

PRESS RELEASE

Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting Held in Barrow, Alaska October 12-13, 2000

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Frank Loy chaired the second biennial meeting of the Arctic Council, October 12-13, in Barrow, Alaska, which marked the culmination of the two-year period of U.S. leadership of the Council and the beginning of the Finnish chairmanship. Participants included Ministers from the eight member states of the Council: The United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden; presidents of the four Arctic indigenous organizations that have Permanent Participant status on the Council: the Aleut International Association, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Saami Council; and representatives of the Council's twelve accredited observers, among them representatives of the governments of France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Alaska's Lieutenant Governor Fran Ulmer and North Slope Borough Mayor George Ahmaogak, Sr., welcomed delegates to the meeting. The North Slope community, including school classes, observed the Council proceedings and joined in an evening panel discussion on human health and the Arctic environment.

The meeting set the Arctic Council agenda for the 2000-2002 period. Topping the Council's agenda is a new program to undertake a comprehensive study of the impact of climate change in the Arctic. The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) will address the environmental, human health, social, and economic impacts of climate change in the Arctic. The Council will also pursue a number of projects under the newly established Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP), which resulted from a mandate given at the first Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council held in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada, in 1998. The Ministers recognized the critical importance of ensuring further progress in the Council's Sustainable Development Program, and that such progress requires the active participation of the Permanent Participants.

In addition to setting the Council's agenda, Ministers held a series of roundtable discussions on the impact of climate variability on Arctic communities and ecosystems; health, education, and economic opportunities of Arctic communities; the threat of contaminants in the Arctic and opportunities for collective action to address the problem; and how to improve cooperation between the Arctic Council and the many organizations and initiatives with a northern focus. Ministers approved the Arctic Athabaskan Council and the Gwich'in Council International as two new Permanent Participants to the Council.

Council accomplishments during the U.S. chairmanship included:

- o finalization of a framework document for the Council's Sustainable Development Program and strong progress on such initiatives as the U.S.-led projects on Telemedicine and Cultural and Eco-tourism, the Canadian-led project on the Future of

- Children and Youth in the Arctic, and the Denmark/Greenland-led Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic;
- o development and endorsement by Ministers of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), a multi-year program which will assess the impact and effects of climate change on the Arctic environment, including environmental, human health, social, and economic impacts. All Council members are participating;
 - o establishment, under the leadership of Norway, of an Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP), and the development of a number of actions to pursue under the plan during the coming two years, including Phase II of a project to reduce PCB use in Russia, and reduction of mercury releases from Arctic States;
 - o strong progress in each of the Council's four environmental working groups including:
 - o contributions toward the development and implementation of the Russian National Programme of Action for Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;
 - o preparation of a map of resources at risk from oil spills in the Arctic;
 - o establishment of a program to monitor circumpolar biodiversity in the Arctic;
 - o production of reports on the incidence of heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants, and radionuclides in the Arctic;
 - o improvements on the coordination of work among the working groups and with other regional fora;
 - o a call for a global assessment of mercury, which could form the basis for international action;
 - o further development of the Arctic Council website and creation of a comprehensive electronic record of the U.S. chairmanship — which was passed on to Finland to assist it with its chairmanship;
 - o expanded participation in the work of the Council, including the holding of public forums during each of the Council's meetings during the U.S. chairmanship.

To close the meeting, Ministers approved and signed the Barrow Declaration, which notes Council accomplishments during the U.S. chairmanship and mandates future actions. The Ministers accepted Finland's generous offer to host the Council for the next two years.

HEADS OF DELEGATION to the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting:

Chair of the Meeting **Frank Loy**, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Member States

Canada **Mary Simon**, Ambassador to Denmark and Ambassador for
Circumpolar Affairs

Denmark **Jonathan Motzfeldt**, Premier, Greenland Home Rule Government

Finland **Johannes Koskinen**, Minister of Justice

Iceland **Siv Fridleifsdottir**, Minister of Environment

Norway **Johan L. Loevald**, Assistant Secretary General, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

Russia **Yuri Tsaturov**, First Deputy Head of the Russian Federal Service
For Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring

Sweden **Eva Kettis**, Ambassador, Senior Arctic Official

United States **Raymond V. Arnaudo**, Acting Director, Office of Oceans Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Permanent Participants

Aleut International Association (AIA)
Mike Zacharof, President

Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)
Aqqaluk Lynge, President

Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
Sergey Haruchi, President

Saami Council
Lars-Anders Baer, President

Gwich'in Council International
Richard Nerysoo, President

Arctic Athabaskan Council
Ed Schultz, Chair