

# IQALUIT DECLARATION 2015

## On the occasion of the Ninth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council

1. We, the Ministers representing the eight Arctic States, joined by the representatives of the six Permanent Participant organizations of the Arctic Council, have gathered in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada, to conclude Canada's second Chairmanship, under the theme of Development for the People of the North, at the Ninth Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council,

2. **Reaffirming the commitment to maintain** peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic,

3. **Confirming** the commitment of the Arctic states and permanent participants to respond jointly to new opportunities and challenges in the Arctic, **noting** the substantial progress the Council has made to strengthen circumpolar cooperation, and **affirming** the important leadership role of the Council in taking concrete action through enhanced results-oriented cooperation,

4. **Reaffirming** our commitment to sustainable development in the Arctic region, including economic and social development, improved health conditions and cultural well-being, and our commitment to the protection of the Arctic environment, including the health of Arctic ecosystems, conservation of biodiversity in the Arctic and sustainable use of natural resources, as stated in the Ottawa Declaration of 1996,

5. **Recognizing** that the Arctic is an inhabited region with diverse economies, cultures and societies, **further recognizing** the rights of the indigenous peoples and reaffirming our commitment to consult in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned, and also **recognizing** interests of all Arctic inhabitants, and **emphasizing** the unique role played by Arctic indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge in the Arctic Council,

6. **Noting with concern** the findings of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the Arctic will continue to warm at twice the rate of the global average, increasing the likelihood of severe impacts in the Arctic and around the world, and **recognizing** that ambitious global and national action is needed to reduce climate risks, increase prospects for effective adaptation, and reduce the costs and challenges of mitigation in the long term,

7. **Reaffirming** Arctic States' commitment to work together and with partners toward an effective, ambitious, durable international climate agreement in Paris in December 2015 that is applicable to all, and our determination to work within and beyond the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to limit the increase in global average temperature to below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels,

Hereby:

SUSTAINING ARCTIC COMMUNITIES

8. **Welcome** the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, and **look forward** to developing a cooperative relationship with this body in order to increase responsible economic development for the benefit of the people of the Arctic,

9. **Recognize** the importance of improving health, mental wellness and resilience in Arctic communities, **welcome** the progress made through the Circumpolar Mental Wellness Symposium and the review of cancer among indigenous peoples, and **encourage** continued collaborative and innovative approaches to address health issues in the Arctic,

10. **Welcome** the recommendations on traditional and local knowledge and recognize the importance of using this knowledge in the work of the Council, **instruct** the Arctic Council to take relevant actions to implement these recommendations, and **note with appreciation** the work done by the Permanent Participants to develop their own principles for the use of traditional knowledge,

11. **Acknowledge** the importance of indigenous peoples' traditional ways of life to their economic wellbeing, culture, nutrition and health, and **welcome** the work done on this issue,

12. **Recognize** the importance of Arctic indigenous languages in empowering Arctic communities, and look forward to continuous efforts to assess and promote Arctic indigenous languages through the Arctic Council,

13. **Note** the importance of telecommunications infrastructure to Arctic communities, science, navigation and emergency response and **decide** to establish a telecommunications infrastructure experts group to develop a circumpolar infrastructure assessment as a first step in exploring ways to improve telecommunications in the Arctic, and report to Ministers in 2017,

14. **Recognize** the importance of freshwater to the health of Arctic inhabitants and their communities and to Arctic biodiversity, and **request** that appropriate next steps be presented to Ministers in this area and to consider whether existing national or regional initiatives could be extended to other parts of the Arctic,

15. **Recognize** the importance of community infrastructure and public health to Arctic peoples and communities and **decide** to consider options for new initiatives,

16. **Recognize** the importance of Arctic communities' access to clean, affordable and renewable energy alternatives and **decide** to facilitate initiatives to promote circumpolar collaboration on renewable energy and energy efficiency,

17. **Recognize** the growing importance of tourism to many Arctic communities, and **welcome** the report on Arctic marine tourism,

18. **Acknowledge** the importance of continued operational exercises in support of the Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement, **welcome** the progress made under this Agreement, and plan to further strengthen international cooperation toward regional search and rescue capability through work within the Arctic Council,

19. **Note** the work done for the Arctic Council through the second Arctic Human Development Report, **acknowledge** that gender equality is very important for economic, social and cultural development and improves the prospects for future generations in the Arctic, and **welcome** the report on current gender realities and future challenges,

20. **Welcome** the work of the Arctic Council on reindeer herding and youth, and further welcome the promotion of food culture and leadership opportunities for indigenous youth,

21. **Acknowledge** the cultural and nutritional importance of traditional and local foods, including from marine living resources in the Arctic, and **welcome** project proposals to assess and promote food security,

## PROTECTING THE UNIQUE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

22. **Acknowledge** that reducing greenhouse gas emissions continues to be the most important contribution to addressing global and Arctic climate change and to the long-term conservation and sustainability of the unique Arctic environment, **recognize** that short-lived climate pollutants emitted within and beyond the borders of the Arctic States have substantial impact on the Arctic, and **further recognize** that efforts undertaken by the Arctic states to reduce these emissions, which complement initiatives such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, lead to climate, as well as health and economic benefits, in the Arctic,

23. **Welcome** the assessments and conclusions on black carbon, tropospheric ozone and methane which provide a clear and compelling basis for further action on short-lived climate forcers in the Arctic and beyond, as well as the successful work related to reducing black carbon emissions from diesel and residential wood combustion,

24. **Decide** to implement the Framework for Action on Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions reductions, **establish** an expert group reporting to Senior Arctic Officials to report on our collective progress, and **call upon** observer states to join us in these actions given the global nature of the challenge,

25. **Recognize** that resilience and adaptation to climate change are critically important for Arctic communities, **welcome** the launch of the Arctic Adaptation Exchange Portal, which will allow Arctic communities to exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices as they continue to adapt to a changing climate, and **commit** to complete the ongoing work,

26. **Recognize** the importance of risk assessments in relation to climate change, and the need to evaluate the widest possible range of impacts, **appreciate** the effort to provide updated knowledge of changes in Arctic snow, water, ice and permafrost, and **welcome** the efforts within the project Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic to integrate climate projections with knowledge about other drivers of change, in order to inform decisions and develop adaptation strategies,

27. **Note** the importance of climate science to the Arctic, and **encourage** the creation of an enhanced elevation map of the Arctic to provide improved information for use in scientific analysis and sustainable development, as well as an Arctic climate change indicator system to help predict the effects of climate change in the region,

28. **Welcome** the launch of the Project Support Instrument in 2014 to facilitate the financing of Arctic Council projects related to pollution prevention, abatement and elimination,

29. **Welcome** the assessments of human health, trends in persistent organic pollutants and radioactivity in the Arctic, and their findings that efforts to reduce emissions of persistent organic pollutants such as DDT and PCBs have contributed to decreasing overall levels in the Arctic environment and humans, and **urge** Arctic States and observers to continue their efforts in monitoring and assessing existing and emerging contaminants,

30. **Support** the continued work of the Arctic Council to address mercury pollution, noting the particular vulnerability of Arctic ecosystems and the observed health effects in Arctic communities, **recall** with appreciation the adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2013, and **urge** governments to ratify the Convention so that it may come into force and be implemented as soon as possible,

31. **Recognize** that effective prevention measures are critical to ensuring the protection of the Arctic marine environment from potential incidents, also **recognize** the importance of cooperation between the public and the private sectors, and further **recognize** that marine oil pollution prevention, preparedness and response remain a long-term commitment of the Arctic Council,

32. **Welcome** the Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic, and **decide** to begin implementing the Framework Plan through Working Groups, expert-level dialogues, and further actions to prevent marine oil pollution, including regular exchanges of knowledge and experience among Arctic offshore petroleum regulators,

33. **Welcome** the Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines: Systems Safety Management and Safety Culture report, **urge** governments to apply these guidelines throughout the Arctic, **welcome** the progress made on implementing the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment recommendations, and **welcome** the progress made on the Polar Code at the International Maritime Organization following extensive engagement by Arctic States,

34. **Welcome** the Guide to Oil Spill Response in Snow and Ice Conditions in the Arctic and the further efforts to implement the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, **request** continuous efforts to further cooperation on oil spill preparedness and response, especially through renewed emphasis on research, information sharing, and exercises,

35. **Recognize** the multiple stresses on the Arctic environment and the need for an ecosystem-based approach to management, **welcome** and continue to **encourage** progress toward implementation of the ecosystem-based management recommendations approved by Ministers in Kiruna, and **request** the development of practical guidelines for an ecosystem-based approach to the work of the Arctic Council be completed as soon as possible,

36. **Note** with concern that Arctic biodiversity is being degraded and that climate change is the most serious threat, **encourage** decisive action to help sustain Arctic biodiversity and promote cooperation on adaptive management strategies for vulnerable species and ecosystems where possible, **decide** to work within relevant international processes to follow up on the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, and **welcome** its implementation plan,

37. **Welcome** the outcomes of the Arctic Biodiversity Congress, **recognize** with appreciation the contribution of permanent participants, observer countries, organizations and stakeholders, and **instruct** Senior Arctic Officials to determine how these outcomes can inform the broader work of the Council,

38. **Welcome** progress on the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program, **encourage** all states and permanent participants to continue national implementation, and look forward to the State of Marine Biodiversity report in 2017,

39. **Note** the importance of the numerous Arctic breeding migratory bird species to communities in the Arctic and worldwide, **welcome** the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative Action Plan, and **invite** all participants and observers in the Arctic Council to contribute to this initiative to improve the health of migratory bird populations and the ecosystems on which they depend,

40. **Approve** the Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of Marine Protected Areas, and **decide** to continue work to develop such a network, based on the best available knowledge and science in order to strengthen marine ecosystem resilience, taking into account the cultural and sustainable use of marine resources,

41. **Recognize** that acidification of marine areas of the Arctic caused by carbon dioxide absorption has the potential to have significant impacts on Arctic Marine Ecosystems and the people who rely on them, **appreciate** the efforts to provide information on biological and socio-economic consequences, and **decide** to undertake work to raise awareness of ocean acidification in the Arctic,

42. **Approve** the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2025 as a framework to protect Arctic marine and coastal ecosystems and to promote sustainable development in the region,



43. **Establish** a Task Force to assess future needs for a regional seas program or other mechanism, as appropriate, for increased cooperation in Arctic marine areas,

44. **Acknowledge** the importance of scientific cooperation to the circumpolar region, **note** the work on Enhancing Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic, and **decide** to extend the Task Force mandate, including to work towards a legally-binding agreement on scientific cooperation, with a view to completing its work no later than the next Ministerial meeting,

#### BUILDING A STRONGER ARCTIC COUNCIL

45. **Recognize** that the Arctic Council Secretariat in Tromsø, Norway has successfully supported and enhanced the work of the Arctic Council, **thank** its staff, and **encourage** further strengthening of the Secretariat,

46. **Express appreciation** to the Kingdom of Denmark for hosting the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat for more than two decades, **reaffirm** the decision taken by Permanent Participants to relocate it to Tromsø, Norway, and **note** the decision to host it with the Arctic Council Secretariat,

47. **Acknowledge** that the work of the Arctic Council continues to evolve to respond to new opportunities and challenges in the Arctic, **reaffirm** existing mechanisms and **commit** to identifying new approaches to support the active participation of Permanent Participants, and **welcome** the work done by Permanent Participants to establish a funding mechanism to strengthen their capacity,

48. **Welcome** the initiatives undertaken to enhance the accountability and transparency of the work of the Arctic Council in tracking the progress of the Council's activities, archiving and opening access to Council documents, and **decide** to continue this work,

49. **Welcome** efforts to work with the youth of the Arctic states and request that this work continue and be strengthened, and **recognize** the need to focus on indigenous youth concerning the development and preservation of their culture, language, mental and physical health, and leadership qualities,

50. **Adopt** the Senior Arctic Officials Report to Ministers, including its working group deliverables and work plans, **approve** the Arctic Council Secretariat budget for 2016 and 2017, and **instruct** Senior Arctic Officials to review and adjust the mandates and work plans of the Arctic Council working groups and other subsidiary bodies as necessary,

51. **Acknowledge** the positive contributions of Observers to the work of the Council, **instruct** the Senior Arctic Officials to further guide the Council's engagement with Observers, taking into account contributions to date and opportunities for future collaboration, and **defer** decisions on pending Observer issues with the goal of deciding on them at the Ministerial Meeting in 2017,

52. **Acknowledge with appreciation** Canada's role in chairing the Arctic Council during the period 2013-2015, and **accept with appreciation** the offer of the United States of America to chair the Arctic Council during the period 2015-2017 and to host the Tenth Ministerial meeting in 2017.

Signed by the representatives of the Arctic Council

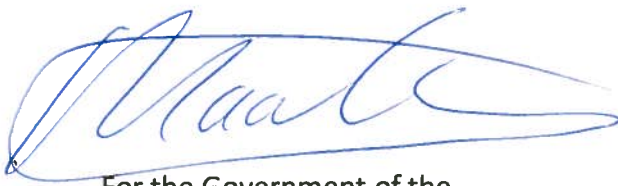
24<sup>th</sup> Day of April, 2015



For the Government of  
Canada  
Rob Nicholson  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



For the Government of  
Norway  
Børge Brende  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



For the Government of the  
Kingdom of Denmark  
Martin Lidegaard  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



For the Government of the  
Russian Federation  
Sergei Donskoi  
Minister of Natural Resources and  
Environment



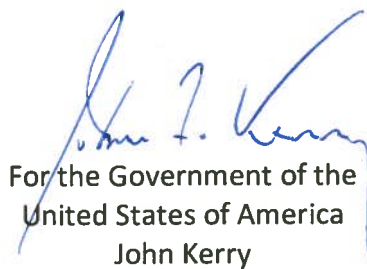
For the Government of  
Iceland  
Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson  
Minister for Foreign Affairs



For the Government of  
Sweden  
Kristina Persson  
Minister for Nordic Cooperation



For the Government of  
Finland  
Erkki Tuomioja  
Minister for Foreign Affairs



For the Government of the  
United States of America  
John Kerry  
Secretary of State



Leona Aglukkaq  
Chair of the Arctic Council