



"NORTHERN WORLD", PAINTED BY TED HARRISON.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL AT 25

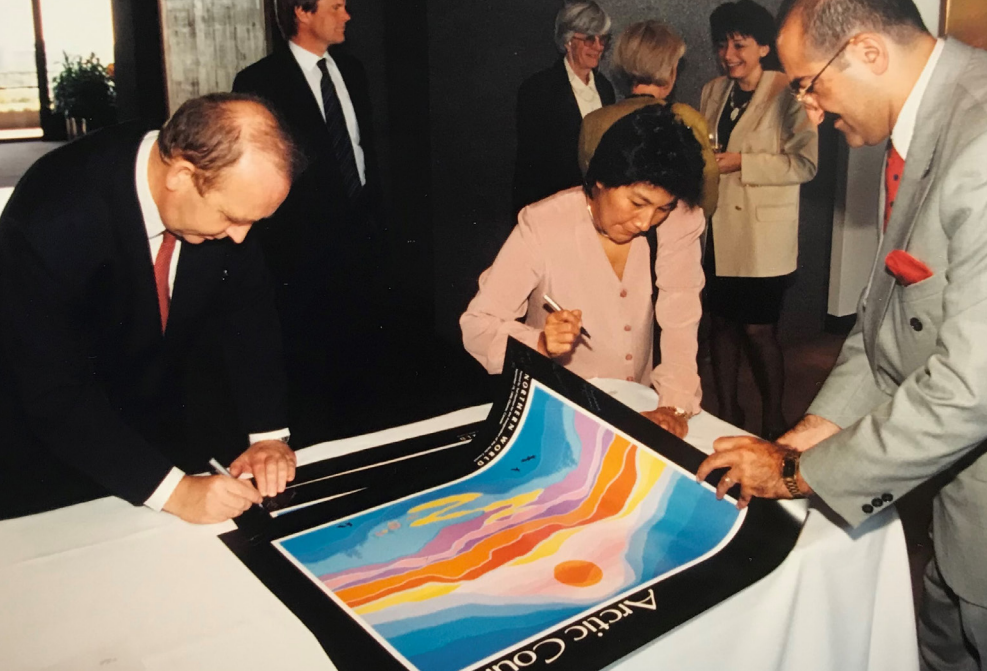
FACTSHEET
2021

On 19 September 1996, representatives of the eight Arctic States signed the Ottawa Declaration, which established the Arctic Council as a "high level forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic [I]ndigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic."

Today, the Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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ABOVE AND RIGHT: MIKE PINDER PHOTOGRAPHY

THE BEGINNINGS: CIRCUMPOLAR COOPERATION FOR THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

The Arctic was in an alarming state at the end of the 1980s. Pollution from industrialized areas accumulated in the High North. Acid rain permeated soils and radionuclides, remnants of nuclear-weapon testing during the 1950s and 1960s and the Chernobyl accident, deposited on Arctic vegetations. This was the environmental backdrop when Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev delivered a historical address in Murmansk in 1987, calling on Arctic States to collaborate on the pressing environmental issues in their Northern territories.

Finland seized the opportunity that the speech offered and initiated a process that eventually would bring the Environment Ministers of the Arctic States to Rovaniemi in 1991. Deeply concerned with the threats to the Arctic environment, they signed the declaration that established the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS).

The AEPS became the forerunner of today's Arctic Council. It was the first time that Arctic States worked together on shared issues in the North – except for the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears. However, soon calls for a more extensive cooperation across the region, including issues related to sustainable development and human wellbeing, grew louder. Canada was the driving force behind the negotiations for an Arctic Council – and succeeded. In 1996, the eight Arctic States gathered in Ottawa for the Council's inauguration.

A UNIQUE POSITION FOR ARCTIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Three Indigenous peoples' organizations – the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council – were included as Permanent Participants as the Council was established – a unique status in international cooperation to this day. The Permanent Participants have full consultation rights in connection with the Council's negotiations and decisions.

The category of Permanent Participants was – and still is – open to Arctic organizations of Indigenous peoples with a majority of Arctic Indigenous constituency representing either a single Indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or more than one Arctic Indigenous people resident in a single Arctic State. Today, the Arctic Council has six Permanent Participants. The Aleut International Organization joined in 1998, and the Arctic Athabaskan Council and Gwich'in Council International in 2000.



ARCTIC COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

AN INCREASING ROLE FOR NON-ARCTIC STATES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to non-Arctic states, inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, global and regional, as well as non-governmental organizations. At the second Ministerial meeting of the Council held in 1998, 12 Observers were welcomed to the Council, including Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom, and organizations such as the United Nations Environment Program and the World Wildlife Fund.

Today (ahead of the Reykjavik Ministerial meeting), the Council has 38 Observers of which 13 are states. Observers contribute through their engagement in the Arctic Council primarily at the level of Working Groups, sharing their valuable expertise on Arctic issues, such as black carbon, shipping and biodiversity.

EXCLUDING MILITARY SECURITY

At the core of the Council's work lie issues related to sustainable development and environmental protection. The Ottawa Declaration explicitly excluded military security issues from the Arctic Council's agenda. This strong focus on the well-being of people in the Arctic and the safeguarding of the Arctic environment has enabled the Arctic States to cooperate constructively and effectively – regardless of disagreements and tensions in other areas and on other issues.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the past 25 years, the Arctic Council has proven to produce the most comprehensive circumpolar assessments and reports of issues and trends that impact the Arctic environment and Arctic inhabitants. Key reports by the Council's Working Groups and Expert Groups have fostered a global understanding of Arctic change and how it affects peoples and environments in the lower latitudes. This work has fed into international agreements, such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, has contributed to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and has informed the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters – to name a few. The knowledge and the recommendations provided by the Council's subsidiary bodies, which include experts from all Arctic States, Indigenous peoples and Observer states and organizations, provide the foundation for informed decision making.

The Council has also provided a forum for the negotiation of three important legally binding agreements among the eight Arctic States:

- *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic* (2011)
- *Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic* (2013)
- *Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation* (2017)

ARCTIC COUNCIL QUICK FACTS

ESTABLISHED 19 SEPTEMBER 1996, OTTAWA, CANADA

SIGNATORY STATES:

CANADA, KINGDOM OF DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SWEDEN, UNITED STATES

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ORGANIZATIONS WITH PERMANENT PARTICIPANT STATUS:

INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL
ICC (1996)

RUSSIAN ASSOCIATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE NORTH
RAIPON (1996)

SAAMI COUNCIL
(1996)

ALEUT INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
AIA (1998)

ARCTIC ATHABASKAN COUNCIL
AAC (2000)

GWICH'IN COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL
GCI (2000)

OBSERVERS

Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to non-Arctic states, along with inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work.



WORKING GROUPS

ARCTIC MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME
AMAP (1991*)

CONSERVATION OF ARCTIC FLORA AND FAUNA
CAFF (1991*)

EMERGENCY PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
EPPR (1991*)

PROTECTION OF THE ARCTIC MARINE ENVIRONMENT
PAME (1991*)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP
SDWG (1998)

ARCTIC CONTAMINANTS ACTION PROGRAM
ACAP (2006)

** AMAP, CAFF, EPPR and PAME were established as Working Groups under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and later integrated into the Arctic Council.*