

Chief Bill Erasmus' Ministerial Statement

11th Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council

7 May 2019

Masi, Mr. Chairman. (Speaking in Dene.)

Ministers, Permanent Participants. In our Athabaskan language I said that we are very pleased to be here to participate, to make our views known, and to continue being participants within the Arctic Council. We want to thank you for this opportunity.

We are somewhat concerned and have disappointment that a declaration was not signed today, as we participated in the development of it. However, sometimes that happens and we are coming to terms with that.

We have some real concerns. Climate change is real, and we recognize that we are in a state of crisis where we live in the North as residents – permanent, long-term residents in our homeland. Climate change is man-made, and our elders tell us that we are clearly in trouble. Our Indigenous Knowledge must be understood and be implemented to provide us comfort. By following our own knowledge, we have always prevented disaster. We have always had certainty and stability in our lands and territories. This way we are confident in our planning and with our way forward.

Mr. Chairman, we are very concerned with the ever-increase in CO2 emissions and the inability to meet agreed-upon targets. Our children are expecting a bright future and they depend on us around this table. We have a duty to provide them with the best opportunities and certainty going forward.

We are pleased and encouraged with the ongoing work and the many efforts of the Working Groups within the Arctic Council. However, as Permanent Participants the ongoing issue of financial resources is still with us and needs to be addressed.

We are encouraged that a Ministers' statement has been developed and signed by the participating Arctic Council members. However, this is not the common practice of the Arctic Council. The Permanent Participants usually have the opportunity to fully participate in the drafting and development of an Arctic Council declaration where our views are fully endorsed and part of the bigger picture.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we thank the Finnish Chairmanship for the excellent hosts that they have been. We also support the statement by the Chair and look forward to its implementation. We also welcome the Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and look forward to their good work.

Thank you for your cooperation. Masi cho. (Speaking in Dene.)