



WWF

MAGAZINE

No. 2

2011

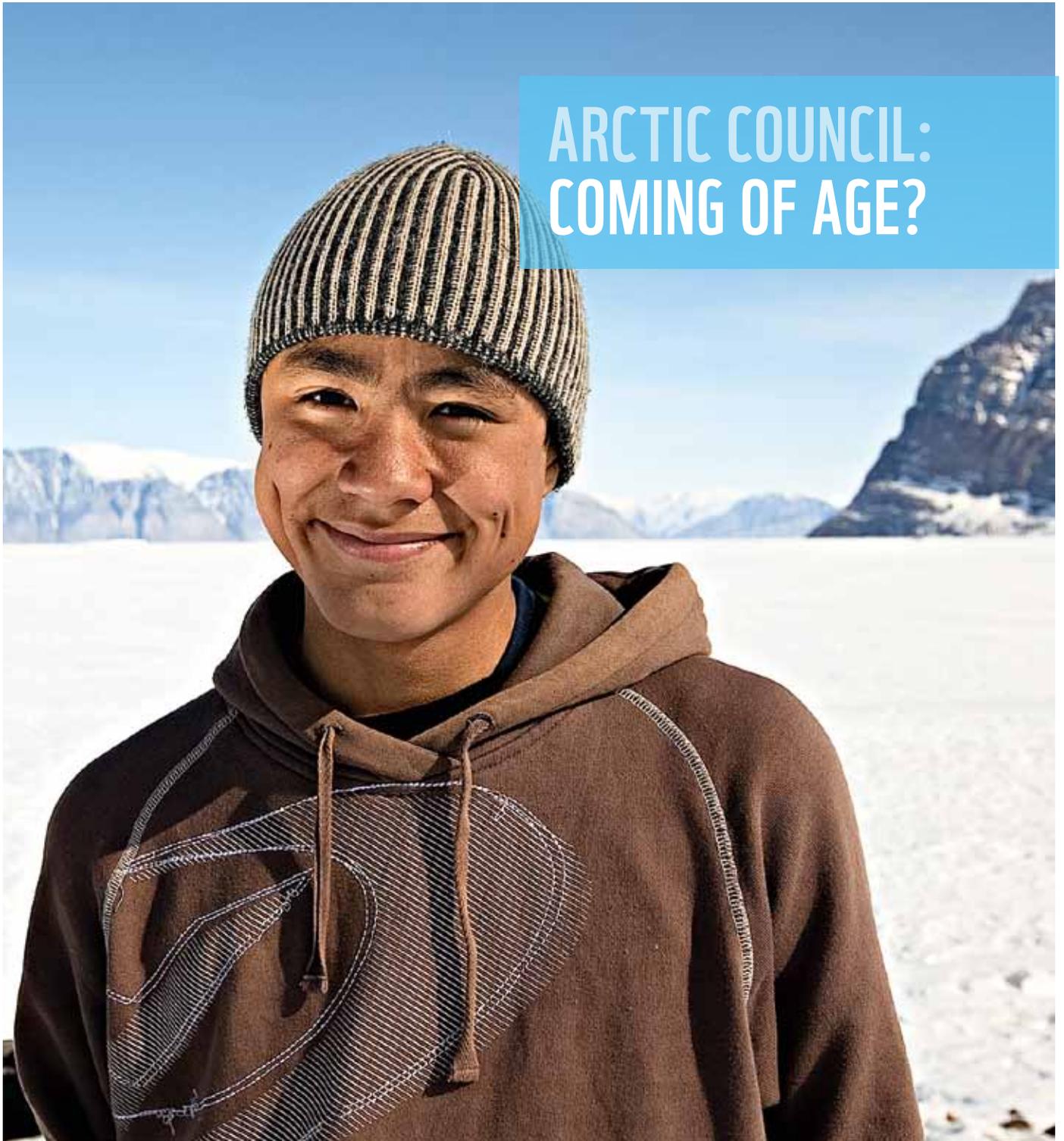
# THE CIRCLE



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## ARCTIC COUNCIL: COMING OF AGE?



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Svolveær, Norway. Arctic Council SAO meeting place. April 2008.

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Film & Form/Ketill Berger,  
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Printed at Merkur-Trykk AS

Date of publication: November, 2011.  
ISSN 2073-980X = The Circle (Oslo)

**COVER:**  
Youngster on sea ice, Uummannaq, Greenland

Photo: Lawrence Hislop, [http://www.grida.no/photo/lib/detail/youngster-on-sea-ice-uummannaq-greenland\\_7b1d.aspx](http://www.grida.no/photo/lib/detail/youngster-on-sea-ice-uummannaq-greenland_7b1d.aspx)

# Urgency and opportunity

**THERE IS HOPE** for the Arctic. In Nuuk, Greenland this past May, the Foreign Ministers of eight Arctic countries agreed on measures to strengthen the organizational structure of the Arctic Council and its role in responding to rapidly changing Arctic conditions and set out future policy for the Arctic Council. The leaders who met signed the first legally binding agreement under the Arctic Council which paves the way for further actions to effectively manage one of Earth's last pristine areas. The meeting was "an unprecedented success", according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in an interview with the media. He also called it one of the most successful meetings of the Arctic Council ever.

The Nuuk Declaration, which sets out the direction for the Arctic Council's work for the next two years, contains a number of breakthrough decisions. One is to develop an international instrument on Arctic marine oil pollution preparedness and response, and recommendations and best practices to prevent marine oil pollution. Indeed, the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, has shown that safety of oil and gas development is of paramount importance.

Another important decision is to assess change and resilience in the Arctic, and recommend further activities in the field of ecosystem-based management.

As US Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar pointed out: "[i]ndividual Arctic nations as well as Arctic Council working groups have undertaken a number of activities that address ecosystem-based management for the Arctic environment but there has not been a shared set of principles that guide these efforts. Given the challenges facing the Arctic, it is essential to manage the region's natural resources in an integrated manner to avoid conflicts and provide for greater environmental protection while still operating commercial activities."

A common set of ecosystem-based management principles and best practices would lay a strong basis for sustainability, holistic management and ecosystem resilience in the Arctic. Ecosystem-based management would require effective international cooperation, consideration of multiple scales, a long-term perspective, including humans as an integral part of ecosystems, an adaptive management perspective and attention to multiple stakeholders.

## THE REINVIGORATED ARCTIC COUNCIL HAS STARTED TO ACT IN ITS NEW CAPACITY AS A NEGOTIATING PLATFORM FOR LEGALLY BINDING AGREEMENTS

It is evident from the Nuuk Declaration that the Arctic states chose priorities for Arctic cooperation wisely. Enhanced cooperation is needed on many existing and future challenges. The Arctic Council must continue tackling the most acute Arctic issues and further develop comprehensive legally-binding instruments for effective cooperation in sustainable development and protection of the Arctic environment. The search and rescue agreement adopted in Nuuk is a good start.

Priority should be also given to making

ecosystem-based management a reality. One way to do this is through marine spatial planning. Norway already has an integrated management plan for the Barents Sea and the Lofoten area. Other Arctic

states should follow this lead.

In addition, the Arctic states need to establish a network of marine protected areas and use environmental impact assessment as a planning tool. A mandatory Polar Code for ships operating in polar waters is urgently needed. Overall, Council members need to commit to transparency and accountability in planning, implementation and management of the Arctic.

Indeed, there is urgency and also a unique opportunity to fix major Arctic problems promptly as Arctic states showed significant will and, more importantly, capability to act efficiently in resolving the region's challenges and problems. The reinvigorated Arctic Council has started to act in its new capacity as a negotiating platform for legally binding agreements.

As true stewards, Arctic states and the Arctic Council need to build on the Nuuk Declaration, to ensure a sustainable future for this unique and beautiful region, its people and ecosystems. ○



**TATIANA SAKSINA** is the Arctic Governance Officer for the Global Arctic Programme, and is based in Gland, Switzerland. Previously she worked as a Senior Legal Adviser for the Council for the Study of Productive Resources of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Tatiana holds a PhD degree in International Law from Moscow State Institute of International Relations and an LLM degree in International Maritime Law from the International Maritime Law Institute. She also held an internship at the International Maritime Organisation. Tatiana has produced several publications on law of the sea issues.



Photo: Paul Nicklen/National Geographic/Stock/WWF-Canada

Two narwhals surfacing to breathe in Admiralty Inlet, Lancaster Sound, Nunavut, Canada.

## Tracking unicorns

**NARWHAL** tusks were once passed off in Europe as the “horns of unicorns”. Since then, scientific research has found out a lot more about narwhals, but much is still unknown about these Arctic whales. Now WWF is supporting a project that includes the local Inuit community of Pond Inlet, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Canadian Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Narwhal Tusk Research project centred at Harvard University, the Vancouver Aquarium and the Calgary Zoo, to track narwhals with satellite

tracking devices. The devices allow researchers to follow the path of the whales as they move around Baffin Bay in Canada’s Nunavut territory.

Pete Ewins, Arctic species specialist for WWF-Canada, said that it is expected the project will contribute fascinating information about the habits of narwhals.

“We’re supporting this project because it is a chance to better understand these animals while their world changes around them. We know Narwhals are often associated with sea ice, and we know the

sea ice is shrinking. WWF is trying to understand how narwhals, as well as all other ice-associated animals in the arctic can adapt to a changing environment. We can put this knowledge together with existing Inuit knowledge, and we can work with Inuit and other stakeholders to help the animals survive the coming changes.”

WWF has developed a tracker to allow people around the world to watch the progress of the whales online. The narwhal tracker can be viewed at: <http://www.panda.org/arctic/narwhaltracker>.

## Netherlands crown prince hosted by WWF in Greenland

**THE CROWN PRINCE** of The Netherlands visited Greenland earlier this year, hosted by WWF. Prince Willem-Alexander joined WWF Netherlands CEO Johan van de Gronden, and WWF Global Arctic Programme director Alexander Shestakov and business, industry and science communities active in the Arctic. The group met with the European Space Agency for a demonstration of research on Greenland’s ice cap. Other presentations included glaciology, paleoecology and international governance focusing on the rapid changes in the Arctic. The Netherlands later hosted a return visit by Greenlandic Premier Kuupik Kleist.

## British government urged to adopt Arctic principles

**WWF IS** one of a group of non-governmental organizations urging the British government to adopt a set of principles that would govern its conduct, and the conduct of British companies in the Arctic. A Conference, “On Thin Ice – Principles for the UK in a

Changing Arctic” was held in London to launch the initiative. Principles being promoted by the group include the control of shipping activities, the promotion of sustainable fisheries, respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples, and holding off on new oil drilling in the offshore Arctic.

## Mapping Russian Arctic biodiversity

WWF RUSSIA has published an *Atlas of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity of the Russian Arctic*. The Atlas, with contributions from experts from the Russian Academy of Science institutes, Moscow University, the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute (AARI) and the Federal Agency of Fishery, was published in both English and Russian earlier this year.

The aim of the atlas is to

### Planning for a future for caribou and reindeer

WWF REPRESENTATIVE Monte Hummel participated in the International Arctic Ungulate Conference in Yellowknife, NWT, Canada in August. Attended by over 200 scientists, government officials and indigenous representatives from circumpolar countries, “there was a good balance between both scientific and traditional perspectives,” Hummel says. “While ungulates refers to all hoofed



Photo: naturepi.com/Bryan and Cherry Alexander/WWF

Nenets reindeer / Caribou herder's wife frosted up after a cold day of travelling. Yamal, Siberia, Russia.

animals, most of the talk was about caribou.” Hummel’s presentation invited input and comment on WWF’s draft Circumarctic Conservation Strategy for Migratory Tundra Caribou and Wild Reindeer.” It

proposes five action steps over the next 10-15 years to help maintain resilient landscapes so that caribou can fluctuate under natural conditions without being lost to the people who depend on them.

facilitate better planning in the Russian Arctic as developers rush to the region. The Atlas includes maps demonstrating the schemes of geographical regionalization,

species diversity in particular taxonomic groups of the Arctic biota, and distribution of existing federal and regional specially protected natural areas. Particular attention is paid to the systems of boundary biotopes at interfaces of different environments: sea/sea ice, sea/river discharge, and sea/land and their associated biological diversity. In the concluding part of the present work recommendations are made to marine environment protection, marine biodiversity conservation and organization of marine resources use (on the basis of the adopted scheme of geographical regionalization). These recommendations may serve as a basis for the devel-

opment of an integral system of marine spatial planning for the Arctic waters under Russian jurisdiction. Igor Chestin, Director of WWF Russia says, “It is important to intelligently locate industrial facilities and economic activity (e.g. shipping) on the shelf and in the coastal zone of the Arctic seas. Otherwise, all intentions to exploit the natural resources of the Arctic would bear unacceptable risks not only to countries and corporations implementing the projects, but also to their neighbors in the Arctic realm, and in some cases far beyond.” The Atlas can be found online at [http://www.wwf.ru/data/publ/arctic/atlas\\_biол\\_ros\\_arkt-engl.pdf](http://www.wwf.ru/data/publ/arctic/atlas_biол_ros_arkt-engl.pdf)



Plant communities of maritime marshes and breeding grounds of rare coastal bird species in Chukotka. From *Atlas of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity of the Russian Arctic*.

# A Resilient Future

**In 2011, Sweden took over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council and presented its first strategy for the Arctic region. For the coming two years Sweden will lead the eight Arctic countries in the Council's efforts to address international environmental and sustainability challenges in the far north. GUSTAF LIND is chair of the Senior Arctic Officials.**

**AT THE MINISTERIAL MEETING** in Nuuk in May, 2011, the Arctic states successfully signed a Search and Rescue Agreement aimed at strengthening coordination in the event of maritime accidents. The signing of the agreement is a crucial

step towards safer shipping activities in the Arctic while demonstrating the capability of the Arctic Council to move from words to action. Furthermore, the ministers decided to establish a standing Arctic Council secretariat in Tromsø. The secretariat will further consolidate the Arctic Council as the international forum for Arctic issues.

The research conducted under the auspices of the Arctic Council indicates that within 30 – 40 years the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free during summertime. This research also points out that the glaciers in Greenland are melting at an accelerating rate. The melting of the ice has meant that increased attention is being paid to the Arctic region – not only with the aim of protecting the environment, but also with a focus on developing the resources of the Arctic.

Sometimes change occurs gradually and things move forward in predictable ways. At other times, change is sudden

and turbulent and leads to entirely new circumstances. These kinds of 'regime shifts' or 'tipping points' pose a new type of challenge for societies as well as for the environment. The inability to adapt to these changes can cause loss of valuable ecosystem services, affect people's livelihoods and affect the economic, political and cultural development of the region as a whole. The rapid climate change that is now being observed in the circumpolar north increases the risk of these abrupt changes and regime shifts in the Arctic.

The Arctic Council is in a unique position to take the leading role in supporting the integration of different knowledge traditions in a way that can result in relevant policy recommendations. An integrated view will be needed both in relation to sub-regional efforts towards integrated ecosystem management and to decisions that address the Arctic region as a whole. It is also becoming increasingly important to provide a coherent knowledge base on the Arctic in dialogue with actors outside the region, whose future decisions may have

a major impact on the Arctic.

In order to strengthen the capacity for adaptation and resilience, networks of protected areas for flora and fauna should be created in the Barents region and elsewhere. The Indigenous peoples and their opportunities to pursue traditional industries play a key role in these contexts. Political cooperation within the Arctic Council has played a major role in enhancing the knowledge of the region by supporting scientific assessments with a clear link to policy development. While there is research on different aspects of environmental impacts in the Arctic, the scope of assessments of the implications from social and ecological factors remain limited.

Sweden is therefore – as a part of the chairmanship of the Arctic Council – initiating an assessment of resilience in the Arctic which will provide a novel approach to understanding the rapid changes that are currently occurring. It will also provide important input for management within national borders, between sectors, for the entire Arctic and for the Arctic in a more global context.

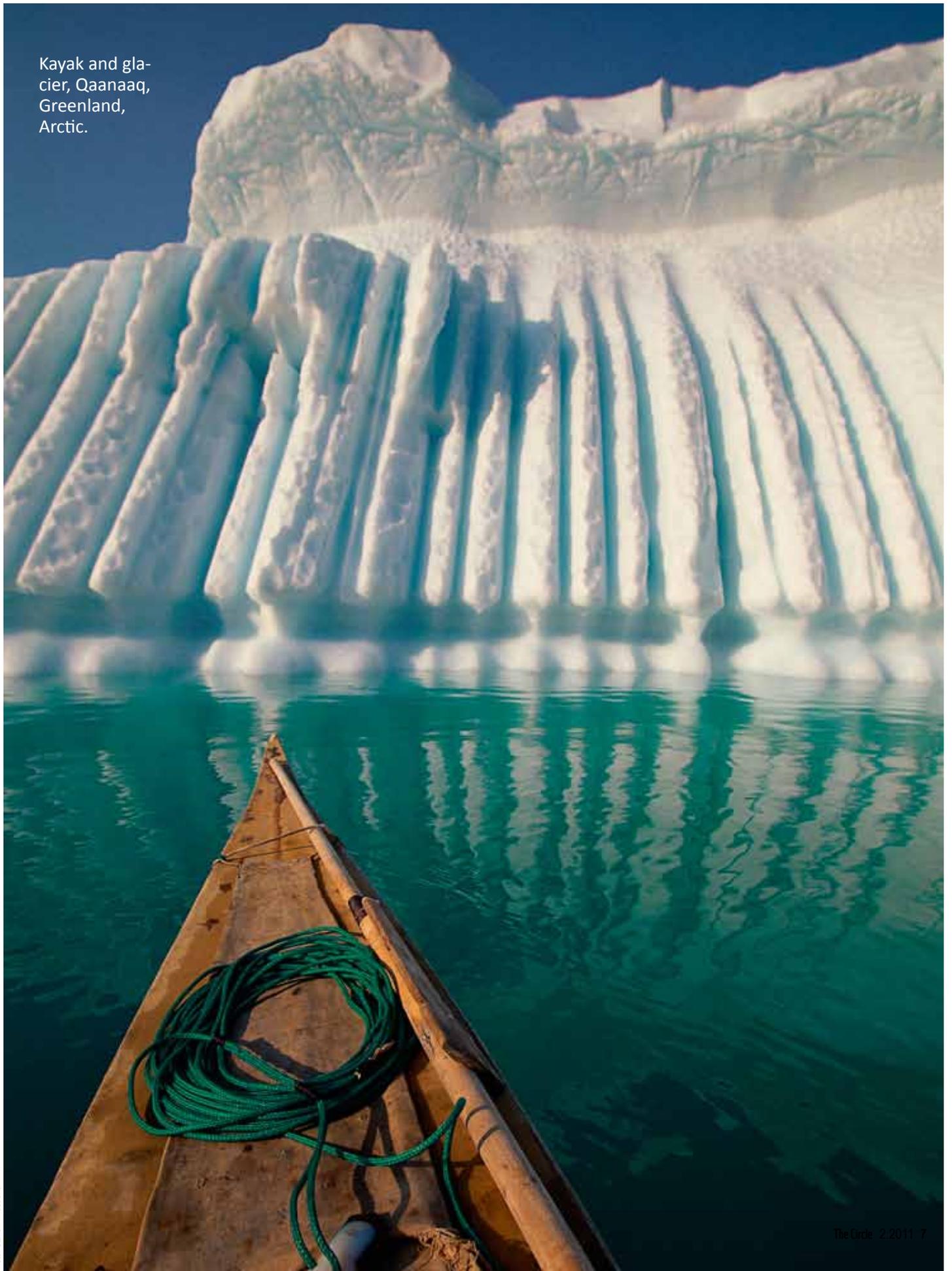
A changed climate requires more political cooperation across territorial borders for developing methods for managing species affected by increased hunting and fishing. Ecosystem-based management of marine resources based on the principle of conservation and sustainable use, and with special protection for threatened areas, species and stocks, will be a necessity in the future. ○

**THE MELTING OF THE ICE HAS MEANT THAT INCREASED ATTENTION IS BEING PAID TO THE ARCTIC REGION**



**GUSTAF LIND** is Sweden's ambassador for the Arctic, and has worked for the Swedish government since 2002. He has a doctoral degree in international law and is a board member of the Swedish section of the International Law Association

Kayak and glacier, Qaanaaq, Greenland, Arctic.



# Is Europe in the Arctic?

**The European Union has been pushing for recognition of a European role in the Arctic for several years. However, the EU has twice been turned down in its bid to be recognized as a permanent observer at Arctic Council meetings. As Member of the European Parliament [DIANA WALLIS](#) writes, keeping powerful interests out of the council may end in weakening the institution.**

**THERE IS RECOGNITION** that the European Union is inextricably linked to the Arctic. Aside from having three Arctic

nations (Finland, Denmark and Sweden) amongst its members, EU policies in areas such as environment, climate change, energy, research transport and fisheries have a direct bearing on the Arctic.

This recognition of the EU's Arctic link was causal in the motion debated by the European Parliament in October 2008 on Arctic Governance which was designed to give direction in turn to the European Commission's Communication on the Arctic a month later.

This Communication is considered to be the EU's strategy in the Arctic recog-

nising the linkage to the region and proposing a number of key initiatives. The primary initiative, partly because of the imminence of the meeting of the Arctic Council was an application by the EU as permanent observers of the Council.

The EU was rebuffed in that application and then again in 2011. That a significant objective of the Commission's Communication on the Arctic has not come into bearing has drawn criticism that the EU's case has not been made in the Arctic. Others argue that whether or not the Permanent Observer status comes about, the EU will always have an active role in the region through a number of key policy areas and through the commitment to supporting research there. It is important to reiterate that the EU's Arctic policy does not rest or fail on this observer status.

It has been suggested that the rejection of the EU's application for Permanent Observer status stems from the unhappiness of some Arctic states over the EU's ban on trade in seal products. Whether this is true or not it did highlight in a point made forcefully by Greenlandic Prime Minister Kuupik Kleist that the seal trade decision should

not indicate a decline in relations between the EU and the Arctic nations, rather it suggested each side needs to understand the other better.

One of the further proposals of the Commission's Communication on the Arctic was to set up an EU Arctic Information Centre. The European Parliament was quite clear in a debate earlier in the year that it supported the bid by the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi Finland to host this. Nevertheless a final decision on the Centre's location appears a long way off.

One of the other concerns of the European Parliament is drilling in the Arctic. This is response to the devastating environmental impact of the Deepwater Horizon disaster of just over a year ago and reflects increasing public concern about a similar incident in the fragile Arctic region where the effects could, of course, be even more devastating. This concern is reflected in responses to

**THE PRESSURE FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, NOT LEAST CHINA, IN HAVING A ROLE IN THE ARCTIC WILL ONLY INCREASE AND THE ARCTIC STATES MUST LOOK AT WAYS OF ACCOMMODATING NOT ONLY INTERESTED NATION STATES FROM THE FAR EAST BUT ALSO NGOs AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.**



**DIANA WALLIS** is a Vice President of the European Parliament with responsibility for Arctic and High North issues. She was President of the EP delegation to Iceland, Norway & Switzerland and the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee for four years. Diana is one of the authors of the book *Forgotten Enlargement: Future EU Relations with Iceland, Switzerland and Norway*. In 2010 she hosted the 9th Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians in the European Parliament in Brussels.

## Defining the Arctic

Commissioner Oettinger report entitled: *Facing the challenge of the safety of offshore oil and gas activities.*

There are some in the Parliament who seek a moratorium on any offshore hydrocarbon exploration and extraction operations in the Arctic. I have some sympathy to this view, but my own amendment to both the Legal affairs and Industry Committees urges the Commission to work with partners and neighbours to achieve a special regime for any operations in the Arctic having careful regard as to the sustainability and necessity of offshore activities in such a vulnerable and unique environment. As ever with the political nature of the European Parliament, a compromise will be found as the report will go to a final vote in the European Parliament in September.

I think the issue of oil drilling is an important one from an EU perspective in how the Arctic matters. Firstly, of course, in many cases it is EU-based companies who are carrying out the drilling, either exploratory or real, in the Arctic and secondly it opens the lid a little on the issue of governance in the Arctic.

It is no secret that for a long time I have advocated a more robust legal regime in the Arctic along the lines of a treaty or charter. This was done partly to raise the debate (we know the Arctic is not the Antarctic) but I can see clearly there is no appetite for this from within the five littoral Arctic states. However, the pressure from the rest of the world, not least China, in having a role in the Arctic will only increase and the Arctic States must look at ways of accommodating not only interested nation states from the Far East but also NGOs and indigenous peoples. So the debate will not go away. Of course, it can continue to circulate around changes or reforms to the Arctic Council, but not indefinitely. Keeping the doors closed cannot be a long-term answer. Indeed it is more likely to initiate a search for more meaningful and inclusive international structures. ○



Where is the Arctic? It depends on who is speaking. This map shows some of the alternative definitions in use. If you ask a geographer, you will likely be told that the Arctic is the area north of the Arctic Circle, an area where in the summer, the mid-night sun can be seen, and in winter, the sun disappears. The 10 degrees Celsius July isotherm is the area where the average summer temperature does not exceed 10 degrees Celsius, and is close to the border of the Arctic tundra, which is arguably another way of defining the Arctic. Even the Arctic Council finds it hard to come up with a single definition. Different Council working groups have their own definitions. On the map you can see the definitions of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group and the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme Working Group (AMAP). WWF's work "in the Arctic" is close to the area described by the Arctic Council working groups, but also includes the Kamchatka peninsula.

# A Unique Forum of International Cooperation

The Arctic Council is run along lines not found anywhere else in international affairs. As **LUCA MONTANI** writes, its uniqueness is largely a result of the place it accords to the Indigenous peoples of the region.

**THE ARCTIC COUNCIL** is a recent international organisation – more precisely, a “high level forum”, as expressed by the first article of its founding document, the 1996 Ottawa Declaration on the

Establishment of the Arctic Council. Its influence on the Arctic is growing slowly, but significantly.

As the Ottawa Declaration sets forth, the Arctic Council is a tool to promote “cooperation, coordination and interaction among Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabit-

ants on common Arctic issues. This competence does not include military security, but rather focuses on sustainable development and environmental protection. Furthermore, the Arctic Council oversees and coordinates the programs undertaken by the former Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, a multilateral, non-binding agreement among Arctic states; adopts terms of reference for and oversees and coordinates a sustainable development

program and disseminates information, encourages education and promotes interest in Arctic-related issues.

Members of the council are the so-called Arctic States – stakeholders in terms of *Arctic* lands – which are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. The Ottawa Declaration also dictates that Observers (both non-Arctic States, inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations and NGOs) and Ad-hoc Observers can take part in the periodical meetings held by the Arctic Council.

A fundamental aspect of the Arctic Council institutional design is that it enables Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPOs) to participate in its meetings, thus allowing a full consultation with them in all the aspects that might affect their lives.

This peculiar design is what makes the Arctic Council a unique international forum of cooperation. The participation of the Permanent Participants (alias the IPOs) substantially differentiates the Council from other interstate cooperative organs. Some authors have argued that excluding indigenous peoples from the Arctic Council would have rendered the structure of the Council “obsolete before it even begins” (McIver, 1997). Still, such an inclusive decision was not something to be taken for granted at the time of the Council’s inception.



**LUCA MONTANI** is currently completing an MSc in International Public Policy at University College London. A relentless traveller, he has always been fascinated by the Arctic, and hopes to experience it first hand in the near future.



Photo: naturepl.com/Bryan and Cherry Alexander/WWF

On the one hand, allowing Arctic Indigenous Peoples to participate in the works on an equal footing with Arctic States certainly enables the Arctic

**THANKS TO THIS PARTICULAR INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES TO FURTHER THEIR INTERESTS AND AGENDAS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**



Inuk man from Igloolik sitting inside an igloo. Nunavut, Canada.

Council to represent the region with great legitimacy. On the other hand, though, even if final decisions are made by Arctic States only, a full consultation of the Permanent Participants must be guaranteed. This element is very “close to a de facto power of veto (granted to Indigenous Peoples) should they all reject a particular proposal” (Koi-vurova and Heinämäki, 2005). Thanks to this particular institutional design, Indigenous Peoples have excellent opportunities to further their interests and agendas at the international level, during these high-level governmental meetings. From a rationalist/realist perspective, this specific feature is not an optimal one for States, as it hinders the adoption of decisions which are favourable for Arctic States and – one

could say – reduces their sovereignty. In short, the very peculiar aspect of the Arctic Council is that States’ interests in the region need to be conjugated with those of Indigenous Peoples.

There are several reasons which can be taken into consideration in an attempt to justify this design. Arctic Indigenous Peoples have legitimate interests – and proper rights – to participate in the region’s management and governance. First and foremost, and from a practical point of view, they need to be considered in the decision-making process because most of the outcomes of the Arctic Council (if not all of them) are likely to affect the livelihood of these populations.

Participation is not only an issue of representation, it is also a cultural

matter. Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge of their environment, their in-depth understanding of the complexities of the Arctic ecosystem, their perception of the environment and their relationships with it need to be incorporated when taking decisions concerning the Arctic region. Even if dismissed by some authors as unscientific and unsystematic (Widdowson and Howard, 2008), this *traditional indigenous knowledge* is crucial and extremely useful to the different activities and programmes developed by the Arctic Council.

Finally, the inclusion of Arctic Indigenous Peoples in the Council represents a successful – certainly perfectible – attempt to incorporate the Principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (non-legally binding, still endorsed by most of the Countries) in the Arctic governance. The Declaration, in fact, requires the participation of Indigenous Peoples in national and international decision-making in matters which would affect their rights.

As previously stated, the Arctic Council’s influence on the international scenario is rapidly growing. Proof of this is the adoption, on 12 May 2011, of the “first legally binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council” (Nuuk Declaration). It is probably reasonable to think that Arctic States decided to adopt a legally binding document mainly because of the highly-technical nature of the topics covered in it (the agreement refers to cooperation in aeronautical and maritime search and rescue in the Arctic). Adopting a legally binding agreement in the areas of sustainable development or environmental protection (main competences of the Council), for instance, might have probably been more difficult, due to the different (and often diverging) national interests of Arctic States. Nonetheless, this aspect can be greeted with some enthusiasm, as it suggests that the desirable strengthening of the Arctic Council – including the role of Indigenous Peoples as Permanent Participants – can be gradually achieved. ○

The indigenous peoples perspective:

# A place for deciding the future

**The Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council occupy a unique position in international affairs. This is the only international forum in which Indigenous peoples have a place to sit with representatives of states to debate issues of interest. This gives them a major stake in the evolution of the Council. Should it become more of a law-making body for the region? Should it be more inclusive of interests from outside the region? ►►**

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Local Inuit residents of the small Uummannaq island on the West coast of Greenland fish from the sea ice, or travel over it in order to reach fertile hunting grounds. More than 80% of the country is covered by an ice cap that is on average about 1.5 kilometres deep..



ARCTIC ATHABASKAN COUNCIL (AAC):

# A Perspective on the Nuuk Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council



By **CINDY DICKSON**  
Executive Director

**BY CONCLUDING** that climate change would “open” the circumpolar world to increased development of oil, gas and minerals, the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment was hugely important to the future agenda of the Arctic Council and to international co-operation generally in the circumpolar world. Many non-Arctic states and non-governmental organizations looked north, perhaps for the first time, and some applied to become observers to the council. At the same time some academics from Europe and North America, wrote that the council is weak because it is a “forum” rather than an “institution”, and that nothing it does is legally-binding. This may be true, but the May 2011 meeting of ministers showed that the council is increasingly important in helping us find ways and means to navigate an uncertain future.

The council can “encourage” its member countries to put in place projects, programmes and policies that will help Athabaskan peoples adapt to unavoidable change. It can sponsor negotiation of agreements between its members that can be legally-binding, and it can promote Arctic considerations and perspectives in global decision-making in the United Nations and other global processes. Actually, the council is now doing all three. It was in this context that

Michael Stickman of Nulato Alaska, International Chair of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, spoke to ministers at the May 2011 meeting in Nuuk, Greenland. Here is a condensed version of what he said:

“The Arctic Council is doing really good work but not many people know about it. We believe the chair of the Senior Arctic Officials and, when needed, the Chair of the Council, should be mandated to speak to international bodies about Arctic perspectives on global issues. The 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants is the only global agreement that singles out the Arctic, and that’s because of the scientific work of the council, and the advocacy of the Permanent Participants. This is what we can achieve when we work together. In 2003 and again in 2008 the Governing Council of UNEP adopted Arctic resolutions. Let’s mandate our Chair to respond through a full report and presentation at the next meeting of UNEP’s Governing Council. AAC will help, if you want us to.

Last year, the American academic Lawrence C. Smith wrote that that the “world is

**WE CAN SET IN MOTION  
NOW A PROCESS THAT  
WILL RESULT IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION LEGACY OF WHICH WE  
CAN ALL BE PROUD**

moving to the Arctic’ as a result of climate change, population growth, and globalization. He thinks it is too late to prevent “dangerous” climate change. Well ministers, you have an opportunity to prove him wrong.

The Arctic Council Task Force on Short-Lived Climate Forcers concludes that sustained reduction of black carbon emissions would slow climate change in the Arctic. The task force is to report to you again in two years. Let’s amend the Nuuk Declaration and direct the task force to develop a regional instrument to reduce emissions of black carbon. This would strengthen the political ability of all Arctic states to promote a black carbon protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

Potential oil pollution through a blow out or major tanker accident in the Arctic marine environment is hugely important. The Arctic Council must do everything in its power, and be seen to do everything in its power, to prevent such a thing happening. The Nuuk Declaration establishes a task force to develop, and I’m quoting: “an international instrument on Arctic marine oil pollution preparedness and response”. This commitment is important, but the declaration is missing a crucial word: “prevention”. I appeal to you to add this one word, and send a political message to the world, including observers here today, that Arctic states are absolutely committed to prevent oil pollution in the Arctic marine environment. Committing to clean-up oil spills after they happen is insufficient.

Developing this international instrument may take some years. Many of us may not be in office when it is completed. But don’t let that stop us. We can set in motion now a process that will result in an environmental protection legacy of which we can all be proud.”

AAC’s intervention was well received at the ministerial meeting. The agenda of the council continues to expand as is clear from the political declaration signed by ministers and the report they received and approved from Senior Arctic Officials. We have to take advantage of what the council is doing and that, finances permitting, is the intention of AAC. ○

# Excerpt from statement at Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council



By VICTORIA GOFMAN

**THIS IS MY FIFTH** Arctic Council Ministerial meeting and it is absolutely amazing to witness the evolution of the Arctic Council, as it is becoming the pre-eminent forum for Arctic affairs. This is the result of rapid changes happening in the Arctic and the increased interest to the Arctic expressed by the global community. Just in a few recent years the discussions have moved from viewing the Arctic as “a barometer of environmental change” to “a strategic source of energy resources and a future marine highway”. The Arctic governments are under pressure to develop an efficient management regime for the region. The high level of participation in this meeting is a good indicator that the governments of the Arctic States are serious about this.

As a permanent participant organization, we are part of this process. It is our responsibility to make our best efforts to contribute to this cooperation, because the stakes for the people we represent are very high when decisions are made affecting their homelands...

...While the Aleutians are not in the high Arctic geographically, the region is being affected by many of the same problems...

...Climate change remains a culprit for coastal erosion, shifts of species habitat, and their health. The increased shipping in the Arctic is becoming a reality. Accidents, spread of invasive species, and pollution will likely increase.

The islands are crossed by the Great Circle Route and are already in the midst of heavy shipping traffic and have experienced the damage caused by past shipping accidents. Only in the Alaska side of the Aleut region, there were 22 oil spills related to shipping between 1985 and 2004...

...Mineral resource extraction may be in the future plans for the nearby regions presenting a serious threat to fisheries and increasing the risks of pollution.

These changes can also bring new opportunities to the region. For example, diversification of local economies that are currently based on commercial fisheries and community services could

**THE INCREASED SHIPPING IN THE ARCTIC IS BECOMING A REALITY. ACCIDENTS, SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES, AND POLLUTION WILL LIKELY INCREASE.**

bring more job opportunities and higher standards of living. At the same time, any loss of subsistence harvesting and disengagement from the intimate connection with the environment that sustained the Aleut people for millennia could have a devastating effect on the culture. Understanding these risks and balancing the benefits is the key to making good decisions leading to sustainability of Aleut communities. And this is why we look at the Arctic Council as a key forum for collaboration on these issues.

What can the Arctic Council do to advance these matters?

The Arctic Council’s assessments enhance our understanding of arctic environment and its peoples, though they are often biased towards the risks. We need to have more focus on assessing opportunities. The Arctic Council has been also instrumental in developing tools for decision-making. Despite all these and many other efforts, gaps in our knowledge about the region as a system are as vast as the Arctic itself. We need more research; we need to have better data and, whenever possible, we should be making decisions only when sufficient science is present, not on the available science at the moment.

The Aleut International Association makes its modest contribution in filling the gaps and identifying areas where new knowledge and data are needed through our research activities...

The Bering Sea Sub Network, which is a multi-year research effort, supported by the US National Science Foundation, was developed to gather local observations on selected subsistence marine species and environmental conditions. The results of this research will help better understand what changes are taking place, how they affect communities, what level of adaption communities have and how local knowledge can inform and fill the gaps in our knowledge...

... In the 21st century, the Indigenous peoples in many Arctic states can make many resource management decisions

and also have certain sovereign rights, but ultimately it's the Arctic states that will be enacting national and international policies. These policies should take into consideration Indigenous ways of life and should have provisions for adequate protective measures.

Identifying areas of significance for subsistence and local economies is crucial for preventing possible future conflicts between coastal communities and marine-based industries. One of The Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment Report recommendations to Arctic states is survey of Arctic Indigenous marine use needed to establish up-to-date baseline data for the purpose of assessing possible impacts from Arctic marine operations...

I want to use this opportunity to call on the governments to implement this vital recommendation in cooperation with relevant Indigenous organizations. ○

Arctic Council meetings show participants some of the realities of Arctic life, such as communities only reachable by air or sea.



Photo: Cive Tesar/WWF

GWICH'IN COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL

# Arctic Council – continues to assert its role wisely



By **BRIDGET LAROCQUE**  
Executive Director,  
Gwich'in Council International

**THE ARCTIC COUNCIL** has been called many things in the past – too weak, not inclusive, elite, just to name a few. While the Arctic Council is not a perfect body and could use some tweaking here and there, the most recent Arctic Council foreign ministers' meeting showed that it continues to be the best forum to address Arctic issues collectively. It remains a place where Indigenous leaders and Arctic ministers get things done by sitting at the same table addressing things that matter. These criticisms, for the most part, are misguided.

The Ottawa Declaration of 1996 formally established the Arctic Council as a high level intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities on common Arctic issues, in particular those of sustainable development and environmental protection.

Now in its 15th year, the Arctic Council continues to assert its role successfully.

Through numerous research initiatives, scientific projects, and interdisciplinary programs, Arctic issues inside the Council receive the policy attention that is needed to find appropriate solutions and adaptive measures to address the human health disparities, among other things, in the Arctic.

It is incumbent on all representatives of the Arctic Council to affirm the statements in the Ottawa Declaration, subsequent rules of procedure, and other declarations that followed, if the Arctic Council is to be perceived as progres-

**FOR THE ARCTIC TO BE SUSTAINABLE, ADVANCEMENT IS IMPERATIVE AND GLOBAL COOPERATION INEVITABLE. BUT THE RIGHTS OF ITS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAN NEVER BE COMPROMISED.**

sive, passionate and politically committed to its Indigenous peoples and Arctic inhabitants. There is now an initiative inside the Council to look at ways of strengthening the organization; in doing so, Indigenous Peoples are doing their part to make sure this process does not do away with what makes the Arctic Council such a successful organization.

There have been calls from the critics that Southern interests and non-Arctic states should have a greater role in the Arctic Council. While Indigenous Peoples welcome outside ideas, the Indigenous groups who have permanent participant status in the Council legitimately fear that the very foundation that makes the Arctic Council successful could be jeopardized if these external ideas are not integrated in a proper manner.

Critics of the Arctic Council are increasingly being proven wrong. In fact, the Arctic Council has done some very important things because of the way it has been set up, and the way it works.

Case in point, at the Seventh Ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, the Arctic Council addressed human health issues for the well-being and empowerment of its Arctic Indigenous Peoples. Further, the Arctic Council negotiated its first legally binding Agreement on Cooperation in Aeronautical and Marine Search and Rescue. These are just two examples.

Future agreements will continue to strengthen the Arctic Council not only in the circumpolar world but globally, as well.

For the Arctic to be sustainable, advancement is imperative and global cooperation inevitable. But the rights of its indigenous peoples can never be compromised. And this is why the current discussion on how best to strengthen the Arctic Council needs to build on the organization's strengths – the cooperation that exists between its member states and the Arctic's Indigenous Peoples – and not on something unknown just for the sake of appearing to be more inclusive. ○

## INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL

# Excerpt from a statement on Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council



By AQQALUK LYNGE

**SOME SAY** the best indicator of a healthy Arctic can be found by measuring the effects of climate change. Others say the best indicator can be found by measuring the health of Arctic biodiversity. Still others say the best indicator is related to resource and economic development. Inuit believe, however, the key indicator that encompasses these and other measurements of a healthy Arctic environment is the state of well-being of Inuit and other Arctic peoples. Well-being is not limited to physical health; it includes mental health, vibrant cultures, and healthy communities with clean food, air, and water. I hope over the next two years, in all we do, we never forget the well-being of the Arctic peoples. The human dimension is the most important indicator of a healthy Arctic.

Due to the increase of existing and new industrial development in the Arctic, ICC launched an *Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles* .... It outlines our collective concern over the increasing focus on oil and gas, minerals, and other resources found in Inuit Nunaat, our collective homeland. It sets out principles on what our conditions are for working together with those that want to exploit these resources. In-



Photo: Clive Tesar/WWF

Illulissat, Greenland. Icebergs spawned here float far to the south, providing a visible example of the links between north and south.

dustry, Arctic states and others cannot simply sail into the Arctic and take what they want for their benefit. We hope the Arctic Council will consider the views expressed in our Declaration.

We experience that some international organizations have a tendency, when they speak about the Arctic, to forget about the human beings living here. It is a daily struggle for the Indigenous Peoples' Organizations present, to explain our ethical and moral values to those organizations, and it is a daily struggle for us to explain to the surrounding

**INUIT ARE MARITIME PEOPLE, WE ALSO TRAVEL ON THE ICE IN THE WINTER, AND WE DEPEND ON THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE SEA, AND EXPECT THE MOST STRINGENT REGULATIONS TO BE DEVELOPED AND APPLIED**

world, that our lives are closely linked to the nature, and that the health of the environment is the pre-requisite of the health of human beings.

Inuit will continue to closely follow resource development and we believe the Arctic Council will stress the need for applying the highest possible standards, so our unique and extremely fragile ecosystem is protected. We depend on a healthy ecosystem to sustain our culture and well-being. We will continue to follow the progress of the creation of a *Mandatory Polar Code* being crafted by the International Maritime Organization. As you know, Inuit are maritime people, we also travel on the ice in the winter, and we depend on the living resources of the sea, and expect the most stringent regulations to be developed and applied....

We all know the Arctic Council is unique in its structure because it incorporates Arctic Indigenous Peoples in all of its deliberations. In the future we hope the Arctic states and Permanent Participants can become equals in the working and decision-making process and further strengthen the Council.

...We must keep the Arctic safe and healthy, proceed cautiously with development, and never forget, that the Arctic Council can only be as strong as its attention to the human dimension. ○

RAIPON

# The role of the Arctic Council and RAIPON priorities



By **RODION SULYANDZIGA**  
RAIPON First Vice-president

**THE ROLE AND ACTIVITY** of the Arctic Council has been increasing over the last few years. This is the result of two factors: climate change effects in the Arctic and hydrocarbon development plans. These oblige the council to be more pro-active and responsible as both a policy-shaping forum as well as a policy-making body.

This means the Arctic Council, its members and permanent participants have to comply with the spirit of the time and the new requirements, as per the Declaration signed by ministers.

The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) welcomes Swedish chairmanship and the efforts in institutional and political strengthening of the Arctic Council's status, as well as the development of cooperation principles in the Arctic.

Environmental and social security, risk monitoring and management should all become the key conditions of circumpolar region development within the international governance regime in the Arctic and national action plans.

The Arctic is not only the resource pantry, but it is habitat for peoples, cul-

tures, which have managed to develop their own governance system, and set of values which match to the conditions of this severe region.

The role of Indigenous Peoples, their associations and communities in the sustainable development of Arctic and preserving natural and cultural landscapes is ever growing

We strongly support the creation of the working group on Indigenous Peoples Contaminants Action Programme (IPCAP) attached to the ACAP working group, and we appreciate efforts of the Russian Federation in this area announced by Minister Lavrov in his speech.

The Arctic doesn't tolerate time-servers and temporary approaches. Investment in human dimension, human development, education, and healthcare along with economic investments will guarantee long-term innovative sustainable development.

RAIPON welcomes research and project activities of the Arctic Council working groups, but calls to strengthen participation of Indigenous organizations and assure relevant funding of our project and expert activities.

Funding of effective and full-fledged participation of Indigenous organizations (permanent participants) in working and expert groups of the Arctic Council remains a problem.

RAIPON welcomes the establishment of standing Arctic Council secretariat with the headquarters in Tromsø, Nor-

way. However, we support maintenance of the Indigenous Peoples secretariat functions in Copenhagen, Denmark with its possible step-by-step integration into a standing secretariat.

RAIPON advocates expanding the use of Russian language within the Arctic Council work and appeals to the chairing country to assure technical and financial conditions for this.

RAIPON expresses acknowledgment and gratitude to Finland and Norway for their long-term support of RAIPON participation in the Arctic Council. We are grateful to the Government of Denmark and Greenland for fruitful cooperation and their support of RAIPON projects.

RAIPON appeals to organizations and countries – observers, as well as countries applying for observer status to strengthen their cooperation with permanent participants and demonstrate their intentions and commitment to the values of the Arctic and its peoples. However, the question of granting observer status remains acute and debatable within the Arctic Council.

RAIPON appreciates the work of Arctic Council as a unique regional body of partnership and cooperation between the states and Indigenous peoples. ○

## SAAMI COUNCIL

# The Saami perspective



By **GUNN-BRITT RETTER**  
Saami Council

**THE ARCTIC COUNCIL** is an international cooperation among eight Arctic states. It is unique because since its establishment in 1996 it has included Indigenous peoples' organizations as permanent participants to the council. Here Indigenous peoples' leaders sit at the same table as the foreign ministers.

The last ministerial meeting in Nuuk was intense in the sense that great efforts were invested in preparations discussing how the Arctic Council itself shall or should strengthen its position as the vital body of Arctic decision shaping and decision making.

The former Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) and its succes-

sor the Arctic Council were in the 1990s known as open and inclusive bodies. The permanent participant organizations were strong and at least in the Nordic countries funding seemed to be quite accessible. At the political level it was relatively easy to get wording into the declaration. That might have been because the Arctic Council was more toothless and not looked upon as very important among the national states, as these issues were not at the top of their agenda. Over these years, the permanent participant organizations worked hard, were quite well coordinated and in this way strengthened their position in the council and increasingly also got more involved at the working group level. The package solution agreed upon at the last ministerial meeting, to a great extent confirmed the permanent participants' position and role in the Council as it has developed until present. The package solution might be interpreted as a strengthening of the permanent participants' role in the Arctic Council. The position is there, the greatest challenge for the permanent participants is that funding to our steadily increased activities is more or less unchanged.

The Arctic Council has gained ever more awareness over the last decade

The meetings provide an opportunity for cultural activities too - the Arctic Council goes "showbiz" in Salekhard.



Photo: Alona Yelimenko

**THE THEMES OF THE ASSESSMENTS AND PROJECTS HAVE COME TO BE DEFINED WITHIN AREAS FAR OUT IN THE OCEAN AND POLAR ICE, WHERE THERE ARE NO PEOPLE.**

and with the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) in 2005, the Council attracted more attention from the outside world than ever before. The increased focus on climate change globally and increased access to the resources in the high north have kept the interest for the Arctic Council high. At least two things show the stronger position of the Arctic Council: Arctic States have appointed more senior ambassadors to the Senior Arctic Official (SAO) position and increased interest by national states and NGOs to apply for observer status at the Arctic Council.

In the increased focus on the Arctic, the Arctic Council itself sees the need to be more efficient, not only by establishing a secretariat in Tromsø, Norway and developing complex rules about how to deal with the observers, but also through the products by the working groups. While the position of the permanent participants is confirmed on paper, the full and effective participation of permanent participants seems to be hindered for the sake of efficiency. Assessments and reports have to be submitted in a timely manner while the gathered data is still valid or while the question is still relevant. Full inclusion of Indigenous peoples' perspective and traditional knowledge is often left out, due to deadlines. Furthermore, the themes of the assessments and projects have come to be defined within areas far out in the ocean and polar ice, where there are no people.

Rarely have the eight member states been more unified in their objectives for the future of the Arctic. In this regard, there are great expectations for the Swedish chairmanship to place more focus on human perspectives.

The role of Arctic Council has been strengthened and it seems the politicians are paying more attention to what we as permanent participants are saying. How the Arctic Council succeeds in the future depends on how it manages to involve the various stakeholders in its work and how it addresses the challenges facing the people living in the Arctic. ○

Non-arctic nations:

# Arctic cooperation must become more inclusive

**July 2011 saw the lowest extent of Arctic sea ice for that month since satellite measurements began in 1979. An increasingly accessible Arctic, and the economic and other potential benefits it offers, has sparked new interest in the region, not only among those states with territory in the Arctic but also among a range of non-Arctic states and organizations. To date, the Arctic states have sought to deal with Arctic matters among themselves, while keeping non-Arctic countries and organizations at arm's length.**

**KRISTOFER BERGH** writes that such an approach risks raising tensions over the Arctic and could prove strategically and economically counterproductive.

## LEGITIMATE INTEREST – LEGAL LIMITATIONS

Although there are considerable environmental risks involved with the exploitation of the Arctic, the receding sea ice could make accessible not only a wealth of natural resources but also unprecedented opportunities for sea traffic. The implications of this go far beyond the Arctic states. If Arctic shipping routes become commercially viable it will bring the markets and manufacturers of Asia, Europe and North America closer together. New fishing grounds, carefully regulated to prevent overfishing, could provide valuable food supplies to countries around the world. Economies dependent on fossil fuels, such as China, and countries like Germany and Japan that are turning away from nuclear power, are significant potential markets for the region's oil and gas resources.

Many officials in non-Arctic states – as well as a large part of the public

in Arctic countries – seem to believe media reports that portray the Arctic as a modern Wild West, where states are locked in a potentially confrontational scramble for resources. This misconception has led to inflammatory talk as well as calls for an international treaty to govern Arctic affairs. In reality, most of the mineral resources thought to exist in the Arctic lie within the uncontested

**MANY OFFICIALS IN NON-ARCTIC STATES ... SEEM TO BELIEVE MEDIA REPORTS THAT PORTRAY THE ARCTIC AS A MODERN WILD WEST**

exclusive economic zones of the five Arctic Ocean littoral states: Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States. In the few places where territorial claims overlap, disputes are well managed.

The regime for governing the changing Arctic is, however, only in embryonic form. For cooperation to improve, the Arctic states need to clearly communicate that the Arctic has an emerging set of institutions capable of managing the region's development and resources in a fair, transparent and law-based way. At the same time they should recognize the value – in fact the necessity – of giving non-Arctic states more of a voice in Arctic affairs.

### **THE ARCTIC COUNCIL – EXCLUSIVE CLUB OR OPEN HOUSE?**

The main organization for Arctic cooperation is the Arctic Council, which consists of the five Arctic littoral states along with Finland, Iceland, Sweden and several organizations representing the region's indigenous populations. Decision-making power is limited to the council members, but non-Arctic states and organizations can be granted the right to participate in council meetings as observers.

The council has, however, resisted defining clearly the role of the observers and the process by which new observers can become part of the organization. Only six non-Arctic states currently have permanent observer status, all of them European. The last ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council, held in Nuuk, Greenland in May, failed to reach consensus on applications from China, Japan, South Korea, Italy and the European Union (EU). Some have suggested that existing members want to establish the 'rules of the game' in the Arctic – notably delimiting territory – before allowing in powerful outsiders. Applicants to the council will now have to wait at least another two years for a decision.

The Arctic Council is in danger of being perceived as an exclusive club,

## **THE OPENING OF THE ARCTIC REGION IS AN HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO FASHION A GENUINELY MULTILATERAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT**

taking major decisions about the Arctic with little regard for the concerns and interests of non-Arctic states. The existing approach risks creating the conditions whereby non-Arctic states could simply disregard the arrangements, rules and codes of conduct that the Arctic Council creates for the Arctic and instead work outside existing frameworks. Furthermore, the council's poor record on external communications allows misconceptions about the Arctic – and the basis on which rights to its resources can be exercised – to persist.

### **TOWARDS COOPERATIVE AND PEACEFUL COOPERATION**

The Swedish chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which runs for two years from the Nuuk ministerial meeting, has already committed to trying to finalize a long-awaited strategic communications plan for the council. In the meantime, the council could also do more to utilize current media interest in the Arctic and make itself a natural part of any discussion on the issues within its remit. This would not only improve its international profile, but it would also contribute to a more nuanced, better-informed debate and reduce the risk of misunderstanding, myth and ignorance.

The opening of the Arctic region is an historic opportunity to fashion a genuinely multilateral approach to the development of the region in safe, sustainable and environmentally sensitive ways.

For this, the Arctic Council will need to become a forum not just of the Arctic nations but for all countries and organi-

zations with a genuine interest in the region. Arctic countries will clearly have stronger interests and a greater say in the future of the Arctic, but other voices must also be a part of the dialogue.

The role of observers should be clarified and applicants for observer status should be provided with a clear process and timetable. This is not just a matter of building confidence and good relations based on mutual respect and understanding; many countries outside the Arctic also have extensive experience in polar research and great knowledge in

areas including the environment and climate that can be better utilized by the council's scientific working groups.

Sweden should seek to use its chairmanship of the Arctic Council to resolve the issue of participation, in accord with its stated approach of inclusiveness towards observers. Sweden could make this issue a priority for the November 2011 meeting of Senior Arctic Officials in Luleå. Progress here would lay the groundwork for the adoption at the next ministerial in 2013 of a decision on the role of observers and the application process for observer status. Success in this area would mark the Swedish chairmanship as opening a new era for the cooperative and peaceful development of the Arctic. ○

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**KRISTOFER BERGH** works with the SIPRI Global Health and Security Programme. The three-year SIPRI project, *Managing Competition and Promoting Cooperation in the Arctic*, examines key political and security issues linked to the development of the Arctic region. Current areas of research under the project include arms in the Arctic, competition for Arctic resources, the role of non-Arctic states, and Arctic regional security. It is made possible by a generous grant from the Foundation for Strategic and Environmental Research, MISTRA.



Growing significance:

# The Arctic Council's Historic Nuuk Ministerial

**Arctic Council Ministerial meetings have at times been uneven affairs – while some states sent senior ministers, others send more junior representation. The last such meeting was the first time that all states were represented at the top level. United States Senior Arctic Official JULIA GOURLEY says that is a reflection of the Council's growing significance.**

**THE RECENT ARCTIC COUNCIL** Ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland was a history-making event. It marked the first-ever participation by a United States Secretary of State. It brought about the signing of the first-ever legally-binding agreement among the eight Arctic states. And it rendered important decisions that will strengthen cooperation among the Arctic states both institution-

ally and programmatically.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said to her colleagues in Nuuk, "This region matters deeply – not just to our citizens, but also to people across the region and the world. And we know the decisions we make as a collective body will directly affect the ecology of this region, the ways of life and futures of all who live here, and the economic

well-being, health, and security of our peoples – and people around the world." Her participation in the Nuuk Ministerial reinforced the long-standing importance the United States has attached to the Arctic as demonstrated through our robust leadership in the Arctic Council, our Arctic scientific research, and our increasingly cooperative relationship with Russia in the region that once served as the main theater of the Cold War.

As evidence of this deepening relationship, the United States and Russia co-chaired the negotiations that led to the Arctic Search and Rescue agreement that Secretary Clinton and her counterparts signed in Nuuk. This agreement will enhance cooperation among the Arctic states in protecting human life in the Arctic and serve as an important precedent for other potential agreements and arrangements, including for filling any gaps in the large body of existing law and policy governing the Arctic. Ever-increasing human activity requires that we be better prepared for the accidents that will inevitably happen in the most challenging environmental conditions. We hope the SAR agreement will bring much needed attention



to our collective need for hard assets and training to be able to respond when lives are at stake.

Following on the successful SAR Task Force, the Ministers established a new Task Force on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response to once again be co-chaired by the United States and Russia. The Arctic Council's Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) working group, under Norwegian leadership, will focus on oil spill prevention in close cooperation with the Task Force. Our plan is to use the Council's vast oil-related work and the lessons we learned from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill as we decide the best course of action in the Arctic.

Climate change is the overarching challenge facing the Arctic. Although climate policy is best addressed in the global forums, the Arctic Council can contribute to the wider understanding of climate impacts in the Arctic and to the causes of, and solutions to, some of those impacts. The 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, initiated during the United States' chairmanship, is an illustration of the role the Council can play in raising important Arctic issues to the global level. In 2009, the Ministers

established a Task Force to analyze the so-called short-lived climate forcing agents that have particular effects in the Arctic – black carbon (soot), methane, and tropospheric ozone (smog). In Nuuk, the Ministers received the initial recommendations of this Task Force, mostly related to mitigating black carbon emissions from sources located in the Arctic. This ground-breaking work is contributing to the emerging global debate on the role of short-lived climate forcers in global climate policy. If the Arctic states take action to mitigate black carbon, we could potentially slow cryospheric melting, while demonstrating to other regions of the world that taking action on black carbon is economically feasible and environmentally beneficial. The next phase of the Task Force's work will examine Arctic state policies and make recommendations on methane and tropospheric ozone.

The Arctic Council was established in 1996. Its first 15 years have been highly successful in raising the profile of the Arctic and its role in the global climate system, the values and lifestyles of its Indigenous peoples, and the unique biodiversity and ecosystems it contains. Nevertheless, there are things we can do

The Nuuk Ministerial meeting was the first attended by a United States Secretary of State.

to strengthen the Council to ensure that it remains the premier forum for Arctic diplomacy. The Ministers decided in Nuuk to establish a standing secretariat for the Arctic Council that will serve the Arctic states and "Permanent Participants" (international organizations of Arctic Indigenous people) and ensure stable continuity of operations and better outreach to the public. With ever-increasing interest in the Arctic Council's work, the Ministers adopted criteria for evaluating applicants for observer status in and further defined the role they will play. The role and criteria will strengthen the Council by ensuring we have the right entities and states engaging in our activities and that they can contribute in the best way possible.

The United States is proud of its record of leadership in the Council from its earliest days to the present. From the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment to the recent search and rescue agreement and looking

ahead to our work on oil spills, the United States has led or co-led nearly all of the Council's most important work and we will continue our strong leadership in this important region of the world. As Secretary Clinton said in Nuuk, "We are committed to the Arctic Council as the region's preeminent intergovernmental body, where we can solve shared problems and pursue shared opportunities. Whether we are discussing matters of internal housekeeping or external policy, we all understand the growing relevance of this Council." ○



**JULIA GOURLEY** is the Senior Arctic Official of the United States and is the U.S. representative to the Arctic Council. She handles the State Department's Arctic portfolio covering the wide range of U.S. foreign policy interests in the Arctic. She came to the State Department from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency where she spent twelve years covering chemicals issues, hazardous waste trade and domestic climate change programs.

# Enter the Arctic Dragon?

**China is paying increasing attention to the consequences of the melting of the ice in the Arctic Ocean as a result of climate change. The prospect of the Arctic being navigable during summer months, leading to both shorter shipping routes and access to untapped energy resources, has impelled the Chinese Government to allocate more resources to Arctic research. As LINDA JAKOBSON writes, Chinese officials have also started to think about what kind of policies would help China benefit from an ice-free Arctic environment.**

**THE MELTING** of the Arctic ice poses economic, military and environmental challenges to the governance of the region. In 2008 the five littoral states – Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and

the United States – committed themselves to the existing legal framework of the Arctic and the “orderly settlement of possible overlapping claims”. Despite these assurances, the evolving situation in the Arctic could potentially lead to new geopolitical disputes involving also non-littoral states, especially regarding issues related to free passage and resource extraction rights. Consequently, policy makers not only in China but across Asia, Europe and North America are turning their attention to the

region in order to assess this transformation and its economic, territorial and geo political implications. To date China has adopted a wait-and-see approach to Arctic developments, wary that active overtures would cause alarm in other countries due to China’s size and status as a rising global power. Chinese officials are therefore very cautious when formulating their views on China’s interests in the Arctic. They stress that China’s Arctic research activities remain primarily focused on the climatic and environmental consequences of the ice melting in the Arctic. However, in recent years Chinese officials and researchers have started to also assess the commercial, political and security implications for China of a seasonally ice-free Arctic region.

**China’s expanding polar research capabilities** China has one of the world’s strongest polar scientific research capabilities. Since 1984 China has organized 26 expeditions and established 3 research stations in the Antarctic. The Arctic became a focus from 1995, when a group of Chinese scientists and journalists travelled to the North Pole on foot and conducted research on the Arctic Ocean’s ice cover, climate and environment. China’s first Arctic research expedition by sea took

place in 1999 and since then it has carried out two more expeditions, in 2003 and 2008.

**China’s commercial and strategic interests in the Arctic** Because China’s economy is reliant on foreign trade, there are substantial commercial implications if shipping routes are shortened during the summer months each year. Nearly half of China’s gross domestic product (GDP) is thought to be dependent on shipping. The trip from Shanghai to Hamburg via the Northern Sea Route – which runs along the north coast of Russia from the Bering Strait in the east to Novaya Zemlya in the west – is 6400 kilometres shorter than the route via the Strait of Malacca and the Suez Canal. Moreover, due to piracy, the cost of insurance for ships travelling via the Gulf of Aden towards the Suez Canal increased more than tenfold between September 2008 and March 2009. Chinese research remains primarily focused on how the melting Arctic will affect China’s continental and oceanic environment and how in turn such changes could affect domestic agricultural and economic development. However, a small number of Chinese researchers are publicly encouraging the government to actively prepare for the commercial and strategic opportunities that a melting Arctic presents. Li Zhenfu of Dalian Maritime University has, together with a team of specialists, assessed China’s advantages and disadvantages when the Arctic sea routes open up. “Whoever has control over the Arctic route will control the new passage of world economics and international strategies”, writes Li, referring both to the shortened shipping routes between East Asia and Europe or North America and to the abundant oil, gas, mineral and fishery resources presumed to be in the Arctic. Commenting on the successful test voyages from South Korea to the Netherlands via the Northern Sea Route in the summer of 2009 by two German commercial vessels, Chen Xulong of the China Institute of International Studies said that “the opening of the Arctic route will advance



**LINDA JAKOBSON**

(Finland) was the Director of the China and Global Security Programme and Beijing-based Senior Researcher of the SIPRI China and Global Security Programme. She has lived and worked in China for over 15 years and has published six books on Chinese politics, foreign policy and East Asian society. She is currently the East Asia Program Director at the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney.



Ice breaker Xue Long (Snow dragon) has been used by several Chinese expeditions to the Arctic.

the development of China's north-east region and eastern coastal area ... It is of importance to East Asian cooperation as well." Chen also said that China should have a long-term vision regarding Arctic shipping. Li Zhenfu has criticized the fact that Chinese research on the Arctic shipping route has not been planned and conducted in a comprehensive manner to enable China to protect its interests. According to Li, China's research "fails to provide fundamental information and scientific references for China to map out its Arctic strategy" and therefore China's power to speak out to protect its rights in the international arena is limited. This kind of criticism of the government's approach by Chinese scholars is rare in Arctic-related publications. Li's article was published in a national journal administered by the prestigious

China Association for Science and Technology (CAST).

Another Chinese researcher on Arctic politics, Guo Peiqing of the Ocean University of China, has not written quite as critically as Li about government policies, but in media interviews he too has voiced disapproval of China's predominantly natural sciences-oriented Arctic research and said it is not in China's interests to remain neutral and "stay clear of Arctic affairs". Guo has said that China, which is transitioning from a regional to a global power, should be more active in international Arctic affairs. He notes that "any country that lacks comprehensive research on Polar politics will be excluded from being a decisive power in the management of the Arctic and therefore be forced into a passive position". Chinese Arctic specialists acknowledge the same uncertainties

as many of their Western counterparts when contemplating how lucrative the Arctic routes would ultimately be in comparison to the current routes through the Suez and Panama canals. Although passage along the Northern Sea Route from eastern China to Western Europe would substantially shorten the journey, high insurance premiums, lack of infrastructure and harsh conditions may make the Arctic routes commercially unviable, at least in the short term. Drift ice will continue to be a problem for ships even when the Arctic passages are officially deemed ice-free. Because of the melting of Greenland's ice cap, the number of icebergs is expected to increase, forcing ships to proceed at a slow speed and make detours. Furthermore, the shallow depth of some of the passages along the shipping routes (in particular the Bering Strait) makes the Arctic unsuited for big

cargo ships. The opening up of the Arctic will also provide access to new reserves of the energy and other natural resources on which China's economic growth increasingly relies. The US Geological Survey estimates that the Arctic contains up to 30 per cent of the world's undiscovered gas and 13 per cent of the world's undiscovered oil resources. Additionally, the region contains vast amounts of coal, nickel, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, gold, silver, diamonds, manganese, chromium and titanium. The technological challenges associated with extracting energy and mineral deposits in the Arctic have been noted by both Chinese and Western observers. To be able to exploit the Arctic's resources, China needs to partner with foreign companies because, as one Chinese scholar notes, "there is a rather large gap between Chinese and advanced foreign deep-sea oil extracting technology". Russia, which controls many of the resources in Arctic waters, lacks both the technology and the capital needed to extract them – opening the way for tri-lateral joint ventures in Russian waters using Chinese capital and Western or Brazilian technology. For example, when in late 2009 Russia's state-owned oil company Rosneft announced plans to apply for the operating licences to develop 30 offshore sites on Russia's Arctic continental shelf, industry experts predicted that it would not be able to develop these deposits on its own. Massive capital will be needed in addition to knowledge of highly advanced technology and specialized project management skills. Another potential multilateral joint venture in which China's capital could be used in exchange for the opportunity to gain the experience it seeks in deep-water drilling projects is the ongoing cooperation between Statoil, Total and Gazprom to develop the first phase of the Shtokman gas fields in the Barents Sea. This is regarded not only as a huge commercial opportunity but also as a formidable technological challenge. ○

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared on the SIPRI website, <http://www.sipri.org/>.

WWF's perspective:

# Panda at the pole – WWF's vision of future work with the Arctic Council

By **ALEXANDER SHESTAKOV**, Director, WWF Global Arctic Programme

WWF IS PROUD of its status as an observer to the Arctic Council since the Council began. One of the sources of our pride is that we have done more than observe; we have also contributed to the Council's work, and to the Council's development. We intend to continue those contributions, but we need the doors of the Council to remain open to allow us to contribute.

Since 1996 WWF has provided its input into scientific and policy work to achieve its vision for an Arctic shielded from the worst effects of rapid change through effective international stewardship promoting healthy living systems to the benefit of local peoples and all humanity. We have shown how the Arctic climate affects the entire world; we

have shown how holes remain in Arctic governance that need to be plugged, and suggested ways of plugging them; we are leading ground-breaking work on ecosystem resilience that we are sharing with the Council; and we have broadcast the work of the council to the world, in part through this very magazine. WWF's national offices in seven arctic states bring their multidisciplinary and multicultural experience into pan-arctic discussions, enriching the discourse.

WWF would like change policies and practices in the Arctic from exploitation to stewardship. We will offer our resources to enable resilience-based ecosystem management, establish best practices for shipping, fishing, and

**WE BELIEVE THE COUNCIL SHOULD CONTINUE ITS COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATION, TO ENSURE THAT ITS WORK IS SEEN NOT ONLY BY A SELECT FEW, BUT REACHES OUT TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS THE ARCTIC, AND TO AUDIENCES BEYOND THE ARCTIC ALSO**



Photo: Hartmut Jungius / WWF-Canon

Panda in the Arctic: WWF flag outside the Lena-Nordenskiöld International Biological Station quarters along the Lena river, Lena-Delta (Ust-Lensky) Nature Reserve, Russia.

hydrocarbon development, and promote sound governance.

### KEY AREAS FOR FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

The following list outlines where we see making a contribution to the Council’s work in the coming years:

- providing capacity to Arctic Indigenous peoples where requested
- Arctic ecosystem resilience assessment
- Arctic biodiversity assessment
- species conservation planning
- protected areas and other conservation measures in the Arctic
- development of best practices for marine oil pollution prevention and of a legal instrument for marine oil pollution preparedness and response
- practical implementation of the existing guidelines for industries at national and regional levels
- regulations for shipping in Arctic waters
- Arctic ocean review
- corporate and social responsibility for the arctic businesses

- scientific contribution to the Arctic Change Assessment

- communication on climate change in the Arctic, value of biodiversity and ecosystem services, conservation work in the Arctic, including on work by the Arctic Council.

The value of our work in the Arctic is linked to the efficiency of our engagement with the Council. As the Council becomes stronger and more relevant to Arctic governance, our contribution to Council working groups becomes more valuable. This is why we are concerned that the Council has recently closed off some of its work. Instead of conducting work in open and accessible working groups, the Council has recently struck “Task Forces” through which some of the work is channelled. These Task Forces are not necessarily open to all participants in the Council. WWF believes that if the Arctic Council is truly to become a stronger organization and to be recognized as a legitimate inter-governmental body helping to formulate and guide strengthened actions by nations for the governance of the Arctic,

it must take its strength from all of its participants, and commit itself to some basic working principles.

The Council’s discussions and decision-making processes must be transparent. Its work should be inclusive, according a place particularly to the Indigenous peoples through their Permanent Participant status, but also to accredited observers and interested arctic stakeholders such as industry and others who come with expertise and capacity to offer. Finally, we believe the Council should continue its commitment to communication, to ensure that its work is seen not only by a select few, but reaches out to all stakeholders across the Arctic, and to audiences beyond the Arctic also. ○



**ALEXANDER SHESTAKOV** is the director of the WWF Global Arctic Programme, based in Ottawa, Canada. His diverse background includes working for a number of NGOs, government and industry, giving him a broad understanding of conservation issues. With a law degree and a PhD focused on environmental management and conservation, Alexander is at home in the arena of international environmental issues.

## The picture



## A toxic history

Toxic chemicals played a large part in the birth of the Arctic Council. In 1989, officials from the Arctic countries met to discuss challenges to the circumpolar environment. This concern was driven at least in part by evidence that chemicals such as DDT and PCBs were showing up in alarming amounts in the Arctic, despite very limited use locally. The 1989 meetings led to the formation in 1991 of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy that later became the basis for the Arctic Council. Many of the toxic chemicals of concern were later dealt with by the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Evidence from the Arctic was influential in persuading countries around the world to sign onto this convention.



### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.panda.org/arctic](http://www.panda.org/arctic)