

# 1996 DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

*Adopted in Ottawa, Canada on 19 September 1996*

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 special 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 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 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\*, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.

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\* The Arctic Council should not deal with matters related to military security

- 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 Preparedness and Response (EPPR).
  - 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 in the North, Siberia, the Far East of the Russian Federation are Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. Permanent participation is equally open to other Arctic organizations of indigenous peoples\* 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 coordination. 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.

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\*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.

7. Decisions of the Arctic Council are to be by consensus of the Members
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 on this 19<sup>th</sup> day of September 1996.

[Signed]  
For the Government of Canada

[Signed]  
For the Government of Denmark

[Signed]  
For the Government of Finland

[Signed]  
For the Government of Iceland

[Signed]  
For the Government of Norway

[Signed]  
For the Government of the Russian  
Federation

[Signed]  
For the Government of Sweden

[Signed]  
For the Government of the United  
States of America