

**Statement by Ms Åsa Larsson Blind, President of the Saami Council,
at the Tenth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council
Fairbanks 11 May 2017**

Mr Chair, Ministers, Indigenous leaders, Observers, friends of the Arctic.

For more than 20 years the Arctic Council has gathered the Arctic states and indigenous peoples' organisations, joined by a steadily increasing group of observers, to cooperation on sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. - What is it that binds this diverse group of actors together? What is it that keep us going for more than 20 years? What makes us claim the Arctic to remain a region of peace and stability in declaration after declaration? - and stick to it...

Mr Chair, I like to believe that the value we all share is to maintain healthy and productive environment in the Arctic that will sustain our lives today and for generations to come. For us the Arctic is our home, it where we live our lives, develop our economies of reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, gathering. We hold unique knowledge about these lands. Some value the Arctic as a knowledge base where to conduct ground breaking research, some want to come to Arctic for extreme experiences of harsh climate, light and beauty, some look to develop technology to extract resources in a best possibly way.

To protect the fragile environment and promote sustainable development in the Arctic are still the value that bind us together in the Arctic cooperation. For more than 20 years this value foundation has not changed, only more people has come to share those values. What changes - are the policies.

If our shared values are put at risk, the policies need to change - not the values. That is what the Arctic Council should do, - develop policies to secure our core values in a changing Arctic. In doing so, Mr Chair, the Saami Council urges everyone to put mother nature first.

In conclusion, the Saami Council would like to thank the US for their very able chairmanship during the past two years, it has been a true pleasure to work with the team.

We look forward to the Finnish Chairmanship and to a close cooperation with Finland, and on their themes. And finally, we look forward to welcoming the Arctic Council to Sápmi again.

Thank you, Mr Chair.