

Cleaner Oceans
Address to Arctic Ministers
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Chair, Working Group on
Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment

Thank you Chairman.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Attendance and interest in this meeting is clear evidence that the Arctic Council is a success. Growing interest means growing support and participation. It also means an expanding agenda -- one which becomes an ever growing challenge to manage successfully.

I am aware of the old Russian proverb that: An optimist is just a pessimist with little information.

However, in the case of the Arctic Council, I believe the information is encouraging. First, we are blessed with a strong and sophisticated scientific basis upon which to formulate our decisions. This basis has been provided through the work of AMAP and CAFF and continues through the efforts of the ACIA project. This is a luxury that most in the World can only hope one day to achieve.

Second, we are wealthy. The Arctic States, in fact, have the resources needed to address the many issues associated with environmental protection and sustainable development, provided they have the will to do so.

To me, this all means that managing our expanding agenda requires that we stay focused, goal oriented and pragmatic in our deliberations, restricting the inevitable rhetorical outbreaks to the occasional.

It also means that, collectively, we must encourage those who have the will and resources to move ahead. This, in turn, entails maintaining a broad and flexible perspective as we experiment with "what works".

For the marine environment, our scientific knowledge and our wealth enable us to move toward the creation of a strategic approach to oceans management. We can thank our colleagues from Canada and Iceland for having the vision to suggest this challenging task and for offering to take the lead in its achievement.

In the development of this strategy, our science allows us to begin to define meso-scale ecosystem units, to understand how these units function and to identify the major forcing factors of change. As we proceed, this will permit us to identify what are the key actions needed to maintain and improve the health of the marine environment.

We can also use this strategic approach to look at emerging issues --- for example biodiversity,

marine transportation and tourism and how they may be affected by global climate change.

In addition to our strategic planning efforts, we are today prepared to begin to initiate programs of action at a scale one to two orders of magnitude larger than before.

We have and should continue to explore partnerships as we undertake these programs. These partnerships should continue to engage NGOs, International Financial Institutions, the private sector and others.

PAME's leadership in developing the Regional Programme of Action for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment coupled with the links to the Russian NPA-Arctic provide a useful model—one which has led to the largest project ever associated with the work of the Arctic Council.

At the same time, this success has raised a number of procedural and substantive questions about how the Arctic Council should be involved with large programs of intervention. It would be useful for the Council to address these questions in a comprehensive manner so as to create an approach that maximizes actions which promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic.

Of course, PAME's focus is on the environment –the marine environment.

Therefore, in closing, I would like to note that, while we all welcome Iceland's proposed new focus on the "human dimension", it is important to keep in mind a simple equation: People Minus Planet =.