperative activities to address Arctic issues requiring circumpolar cooperation, and to ensure full consultation with and the full involvement of indigenous people and their communities and other inhabitants of the Arctic in such activities;

RECOGNIZING the valuable contribution and support of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Saami Council, and the Association of the Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation in the development of the Arctic Council;

DESIRING to provide for regular intergovernmental consideration of and consultation on Arctic issues.

## HEREBY DECLARE:

1. The Arctic Council is established as a high level forum to:
  - (a) provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues<sup>1</sup>, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
  - (b) oversee and coordinate the programs established under the AEPS on the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP); Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF); Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME); and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR).

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<sup>1</sup>The Arctic Council should not deal with matters related to military security.

- (c) adopt terms of reference for, and oversee and coordinate a sustainable development program.
  - (d) disseminate information, encourage education and promote interest in Arctic-related issues.
2. Members of the Arctic Council are: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America (the Arctic States).

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council and the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation are Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. Permanent participation equally is open to other Arctic organizations of indigenous peoples\*<sup>2</sup> with majority Arctic indigenous constituency, representing:

- (a) a single indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or
- (b) more than one Arctic indigenous people resident in a single Arctic state.

The determination that such an organization has met this criterion is to be made by decision of the Council. The number of Permanent Participants should at any time be less than the number of members.

The category of Permanent Participation is created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Arctic Council.

3. Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to:
- (a) non-Arctic states;
  - (b) inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, global and regional; and
  - (c) non-governmental organizations
- that the Council determines can contribute to its work.
4. The Council should normally meet on a biennial basis, with meetings of senior officials taking place more frequently, to provide for liaison and co-ordination. Each Arctic State should designate a focal point on matters related to the Arctic Council.
5. Responsibility for hosting meetings of the Arctic Council, including provision of secretariat support functions, should rotate sequentially among the Arctic States.
6. The Arctic Council, as its first order of business, should adopt rules of procedure for its meetings and those of its working groups.
7. Decisions of the Arctic Council are to be by consensus of the Members.

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<sup>28</sup>The use of the term "peoples" in this Declaration shall not be construed as having any implications as regard the rights which may attach to the term under international law.

8. The Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat established under AEPS is to continue under the framework of the Arctic Council.
9. The Arctic Council should regularly review the priorities and financing of its programs and associated structures.

THEREFORE, we the undersigned representatives of our respective Governments, recognizing the Arctic Council's political significance and intending to promote its results, have signed this Declaration.

SIGNED by the representatives of the Arctic States in Ottawa, this 19th day of September 1996.

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT  
OF CANADA

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT  
OF DENMARK

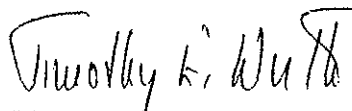
  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT  
OF FINLAND

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT  
OF ICELAND

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT  
OF NORWAY

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT  
OF SWEDEN

  
FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA

# JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE ARCTIC COUNTRIES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Ministers and Senior Representatives of the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America met in Ottawa, Canada, on September 19, 1996, and signed the Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council.

This inaugural meeting was attended by the leaders and senior representatives of three international Arctic indigenous organizations - the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council, and the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation, as Permanent Participants in the Council.

Also present at the signing ceremony were the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region; the Nordic Council of Ministers; the Nordic Council Finnish Secretariat; the non-Arctic States of Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Poland and the Netherlands; the International Union for Circumpolar Health; the International Arctic Science Committee; the United Nations Environment Programme; the International Union for the Conservation of Nature; the Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea; and the World Wildlife Fund.

Ministers viewed the establishment of this new intergovernmental forum as an important milestone in their commitment to enhance cooperation in the circumpolar North. The Council will provide a mechanism for addressing the common concerns and challenges faced by their governments and the people of the Arctic. To this end, Ministers referred particularly to the protection of the Arctic environment and sustainable development as a means of improving the economic, social and cultural well-being in the North.

Ministers noted that the indigenous people of the Arctic have played an important role in the negotiations to create the Arctic Council. The Declaration provides for their full consultation and involvement in the Arctic Council. To this end, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council, and the Association of the Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation, are named as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. Provision is also made for additional organizations representing Arctic indigenous people to become Permanent Participants.

Ministers acknowledged the significant work accomplished under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), whose existing programs will be integrated within the Council. They agreed to complete the integration process by the time of the final AEPS Ministerial meeting being held in Norway in 1997.

The Ministers recognized the contribution of international science to the knowledge and understanding of the Arctic region and noted the role that scientific cooperation, through the International Arctic Science Committee and other organizations, is playing in developing a truly circumpolar cooperation.

Ministers welcomed the attendance of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and looked forward to its future participation in the meetings of the Council. They also recognized the need for providing the opportunity to non-Arctic countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations with Arctic interests to participate actively, as Observers, in the work of the Council, and to draw on their experience.

Ministers set the initial priority tasks for the start-up of the Council as follows:

- developing, for adoption by the Council, rules of procedure;
- developing, for adoption by the Council, terms of reference for a sustainable development program as a basis for collaborative projects; and
- ensuring an effective transition of the AEPS into the Arctic Council, to be completed at the time of the 1997 AEPS Ministerial meeting in Norway.

Ministers expressed their appreciation to Canada for hosting the inauguration of the Arctic Council, and welcomed Canada's offer to host the first meeting of the Council in 1998.