

Reykjavík, 20 May 2021

Arctic Council Strategic Plan 2021 to 2030

This Strategic Plan is adopted in recognition of the Arctic Council's 25th anniversary at the Council's 12th Ministerial Meeting. It reflects the shared values and joint aspirations of the Arctic States and the Permanent Participants, to advance sustainable development, environmental protection, and good governance in the Arctic.

Strategic Vision for the Arctic and the Arctic Council in 2030

In 2030 we envision the Arctic to remain a region of peace, stability and constructive cooperation, that is a vibrant, prosperous, sustainable and secure home for all its inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples, and where their rights and wellbeing are respected. The Arctic will be a region where it is firmly established that healthy ecosystems and habitats are of critical importance and the uniqueness and fragility of the Arctic environment is respected by all in the region and beyond.

All people in the Arctic will have ample pathways for sustainable social and economic development while respecting the environment. Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Arctic, that respect the rights and cultures of all Arctic inhabitants, will contribute to resilient societies. The particular vulnerability of the Arctic to the rapid warming of the region will continue to be widely acknowledged globally and be a critical driver for the Council's activities. Furthermore, Arctic States continue to make the voice of the Arctic heard at multilateral fora that address climate issues, drawing attention to and urging the international community to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The Arctic Council will remain the leading intergovernmental forum for Arctic cooperation as it continues to advance knowledge, understanding, and action on issues of critical importance to the region, and continue to support the strong legal framework that applies to the region. The Council will contribute effectively to social and economic development, climate change mitigation and adaptation towards low emission societies, and environmental protection throughout the Arctic. The Arctic Council will have further developed its working methods and structures including the cooperation with observers and other partners, to respond to new realities, opportunities and increased international attention to its work.

Strategic Goals

For 2021-2030 the Arctic Council will work towards the following goals:

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Goal 1 – Arctic Climate

monitor, assess and highlight the impacts of climate change in the Arctic to encourage compliance with the Paris Agreement and support stronger global measures to reduce greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants, while strengthening circumpolar cooperation on: climate science and observations; reduction of emissions; climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience; and exchange of knowledge and innovative technologies in support of these efforts;

Goal 2 – Healthy and Resilient Arctic Ecosystems

promote pollution prevention, monitoring, assessment, conservation and protection of Arctic biodiversity, ecosystems and species habitats, based on best available science, and respecting the importance of sustainable development for all current and future generations of Arctic inhabitants;

Goal 3 – Healthy Arctic Marine Environment

promote conservation and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment for the benefit of all current and future generations of Arctic inhabitants, encourage safety at sea, prevention of marine pollution and cooperate to improve knowledge of the Arctic marine environment, monitor and assess current and future impacts on Arctic marine ecosystems, work together to enhance cooperation on marine issues and promote respect for the rule of law and existing legal frameworks applicable to Arctic waters;

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 4 – Sustainable Social Development

enhance work aimed at social and cultural inclusion and at improving health, safety, resilience, and well-being of all Arctic inhabitants with a particular focus on Indigenous Peoples;

Goal 5 – Sustainable Economic Development

advance cooperation on sustainable and diverse economic development in the Arctic, promote economic cooperation, knowledge and information sharing on innovative, sustainable and low-emission technologies, for the benefit and increased resilience of all Arctic inhabitants with a particular focus on Indigenous Peoples;

STRENGTHENING THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Goal 6 – Knowledge and Communications

generate, collect, analyze and communicate science, and traditional knowledge and local knowledge, as appropriate, and enhance understanding of the Arctic within and beyond the region to inform policy shaping and decision making;

Goal 7 – Stronger Arctic Council

strengthen the Arctic Council as the pre-eminent high-level circumpolar forum for effective coordination and cooperation, and enhance its ability to efficiently respond to emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic.

Strategic Actions

For 2021 to 2030 the following Strategic Actions supplement each of the Strategic Goals.

1 – Arctic Climate

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 1.1 enhance monitoring, assessment, predictions, and dissemination of data and information on the **accelerating effects of climate change** in the Arctic, within and across ecosystems and on livelihoods and economies, based on best available science and supported by community observations, traditional knowledge and local knowledge;
- 1.2 integrate **climate change considerations and biodiversity perspectives** in all relevant Arctic Council projects and policy recommendations;
- 1.3 encourage **stronger global mitigation efforts** through providing an Arctic view, including Indigenous Peoples' perspectives, to multilateral fora that address climate issues – drawing attention to the particular vulnerability of the region and to the effects of changing climate and urging the international community to invest efforts to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement;
- 1.4 promote enhanced actions, within and beyond the Arctic, to **reduce greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants** in the Arctic environment, including through cooperation on reduction of emissions of black carbon and methane;
- 1.5 work to enhance **adaptation and resilience** of Arctic communities as the Arctic region warms significantly more than regions at lower latitudes;
- 1.6 encourage cooperation on enhancing **Arctic meteorological observations and services** in order to strengthen understanding of weather and climatic phenomena and changes in the Arctic and improve the safety of human activities in the region;
- 1.7 promote **clean energy solutions and technology**, and enhanced energy efficiency in the Arctic to reduce the effects of climate change.

2 – Healthy and Resilient Arctic Ecosystems

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 2.1 promote **protection of the vulnerable Arctic ecosystems** based on best available science and traditional knowledge and local knowledge, providing for conservation of biodiversity in the region, and supporting responsible use of its natural resources;
- 2.2 encourage cooperation among Arctic States in **monitoring the state of the Arctic biodiversity and ecosystems**, as well as impacts of pollutants and other environmental stressors on environmental and human health, produce scientific assessments of status and trends, as well as action plans and guidelines, and utilizing traditional knowledge and local knowledge to continually improve understanding of relevant issues;
- 2.3 promote cooperation among Arctic States in **global fora that address pollution and other environmental issues** relevant to the Arctic and encourage the Arctic States to provide Arctic views, including Indigenous Peoples' perspectives, on issues relevant to the Arctic and its inhabitants;

- 2.4 encourage actions at all levels to address **pollutants and hazardous and radioactive substances**, that affect human health and the environment in the Arctic and raise Arctic inhabitants' awareness of these issues as appropriate;
- 2.5 promote action on issues that are critical to maintaining the health of Arctic ecosystems, as well as Arctic inhabitants, and encourage cooperation among Arctic States on **ecosystem approach to management** in the Arctic to advance conservation and sustainable use based on best available science;
- 2.6 support work on protection and restoration of **wetlands and habitats** that are vital for Arctic species;
- 2.7 support international efforts on **conserving nature and biodiversity** and providing Arctic, including Indigenous, perspectives on such efforts.

3 – Healthy Arctic Marine Environment

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 3.1 strengthen cooperation related to **Arctic marine and coastal areas** and promote conservation and sustainable use, taking into account science-based recommendations as well as traditional knowledge and local knowledge;
- 3.2 encourage cooperation among Arctic States on safe and sustainable shipping and other economic activities related to the Arctic marine environment and support development at appropriate levels of **norms and standards that affect Arctic waters**;
- 3.3 support the implementation of the ***Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic*** (2011) and the ***Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic*** (2013) in order to mitigate risks to safety of seafarers, human health and the Arctic environment;
- 3.4 promote respect for international law, including as reflected in the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, as the legal framework within which the **governance of the Arctic marine environment** must be carried out, while emphasizing the role and responsibility of the coastal states and contributing to wider global efforts in this regard;
- 3.5 cooperate regionally on issues, critical to the **health of the Arctic marine environment**, support monitoring, and encourage ecosystem approach to management to advance conservation and sustainable use of Arctic marine resources.

4 – Sustainable Social Development

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 4.1 strengthen cooperation that improves the **health, safety and long-term well-being** of Arctic inhabitants in general and of its Indigenous Peoples in particular; and integrate social considerations into all relevant activities;
- 4.2 continue to improve **safety for all Arctic inhabitants and visitors** by identifying and studying emerging natural and human-induced disaster risks, and developing prevention, preparedness, response and mitigation measures that seek to limit adverse environmental, social and economic impacts;
- 4.3 continue to promote **public health** through work dedicated to preventive measures and high-quality health care, adapted to and suitable for the region and its cultures and demography in terms of specific challenges, addressing in particular mental health and elevated suicide risk in many Arctic communities;
- 4.4 enhance work on **communicable diseases, epidemics and pandemics**, focusing on Arctic conditions, in order to identify preventive and response measures appropriate for the Arctic and its inhabitants;
- 4.5 promote **gender equality and non-discrimination** in the Arctic with the aim of contributing to sustainability and balanced participation in leadership and decision making both in the public and private sectors;
- 4.6 encourage meaningful **engagement with youth** across the Arctic in a manner that can both support and inform the Council's work and empower Arctic youth;
- 4.7 promote **quality, culturally appropriate, education** for all Arctic inhabitants, including in cooperation with educational institutions in the Arctic region, the University of the Arctic and other relevant organizations;
- 4.8 promote respect for **Arctic Indigenous Peoples**, taking due note of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and encourage participation in the *United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032)*;
- 4.9 inform and involve the **local level** in activities on Arctic issues as appropriate and encourage cooperation between Arctic regions and people-to-people contact.

5 – Sustainable Economic Development

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 5.1 enhance cooperation on development and promotion of **favorable conditions for sustainable investments** and economic activities in the Arctic;
- 5.2 continue to encourage sustainable development of low emission Arctic economies, including in cooperation with relevant fora, in order to build **vibrant and healthy Arctic communities** for present and future generations;
- 5.3 provide guidance to decision-makers on **securing and diversifying livelihoods**;
- 5.4 support and encourage the transition towards sustainable and low-emission societies, including through the use of **clean technology, innovation and circular economy**;

- 5.5 seek to **align sustainable economic development with traditional ways of living** respecting the rights, cultures and history of the Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic;
- 5.6 promote responsible and integrated approaches to resource development in the Arctic, including the development of **environmentally and culturally sustainable tourism**;
- 5.7 continue to address the issue of **physical and digital connectivity** as a crosscutting theme and an important prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development, transport, search and rescue and other activities in the Arctic.

6 – Knowledge and Communications

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 6.1 emphasize the importance of **scientific assessments** to improve knowledge and understanding of the Arctic to inform policy shaping and decision making;
- 6.2 promote **co-production of knowledge**, based on different knowledge systems, where science, traditional knowledge and local knowledge are valued and utilized, as appropriate, to inform policy shaping and decision making relevant to Arctic people and their communities;
- 6.3 promote scientific and Arctic research cooperation and encourage public access to, and sharing of, Arctic relevant data, including through the implementation of the **Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation** (2017);
- 6.4 use **best available science** to make targeted and concrete policy-level recommendations that inform the work of decision-makers and that are relevant to Arctic peoples and their communities;
- 6.5 encourage **timely exchange of information** and views when Arctic matters are being addressed within other regional and international fora;
- 6.6 utilize **strategic communications** tools and mechanisms to enhance awareness of the work of the Council, both within the Arctic region and beyond as appropriate.

7 – Stronger Arctic Council

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WILL:

- 7.1 maintain its commitment to **peace, stability, and constructive cooperation in the Arctic**, and continue to promote respect for the international legal framework that supports responsible governance relevant to the Arctic region;
- 7.2 review its **working methods, organization and structure**, and update as needed to position the Council to successfully implement this Strategic Plan; align work plans and activities among and between the Working Groups and other subsidiary bodies as well as with this Strategic Plan; and solidify the identity of the Council as a whole;
- 7.3 aim to ensure that its **policy recommendations** are ambitious, practical, prioritized and based on best available science and utilizing traditional knowledge and local knowledge, as appropriate;
- 7.4 strengthen the **Permanent Participants' capacities** to facilitate their full and effective participation in Arctic Council activities, based on common priorities;

- 7.5 review the **financing of the Arctic Council**, including the Arctic Council Secretariat, the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat and the secretariats of the Working Groups, and assess the need for further development of project financing;
- 7.6 enhance **constructive, balanced, and meaningful Observer engagement** and encourage their proactive engagement in relevant activities of the Council;
- 7.7 enhance and further promote cooperation with relevant public and private bodies, including the **Arctic Coast Guard Forum and the Arctic Economic Council**, as well as international and intergovernmental institutions and initiatives reflecting the interconnectedness between the Arctic and the rest of the world;
- 7.8 carry out a **mid-term review of the Strategic Plan in 2025 and an end term review in 2030**.