



REYKJAVÍK DECLARATION 2021

On the occasion of the Twelfth Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council

We, the Ministers representing the eight Arctic States, joined by representatives of the six Permanent Participant organizations of the Arctic Council, have gathered in Reykjavík, Iceland, at the conclusion of Iceland's second Chairmanship for the Twelfth Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council,

Reaffirming our commitment to maintain peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic,

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Arctic Council and the progress achieved towards its commitment to sustainable development in the Arctic region and to the protection of the Arctic environment, **emphasizing** the role of the Arctic Council as the preeminent forum for cooperation in the region, and **reaffirming** our commitment to further strengthen the Arctic Council and provide strategic guidance to its work,

Recognizing the cooperative strength of the Arctic States and the Permanent Participants to address new challenges and opportunities in the Arctic and **emphasizing** their unique position to promote responsible governance in the region and on Arctic affairs,

Stressing the importance of achieving the Paris Agreement goals and, in that regard, **calling upon** all parties to the Paris Agreement, including Arctic States and Arctic Council Observer States, to implement and enhance nationally determined contributions and other measures in line with the Paris Agreement goals,

Noting the essential role of the human and social dimension in the work of the Arctic Council, **reaffirming** that the well-being of Arctic inhabitants is at the core of the Council's work, **recognizing** the diversity of societies, cultures and economies in the Arctic, and **acknowledging** the effects of a devastating pandemic,

Recognizing the rights and the special circumstances of Indigenous Peoples and the unique role of the Permanent Participants within the Arctic Council and **noting** the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*,

Noting that, due to climate change and other factors, the Arctic is becoming more accessible, and that this could provide opportunities for new and expanded economic activities, **reaffirming** that such activities should be sustainable and transparent and **emphasizing** that climate change mitigation efforts, such as transition to low-emission and energy efficient solutions, can contribute to sustainable job creation,

Acknowledging the unique biodiversity of the Arctic, **noting** with concern the serious threats to Arctic ecosystems due to climate change and other stressors and **reaffirming** our commitment to the protection of the Arctic environment,



Emphasizing the importance of strengthening and sustaining Arctic scientific research and long-term observations and **noting** that scientific data together with traditional knowledge and local knowledge will continue to provide the basis for informed decision making in the Arctic and in the work of the Arctic Council,

Noting with appreciation the comprehensive, quality work accomplished by the Council's subsidiary bodies under exigent circumstances caused by the pandemic during the Icelandic Chairmanship,

Reaffirming the importance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the need for their effective implementation by 2030,



HEREBY:

People and Communities of the Arctic

- 1. Reaffirm** our support for cooperation on matters that will promote safe and healthy Arctic communities and welfare of all Arctic inhabitants, **recognize** the growing impacts of climate change in the Arctic, **note with concern** the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Arctic communities, **welcome** the work undertaken by the Arctic Council to assess the implications of the pandemic in the Arctic and the responses made and **encourage** further work to support Arctic communities abilities to meet future global health challenges and other major disruptions to life in the Arctic region,
- 2. Recognize** the intrinsic link between human health, animals, and the environment, as demonstrated by the emergence of deadly diseases such as COVID-19, **welcome** continued progress in establishing circumpolar networks of Arctic health experts through the *One Arctic, One Health* project, **reiterate** our support for mental well-being and suicide prevention in the Arctic, **note** the progress in reducing pollution from persistent organic pollutants (POPs), heavy metals and other toxic substances, **welcome** the report *Rapid Environmental Assessment Demonstration Project in Russia*, which evaluates human health and environmental threats of pesticides storage facilities and **encourage** continued work in this area,
- 3. Note with concern** that Arctic Indigenous Peoples remain amongst the most exposed people globally to contaminants that accumulate in traditional subsistence foods, despite declining levels of many contaminants measured in Arctic populations, **reaffirm** our support for continued studies on new, emerging and regulated contaminants, **urge** the Arctic States to consider the recent reports on POPs, mercury and human health and contaminants, and their recommendations, and **call for** strengthened implementation measures within the Stockholm and Minamata conventions to eliminate as possible POPs and mercury emissions,
- 4. Emphasize** that understanding and addressing the needs and challenges faced by remote communities across the Arctic are central to the role of the Arctic Council, **welcome** the implementation of the *Community-Based Black Carbon and Public Health Assessment*, which will provide valuable insights into how communities can reduce black carbon exposure from cooking, heating, and energy production, and **note** that supporting work to reduce emissions in remote and Indigenous communities across the Arctic will help advance our mutual environmental and climate efforts,
- 5. Recognize** that a clean and secure energy future is essential for the resilience of Arctic communities, **emphasize** the need to continue the work of the *Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy II*, **underscore** the importance of promoting the use of sustainable, affordable, reliable, and clean energy sources in Arctic communities and **encourage** further work on innovative and renewable energy solutions and related capacity building in the Arctic aimed at combating climate change,
- 6. Recognize** the importance of enhancing prevention, preparedness and response measures to mitigate the negative impacts of emergencies on Arctic inhabitants and the Arctic environment, **welcome** continued actions ensuring the implementation of the *Agreement on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic* and the *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and*



Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, **recognize** the increasing threat of wildland fires in the Arctic region, **note with satisfaction** the ongoing work to strengthen circumpolar cooperation on this serious challenge, and **encourage** efforts to keep pace with the evolving impacts of climate change, human-induced and natural disasters, and growth of sustainable development activities,

7. **Note with satisfaction** the cooperation to share knowledge and experience of preparedness and response to accidents and threats from the release of radionuclides **welcome** the establishment of an expert group on radiation during the Icelandic Chairmanship to examine related risks, including with regard to nuclear waste, and mitigation measures,

8. **Note with appreciation** the progress made in developing and expanding the *Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer Network* with growing participation, **recognize** its value for capacity building and sharing of knowledge, including among Indigenous and local youth, and **welcome** further support for the project,

9. **Emphasize** the importance of gender equality and respect for diversity for sustainable development in the Arctic and welcome the *Pan-Arctic Report, Gender Equality in the Arctic, Phase 3*, **encourage** the mainstreaming of gender-based analysis in the work of the Arctic Council and **call for** further action to advance gender equality in the Arctic,

10. **Recognize** the importance of engaging Arctic youth in international cooperation, **welcome** youth engagement initiatives by the Council's subsidiary bodies and **encourage** Senior Arctic Officials to continue to seek practical and innovative ways to support youth cooperation across borders as well as interest in Arctic affairs,

11. Welcome that the United Nations has declared 2022-2032 as the *International Decade of Indigenous Languages*, underscore that there is a clear link between Arctic Indigenous languages and knowledge, **encourage** activities that empower Arctic Indigenous language users and sustain and strengthen their languages and **welcome** the project *Digitalization of Linguistic and Cultural Heritage of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic*,

Sustainable Economic Development

12. **Reiterate** the need for the Arctic to remain, and further develop, as a vibrant region, where its inhabitants can pursue employment opportunities and improve their economic and social well-being,

13. **Reaffirm** the importance of understanding the unique, diverse, and evolving economies in the Arctic and acknowledge the essential role of Indigenous people's businesses and traditional livelihoods in Arctic economies, **welcome** the fourth *Economy of the North – ECONOR 2020* report, and **encourage** Senior Arctic Officials to continue work to preserve and enhance economic diversity of Arctic communities,

14. **Reaffirm** the importance of further developing sustainable economic growth in the Arctic, **acknowledge** the role of responsible resource management and sustainable economic development for livelihoods in the region, **support**, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, concrete ways to further promote sustainable economic activities and **encourage** innovation and entrepreneurship,

15. **Emphasize** as appropriate, the importance of responsible, low-emission and sustainable investment in, and development of, resilient infrastructure such as: enhanced energy, connectivity and transport networks, that will benefit Arctic communities, helping to provide them with meaningful access to relevant public services, **recognize** the importance of collaboration with the private sector, which can contribute to transition to low-emission economies, and **encourage** partnerships on issues of common interest and capacity building, taking into consideration impacts on biodiversity and traditional land-use,

16. **Welcome** the work on the *Arctic Food Innovation Cluster*, **support** local food production and **underscore** the importance of food security in the Arctic, amplifying the Arctic region's role in sustainable, global food production,

17. **Acknowledge** the importance of sustaining living marine resources in the Arctic, **welcome** the report *Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic Region*, **underscore** the potential for economic development through sustainable management and responsible use of marine bioresources in the Arctic and **encourage** Arctic States to facilitate and promote as appropriate sustainable development of the blue bioeconomy,

18. **Recognize** the need to increase employment opportunities and raise living standards in the Arctic, **acknowledge** the need to support Arctic businesses and **underscore** that all projects, small, medium and large, must be carried out in a responsible manner, while respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples,

Climate, Green Energy Solutions, Environment, and Biodiversity,

19. **Note with utmost concern** that for the past 50 years the Arctic has warmed at a rate three times the global average with harmful effects on the environment, biodiversity, society and infrastructure, as well as on subsistence-based livelihoods of many Arctic communities, **recognize** that deposition of black carbon in the Arctic accelerates melting of snow and ice, intensifying the adverse effects of climate change, and that future, global emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) will largely determine the extent of climate change for the Arctic, **reiterate** the need for enhanced action to meet the long-term temperature goal and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and SLCPs and slow the rate of increase in average temperature at the global level and in the Arctic,

20. **Note with deep concern** the continued increase of global anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and SLCPs that drive climate change and have a major impact on the Arctic with widespread harmful effects on people, societies and ecosystems, including on subsistence-based livelihoods of many Arctic communities and **underline** the necessity of stepping up efforts to achieve the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal,

21. **Welcome** the reports *Arctic Climate Change Update 2021: Key Trends and Impacts* and *Short-lived Climate Forcers (SLCFs) 2021*, **instruct** the Arctic Council to continue and advance its work on monitoring and assessments on climate change impacts, adaptation, and mitigation in the Arctic and to inform and contribute to the assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and other relevant

international organizations to motivate stronger global action to mitigate emissions of greenhouse gases and SLCPs, and to prevent biodiversity loss,

22. **Approve** the report *Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane, Summary of Progress and Recommendations 2021*, on the collective progress to reduce black carbon and methane emissions by the Arctic States and several Observer States, **encourage** Arctic States and Observer States to develop cooperation and implement the recommendations of the report, **support** the collective and aspirational goal to reduce black carbon emissions by 25-33 percent below 2013 levels by 2025, strongly **encourage** Observer States to commit to similar reduction goals, **consider** possible updates to the goal and present a recommendation at the next Arctic Council Ministerial meeting, and **note** that additional action and measures are needed to significantly reduce overall methane emissions,

23. **Welcome** the work to mitigate emissions of black carbon and methane from flaring in the oil and gas sector in the Arctic, and **reiterate** the importance of continued Arctic cooperation on reducing SLCPs,

24. **Conscious** of the accelerated warming of the Arctic, the associated loss of sea-ice and snow cover, coastal erosion, and other impacts, **recognize** the urgent need for climate change adaptation measures at all levels, **support** efforts to increase capacity of all Arctic communities to adapt to climate change and **encourage** further work to identify and share best practices to deal with these challenges,

25. **Recognize** that Arctic Indigenous Peoples are among those contributing the least to climate change, while being among the first to observe and be impacted by its effects and **note** the importance to consult in good faith, with Arctic Indigenous Peoples on issues related to low-emission economies,

26. **Welcome** the report *Zero Arctic: Concepts for Carbon Neutral Arctic Construction Based on Tradition*, and **urge** more work to support innovative approaches, capacity development and technologies to advance reliable, clean energy solutions,

27. **Note** the potential in the Arctic to benefit from and produce sustainable and low-emission energy, critical minerals and innovative solutions that may accelerate sustainable energy transition globally, taking into account vulnerable ecosystems and biodiversity and **support** renewable energy development in Arctic communities and cooperation in this regard, while applying high standards for the protection of health, safety and the environment and facilitating its reliability,

28. **Recognize** the intrinsic value of biodiversity and its conservation as a common concern and **underline** its importance for the environmental, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being of Arctic inhabitants, **emphasize** the importance of protecting Arctic ecosystems, **promote** nature based solutions, such as protected areas, Indigenous-led conservation efforts, and other effective area-based conservation measures, to conserve Arctic biodiversity, including Arctic species, and **call for** actions to promote an ecosystem approach to management and to mainstream biodiversity into relevant decision-making, and to continue to contribute to the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, as appropriate,

29. **Underline** the importance of sustained monitoring and conservation of Arctic biodiversity, **welcome** the report *State of the Terrestrial Biodiversity* and the new *Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program Strategic Plan (2021 – 2025)* and **encourage** further efforts to address monitoring

needs and to develop biodiversity status reports for Arctic ecosystems to inform national, regional and global initiatives,

30. Recognize that Arctic wetlands and boreal forests support biodiversity, make substantial contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and provide important ecosystem services to Arctic and global communities, including by storing carbon and building resilience to the impacts of climate change, **welcome** the report *Resilience and Management of Arctic Wetlands: Key Findings and Recommendations*, and **encourage** implementation of its recommendations and continued work on Arctic wetlands,

Arctic Marine Environment

31. Note with concern the increased carbon dioxide concentrations, ocean acidification, and the widespread impacts of climate change on the Arctic marine and coastal environments, including sea-ice loss and **decide** to continue to monitor and assess these impacts for informing decisions and actions aimed at improving cooperation related to marine activities and protection of the Arctic environment,

32. Note with concern the increasing pressure from climate change and other stressors on Arctic marine biodiversity and coastal communities, **note** the information briefs *Marine Protected Areas in a Changing Arctic* and *Indigenous Food Security in the Arctic - Implications of a Changing Ocean*, **recognize** that marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures can be effective as tools for enhanced biodiversity conservation and resilience, when applied based on best available scientific data in accordance with national legislation and international law, taking into consideration socio-economic impact and **welcome** continued work on this matter,

33. Welcome the first SAO Marine Mechanism dialogue of the Senior Arctic Officials and professionals on marine related issues, following up on the recommendations of the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation II (2019), and **look forward to** continued dialogue of this kind under future Chairmanships,

34. Reiterate the importance of the *Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2025* (AMSP) and the *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-2021* to provide strategic direction for conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources in the Arctic, **welcome** the work to update the AMSP to address new strategic actions in response to new and emerging issues, and **look forward to** the entry into force of the *International Agreement to Prevent Unregulated Fishing in the High Seas of the Central Arctic Ocean*, once ratified by all parties,

35. Welcome the *Final Report on Modelling Arctic Oceanographic Connectivity* and new efforts by the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program to implement a platform for co-production of knowledge in monitoring and assessing Arctic coastal ecosystems,

36. Reiterate the importance of the ecosystem approach to management for the Arctic marine environment, **encourage** use of the *Guidelines for Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Management of Arctic Marine Ecosystems* (2019) and **welcome** relevant activities in this regard,

37. Note with concern the impacts of long-range pollution on the Arctic environment and its wildlife, documented in *POPs and Chemicals of Emerging Arctic Concern: Influence of Climate Change*

2020. *Summary for Policy Makers* and *Mercury Assessment 2021. Summary for Policy Makers*, **welcome** further studies on climate change impacts on contaminants, **encourage** the use of science along with traditional knowledge and local knowledge in pollutant and climate change research and **cooperate** to provide Arctic data for consideration under international chemical agreements,

38. **Note** with concern the presence of marine litter and microplastics in the Arctic environment, **decide** to promote work to improve management of waste to prevent and reduce marine litter and **encourage** Arctic States to cooperate with relevant regional and international organizations to address waste and marine litter, through a circular and lifecycle approach,

39. **Welcome** the work on marine litter including microplastics, **approve** the *Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the Arctic (ML-RAP)*, **recognize** its important role in reducing marine litter in the region, **underscore** the need to ensure effective implementation of the Action Plan and **call upon** Observer States as appropriate to take actions to reduce marine litter from outside the Arctic,

40. **Welcome** the *Litter and Microplastics Monitoring Plan*, which complements the ML-RAP and other international activities, and **encourage** Arctic States to support its implementation across the Arctic region,

41. **Recognize** that gaps in efficient waste management systems around the globe contribute to marine litter in the ocean, **welcome** the cooperation and efforts aimed at strengthening capacity for environmentally sound management of solid waste and marine litter in the Arctic, **acknowledge** the importance of strengthening cooperation on Arctic shipping issues, including within the framework of the International Maritime Organization and **welcome** work on regional arrangements for port reception facilities in the Arctic to facilitate effective management of ship-generated wastes,

42. **Note** the increase in Arctic shipping, **approve** the updates to the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment recommendations, **acknowledge** the role of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum to promote the Polar Code and **encourage** meaningful efforts, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to promote safe and sustainable shipping across the circumpolar Arctic,

43. **Recognize** that growing shipping activities in the Arctic have underscored the need to develop shipping routes that minimize negative impacts on coastal communities and the marine environment, **welcome** the *Underwater Noise in the Arctic – Understanding Impacts and Defining Management Solutions - Final Phase I Report*, the report on *Low Impact Shipping Corridors in the Arctic* and the *Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities Reference Guide*,

44. **Welcome** the development of web-based tools on circumpolar oil spill response viability and Arctic risk assessment and the production of online videos on prevention, preparedness and response in small communities and **encourage** Arctic States to promote the use of these tools as appropriate,

45. **Welcome** the amendments to the MARPOL Convention related to the prohibition on use, and carriage for use as fuel, of heavy fuel oil in Arctic waters, to protect the marine environment, and **support** the development of a knowledge base on alternative fuels and their characteristics, to understand their behavior in cold waters to inform future oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response activities in the Arctic,



46. **Welcome** the *Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021-2030*, proclaimed by the United Nations and **note** the importance of desired outcomes of the Decade, including for the Arctic marine environment,

Stronger Arctic Council

47. **Recall** the signing of the Ottawa Declaration, 19 September 1996, establishing the Arctic Council, **applaud** the Council's successful cooperation on common Arctic issues in the past quarter-century and **acknowledge** the need to ensure that the Council is ready to meet future challenges, **decide** to adopt a strategic plan to guide the Council's work through the next decade and **instruct** the Senior Arctic Officials to take the necessary actions to implement the plan,

48. **Acknowledge** the important role of international scientific cooperation in obtaining new data on natural hazards, climate change and the state of pollution in the Arctic and **instruct** Senior Arctic Officials to explore the possibility to conduct an Arctic Council scientific expedition to the Arctic Ocean,

49. **Welcome** the review of the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS) after its first six years of operation, **note with satisfaction** that the ACS has since its inception operated efficiently and effectively in support of the Arctic Council, further **note** the subsequent changes in the ACS' governing documents in response to the findings of the review and **instruct** the Senior Arctic Officials to enable the ACS to continue to successfully support the Council's activities,

50. **Welcome** the update of the *Arctic Council's Communications Strategy (2020)*, **reiterate** the importance of harmonized communications from the Arctic Council and all its subsidiary bodies and **request** the Senior Arctic Officials to facilitate efficient coordination of communications and public access to all Arctic Council reports,

51. **Recognize** the valuable contributions by the Permanent Participants, and the support provided by the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, and **encourage** efforts to strengthen their capacity to full and effective participation in their prioritized areas of the Arctic Council's work,

52. **Recognize** that adequately responding to rapid changes in the Arctic environment requires access to sustained observational networks and reliable data to facilitate understanding and informed decision making, **welcome** progress on implementing guiding principles on management of and access to data and **facilitate** that data, generated by the Council, is findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable, and widely shared,

53. **Welcome** the establishment by Senior Arctic Officials of an informal group to assess further enhancement of Arctic Council project financing and the future of the Project Support Instrument (PSI), **decide** to extend the operating mandate of the PSI until the end of 2023, **encourage** Arctic States to continue voluntary contributions to the PSI during this time, and **instruct** Senior Arctic Officials to report on this issue to the Ministerial meeting in 2023,

54. **Endorse** the *Arctic Council–Arctic Coast Guard Forum Statement of Cooperation* for enhancing and promoting safe, sustainable, and responsible maritime activities in the Arctic, and **look forward** to enhanced cooperation with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum,



55. **Note with appreciation** the first joint meeting of the Arctic Economic Council and the Arctic Council in Reykjavik in October 2019 and **look forward to** further cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council and other appropriate non-governmental and private sector actors,
56. **Endorse** the joint declaration between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission on hydrography in the Arctic, which encourages the governments of the Arctic States to improve bathymetric and hydrographic surveying, collection of data and charting in the Arctic region,
57. **Note with appreciation** the third Arctic Science Ministerial meeting, held in Tokyo, in May 2021 and **note** the *Joint Statement of Ministers* adopted on that occasion,
58. **Congratulate** the University of the Arctic (UArctic) on their 20th Anniversary this year, **recognize** the valuable contribution to knowledge and science on Arctic affairs by the UArctic, a network of universities, colleges, and research institutes within the region and beyond, **note** the role of the Arctic Council in establishing the UArctic in 2001, and **welcome** the organizational strengthening of the UArctic by its formal registration in Finland in 2020,
59. **Recognize** the important role that Observers play in the work of the Arctic Council, **note** the continuous efforts by the Senior Arctic Officials and the subsidiary bodies to enhance their meaningful engagement, **instruct** the Senior Arctic Officials to review the role of Observers as well as modalities of their continued engagement in the Council and **call upon** Observers to increase their concrete engagement in Arctic Council projects and objectives,
60. **Note** the second review of the *Fairbanks group* of Observers accredited during the years 1998-2000 and 2017, **reaffirm** the Observer status of those reviewed, and **instruct** the Senior Arctic Officials to conduct the second review of the *Rovaniemi group* of Observers and report the outcome to Ministers in 2023,
61. **Adopt** the *Senior Arctic Officials' Report to Ministers*, including its Working Group work plans and deliverables, **approve** the Arctic Council Secretariat budget for 2022-2023, and **instruct** Senior Arctic Officials to review the roles and adjust the mandates of the Arctic Council Working Groups and other subsidiary bodies as necessary, and
62. **Acknowledge with appreciation** Iceland's role in chairing the Arctic Council during the period 2019-2021 and **accept with appreciation** the Russian Federation's offer to chair the Council for the period 2021-2023 and to host the thirteenth Ministerial meeting in 2023.



ARCTIC COUNCIL

Signed by the representatives of the Arctic Council
20th day of May 2021
Reykjavík, Iceland

For the Government of
Canada
Marc Garneau
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Government of
Norway
Ine Eriksen Søreide
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Government of
the Kingdom of Denmark
Jeppe Kofod
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For the Government of
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Sergey Lavrov
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