

# All presentations from the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Official's meeting in Luleå, Sweden, November 8-9 2011.

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## Arctic Council

### Arctic Council Secretariat

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Intervention

Bjørn Willy Robstad, Secretary General, SCPAR

Meeting of the Senior Arctic Officials Luleå 8-9 November 2011

## **REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ARCTIC PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION**

Mr. Chair, SAOs and Arctic colleagues,

First of all I will like to congratulate the Swedish chairmanship and the secretariat with a very professional and friendly leadership and organization of this first SAO-meeting under Swedish leadership.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to update you on the activities of the Arctic parliamentary cooperation. As some of you will recall it is about 1 year since the last Arctic parliamentary conference in the European Parliament in Brussels. Since then the Standing Committee has met 4 times. The last meeting took place in Syktyvkar, Russia in September and the next meeting will be in Stockholm 14 February next year. To the meeting in Stockholm we have invited Foreign Minister Bildt to report on the activities under the Swedish chairmanship and engage in a dialogue with the parliamentarians on these issues.

Let me go a little more into the details of the activity of the Standing Committee.

The main project for the Committee at the last two meetings has the name "Arctic governance in an evolving Arctic region". Here the parliamentarians have drafted a paper where they line up some thoughts and ideas of how the Arctic cooperation shall develop further. A workshop was held in Iceland with lively discussions. The current draft includes proposals like:

- A stable and adequate budget for the Arctic Council
- A 10 year strategic plan for the Arctic Council
- Possible new areas for legally binding agreements between the Arctic countries

Another issue which is mentioned in the report is the role of observers in the Arctic Council, also the role of the Arctic parliamentarians as an observer to the Arctic Council. At the ministerial meeting in Nuuk the Chair of the Arctic parliamentary cooperation was present together with the US member of SCPAR Senator Lisa Murkowski. Senator Murkowski was a member of the US delegation. For the first time at an Arctic ministerial the peoples elected representative was not given the floor at the meeting. The Arctic parliamentarians are of course not happy with this development and this is an issue they will continue to raise with the Arctic Council and the Swedish chairmanship.

The Standing Committee will now engage in a discussion on the governance issues with a broader audience. This will include participation at different seminars and conferences, such as the international legal forum in Salekhard 2-3 weeks ago and a similar event in Toronto 17-18 January next year. The Arctic Parliamentarians will also arrange a side event at the IPY conference in Montreal next April. The finalization of the work on the governance report will be at the next Arctic parliamentary conference 5-7 September in Iceland next year, where the main conclusions in the report will be proposed included in the conference statement adopted by the conference. In addition to Arctic governance there will be two other main items on the agenda:

- Economic development in the Arctic

- Enhancing human development in the Arctic – interplay of research, authorities and residents

Finally let me update you on last weeks' activities.

The Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Høglund, has written a letter to the Premiers of the three territories in Canada and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Mr. John Duncan addressing the dramatic cut in funding for UArctic in Canada.

I will quote the following from the letter to the Premier in Yukon:

“I am very grateful for the generous contribution Canada has given to the development of the UArctic, but its recent cut in funding concerns me greatly. I ask you and your fellow premiers in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to examine how you might further support the UArctic as a valuable institution that will help develop your jurisdictions as well as the circumpolar north.”

Finally: Last week the three members of the Standing Committee, senator Murkowski, senator Torlopov and the chair of the Committee Mr. Høglund met in Washington DC to discuss some of these issues I have been outlining in my report to you today. Mr. Høglund and senator Torlopov also met with the other senator from Alaska senator Begich to address some of the same issues and the work in the US Senate to ratify UNCLOS.

Once again, thank you Chair for giving me this opportunity and thank you for your attention.