

The Arctic Council: A Forum for Peace and Cooperation

On September 19, 1996 in Ottawa, the Arctic Council was established as a high level intergovernmental forum to enhance cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States with the active involvement of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues. Today, we celebrate twenty years of Arctic cooperation and look forward to a long term future of peace and stability in the region.

Over the past twenty years Arctic cooperation has come a long way, from ground-breaking studies and reports to the realization of programs and projects with important concrete outcomes. Continuing our long term efforts to address climate change impacts in the Arctic, we recognize the need for urgent global action based on the 2015 Paris Agreement. Our work aims to improve the well-being of Arctic residents, protect the Arctic environment, and promote sustainable development throughout the region including maintaining the cultural heritage and livelihoods of Arctic indigenous peoples.

Arctic cooperation encompasses all aspects of life and activity in the region. The Arctic Council is at the forefront of this cooperation and has become the most important body for promoting a positive agenda and coordinating joint action on all vital issues in the region. The success of the Arctic Council can also be attributed to the active participation of the indigenous Permanent Participants.

The Arctic Council has played a leading role in delivering world-class scientific assessments, addressing the impacts of globalization and climate change, and facilitating cooperative responses to these challenges. The Council's work has contributed to the conclusion of the International Maritime Organization's "Polar Code", the "Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants," the "Minamata Convention on Mercury" and others.

The Arctic Council has engaged in many important joint actions such as the "Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic," the "Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of Marine Protected Areas," the "Framework for Action on Black Carbon and Methane," and the "Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program," and is promoting mental wellness across the Arctic. The launch of the Project Support Instrument in July 2014 is further facilitating protection of the Arctic environment by providing financial support to pollution mitigation projects.

Two legally binding pan-Arctic agreements concluded under the auspices of the Arctic Council, the "Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic" and the "Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic," are important developments and have strengthened Arctic cooperation.



The Arctic Council has facilitated the creation of additional structures for regional cooperation and interaction such as the University of the Arctic, the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks forum, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, the Arctic Economic Council, and the Arctic Offshore Regulators Forum.

Recognizing our special responsibility and leadership role in ensuring environmental protection and sustainable development, we consider cooperation under the auspices of the Arctic Council as an opportunity to encourage constructive input from accredited observers and other interested stakeholders.

On this twentieth anniversary of the Arctic Council, we the Arctic States reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Ottawa Declaration, to work together and with the indigenous Permanent Participants, and to promote prosperity, development, and environmental sustainability for the benefit of generations to come.

For Canada, Stéphane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Kingdom of Denmark, Kristian Jensen, Minister for Foreign Affairs

For Finland, Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs

For Iceland, Lilja Alfreðsdóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs

For Norway, Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Sweden, Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs

For the United States of America, John F. Kerry, Secretary of State