

## Statement by minister Timo Soini at the Arctic Council 10th Ministerial meeting

Statement by Mr. Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Arctic Council 10th Ministerial meeting, Fairbanks, Alaska, 11 May 2017

I first visited Alaska as Foreign Minister almost two years ago, when I attended the Glacier conference in Anchorage. We felt very welcome in Alaska. We had the spectacular view of Denali, the highest mountain in the US. The United States and Finland decided to intensify the cooperation between the Chairmanships in order to ensure continuity. I will come back to the Chairmanship program later today.

The Arctic is becoming increasingly important for governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations. The reason is simple. We recognize that global warming is the main driver of change in the Arctic. The challenges of melting sea ice, thawing permafrost and changes in eco-systems are complex. They cannot be solved one by one or in isolation.

The Arctic region is connected with other sea areas and continents. The changes affecting the Arctic are reflected elsewhere. Our ability to understand, predict and respond to the changes is crucial for the future of the Arctic.

Global warming is expected to continue for decades, and we should understand the effects and act with determination. The Paris Climate Agreement is the cornerstone for mitigating climate change. The UN Agenda 2030 provides a toolbox for promoting and achieving sustainable development. Both are important for the future of the Arctic.

Predictability in climate work is important for both governments and businesses. Investing in low-carbon clean technologies simply make sense.

In the past twenty years the Arctic Council has evolved into the main forum for Arctic issues. The Arctic Council has promoted common Arctic interests worldwide. It is my wish that we will continue to work together to foster prosperity and sustainability of Arctic people and environment.

The scope of the Council's work has grown wider during the recent years. Crosscutting themes such as climate, energy, resilience and the seas have filled up the agenda. The number of projects and programs are close to one hundred.

The work of the Arctic Council would benefit from a longer term strategic plan. Then the Council could decide what to focus on in the coming years.

I would like to commend the US Chairmanship for its leadership during these past two years. It has not been an easy task. The international situation has put its mark on relations between countries, but it has not affected Arctic cooperation. And I think it should not.

It gives me great pleasure that we today sign the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation. This will/is be the third legally binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council.

I am pleased that also this Ministerial was able to agree on a declaration.

The declaration addresses ocean stewardship, living and economic conditions, and impacts of climate change and is a most welcome sign of our will to cooperate.

Finally I would like to thank all Arctic states, Permanent Participants and Observers for the cooperation and the Arctic Council Secretariat for its outstanding work.