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Sustainable Development Framework Document

The Ottawa Declaration established the Arctic Council and expanded the scope of cooperation begun under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy to include a broader sustainable development policy framework. At Iqaluit in 1998, the Ministers formally established the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Program and the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group. Also at that time, the Ministers agreed to Terms of Reference for the Sustainable Development Program.

As noted in the Terms of Reference, the goal of the Sustainable Development Program is to

propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic, including opportunities to protect and enhance the environment and the economies, culture and health of indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve the environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

In light of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro, the Sustainable Development Program is an important part of an international effort that builds on the work of governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations. The Council's Sustainable Development Program has the objective of addressing the special circumstances of the Arctic in that context.

Consistent with the Terms of Reference and with the Iqaluit Ministerial Declaration, the Arctic Council should pursue and adopt sustainable development projects, cooperative activities and priorities bearing in mind the following:

- Sustainable Development must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Economic, social and cultural development are, along with environmental protection, interdependent and mutually reinforcing aspects of Sustainable Development and are all part of the Council's focus in this regard.
- Capacity Building is, similarly, a necessary element for achievement of Sustainable Development and must be taken into consideration in the projects developed under the Program. The Program should, therefore, aim to increase capacity at all levels of society.
- The Sustainable Development Program should leave future generations in the North with expanded opportunities, and promote economic activity that creates wealth and human capital, while simultaneously safeguarding natural capital of the Arctic.
- The Sustainable Development Program should promote the integration of environmental considerations into all economic activities that may have a significant impact on the environment and human health in the Arctic States.
- Sustainable Development must be based on sound science, traditional knowledge of indigenous and local people, and prudent conservation and management of resources, and it

must benefit from and strengthen the innovative and educational processes of northern communities.

- The Sustainable Development Program requires coordination and synergy among Arctic Council working groups and other cooperative activities, and must be realized through a responsive public process, which may include local, regional and international initiatives.
- The Council will give high priority to those projects and activities that emphasize local leadership and implementation to ensure maximum long-term benefit to the community and regional level.

The Arctic Council attaches special importance to a number of subject areas under the heading of Sustainable Development. These currently include:

- Health issues and the well-being of people living in the Arctic. Prevention and control of disease and injuries, as well as the long-term monitoring of the impact of pollution and climate change, are critical to human health and Sustainable Development.
- Sustainable economic activities and increasing community prosperity. To be sustainable, Arctic communities must have an appropriate economic base to ensure their survival.
- Education and cultural heritage. These are a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development and capacity building.
- Children and youth. Their well-being and potential are essential to the future of Arctic communities and must be protected and nurtured.
- Management of natural, including living, resources. This must be based on sound science and traditional knowledge to maintain and develop local settlements in the Arctic.
- Infrastructure development. This enhances economic growth and the quality of life for Arctic people.

Under each of the areas covered by the Program, there is a strong commitment within the Council to stimulate, approve and support projects of common interest which will deliver meaningful and tangible benefits to Arctic residents.

The Council will periodically review the progress of the Sustainable Development Program in order to highlight new areas and policies.