

Arctic Council

Ottawa, Canada
September 19, 1996

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Ottawa, September 19, 1996

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Secretariat

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**JOINT COMMUNIQUE
OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE ARCTIC COUNTRIES
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL**

Ministers and Senior Representatives of the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America met in Ottawa, Canada, on September 19, 1996, and signed the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council*.

This inaugural meeting was attended by the leaders and senior representatives of three international Arctic indigenous organizations - the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council, and the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation, as Permanent Participants in the Council.

Also present at the signing ceremony were the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region; the Nordic Council of Ministers; the Nordic Council Finnish Secretariat; the non-Arctic States of Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Poland and the Netherlands; the International Union for Circumpolar Health; the International Arctic Science Committee; the United Nations Environment Programme; the International Union for the Conservation of Nature; the Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea; and the World Wildlife Fund.

Ministers viewed the establishment of this new intergovernmental forum as an important milestone in their commitment to enhance cooperation in the circumpolar North. The Council will provide a mechanism for addressing the common concerns and challenges faced by their governments and the people of the Arctic. To this end, Ministers referred particularly to the protection of the Arctic environment and sustainable development as a means of improving the economic, social and cultural well-being in the North.

Ministers noted that the indigenous people of the Arctic have played an important role in the negotiations to create the Arctic Council. The Declaration provides for their full consultation and involvement in the Arctic Council. To this end, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council, and the Association of the Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation, are named as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. Provision is also made for additional organizations representing Arctic indigenous people to become Permanent Participants.

Ministers acknowledged the significant work accomplished under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), whose existing programs will be integrated within the Council. They agreed to complete the integration process by the time of the final AEPS Ministerial meeting being held in Norway in 1997.