

Statement by Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi 7 May 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Permanent Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to greet all delegations that participate in this Ministerial. I wish to thank The City of Rovaniemi for hosting the Arctic Council Ministerial. It's good to be here where all started in 1991 when the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy was adopted.

I'm also delighted that our meeting is here, in my home town. I grew up in a small village near Rovaniemi. My point to you today is that; if we want the North to stay vibrant, it's important to ensure the conditions for people to live, work and take care of their nearest environment.

Rovaniemi is situated near Sápmi, the homeland of the Sámi people. The participation of Sámi in the Arctic Council, along with the other Permanent Participants, is extremely important for Finland.

Mr. Chairman,

Our children are the future. Millions of young people around the world, including in all Arctic countries, have called for strong actions to prevent climate emergency. The Arctic is changing unbelievable fast. The report on Arctic Climate Update 2019 underlines the sense of urgency.

Our countries, the Arctic States, are among the wealthiest in the world. We have the undeniable responsibility to speed up our climate action in order to keep the global warming within 1,5 degrees Celsius. We need to cut greenhouse gas emissions and we need to do it urgently. An ambitious climate

policy strengthens resilience and improves the possibilities in adapting to global warming.

Dear delegates,

Finland is committed to carrying out an ambitious and a smart mitigation policy. We will cut our emissions by 80% by 2050 and we aim to be carbon neutral by 2045. Entrepreneurs, researchers, universities, municipalities and various stakeholders are working hard towards a climate friendly circular economy.

Finland also emphasizes the importance of reducing emissions of black carbon. The reductions will bring significant health benefits and support achieving the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement. Investing in clean and energy efficient technologies is good business at the level of enterprises as well as societies.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are relevant also for the Arctic. Finland is committed to implementing the Agenda 2030 to support the sustainable future of the Arctic region. The Arctic Council's work on sustainable development is also important and was recognized only last week, when the International Association for Impact Assessment awarded the Arctic Council with its Global Award. One example of this is important work is the development of an Arctic Environmental Assessment tool.

All Arctic States and Permanent Participants have pledged to maintain the Arctic as a region of peace, stability and constructive cooperation. We must also pay attention to the growing interest of non-Arctic actors towards the Arctic. Close cooperation between the Arctic States will ensure their necessary leadership in guiding the developments of the Arctic region.

Dear friends,

The point of departure for Finland's Chairmanship in the Arctic Council was exploring common solutions to common challenges. We think inclusive cooperation is key to success. That is why we invited the Arctic Environment Ministers and Permanent Participants to Rovaniemi last fall. That meeting underlined the importance of continuing the cooperation on climate change, pollution prevention and conservation of biodiversity for the benefit of both

Arctic peoples and nature. Ministers presented their solutions to speed up the reductions of the greenhouse gas and black carbon emissions, to reduce marine plastic litter and to develop the network of protected areas, among others.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Finland welcomes the joint Statement by the Ministers and the Statement by the Chair and is committed to contribute to their implementation.

I would like to assure Iceland of Finland's support for its Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Finland intends to make use of our experiences in the Arctic Council when we take over the Presidency of the European Union in July. The European Union is an important partner for the Arctic Council in supporting Arctic science and observations, mitigating climate change and promoting sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The Arctic Council is like a big family. Every family has its moments. This family must keep together and look after our common good, by protecting the environment, by promoting sustainable development and by caring for the wellbeing of Arctic communities.

Thank you.