

Address by Minister Aglukkaq to Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting on Canada's Chairmanship Achievements

April 24, 2015 - Iqaluit, Nunavut

Check Against Delivery

We now move to the next agenda item, where I have the pleasure of highlighting the results achieved by the Arctic Council during Canada's two-year term as chair.

As a Canadian born and raised in Canada's Arctic, I am proud Canada has advocated putting Northerners at the forefront of the Arctic Council agenda.

No one knows better than the people who live here how to survive and thrive in the Arctic environment—this land of the intense cold, strong winds and darkness we face much of the year.

We have adapted to rapid social, economic and environmental changes. And we still rely heavily on the land, water and wildlife for our subsistence.

The people [of] the Arctic are the true Arctic experts and we must include their perspectives—we simply must. Arctic people have important knowledge to bring to the table that is based on our traditional ways of life. Arctic people also want to benefit from the economic opportunities unfolding around us.

Indeed, it was a great honour for me, as an Inuk, to be the first Arctic indigenous person to serve as Chair of the Arctic Council.

Canada's deep commitment to the North and its people forms part of our national identity. Canada is an Arctic nation, and we are proud of it. Our connection to the North is one of the reasons why the Council's theme under Canada's chairmanship was Development for the People of the North.

Over the last two years, all of us here today have taken action on key issues important to the four million people who live in the Arctic—by putting their interests and well-being at the forefront of the Council's priorities.

Let me touch on some of that work.

Many years ago, we started talking about how business can play a role in the sustainable development of the Arctic. The Arctic Council took action on this during Canada's chairmanship by facilitating the creation of the Arctic Economic Council, or the AEC.

This new independent body was launched in Iqaluit in September 2014. The AEC provides a mechanism for businesses—both small and large—to learn from each other. Its members will share best practices, standards and innovative solutions to promote responsible development in the Arctic.

Additionally—and this will be key to its success—Arctic indigenous peoples are well represented on the AEC. This will ensure that those living in the Arctic will have control over decisions affecting their communities and their future.

The Council has also worked to promote sustainable economic development in the area of Arctic marine tourism. The work will help Northerners benefit from the economic opportunities that tourism provides.

In addition to taking the Council's work on economic development to a new level, we've also brought attention to the important issue of mental wellness.

We have worked with Arctic communities and health professionals to identify successful approaches that can be shared across the region to improve mental wellness. And we've ensured that these approaches reflect indigenous cultures, values and realities.

The outcomes of this project were shared at the Circumpolar Mental Wellness Symposium I hosted here in Iqaluit last month.

Addressing mental wellness is a personal priority of mine, and I look forward to continuing work in this area with all of my [Arctic Council] ministerial counterparts in the years ahead.

It has also become increasingly clear that scientific knowledge and policy-making are enhanced when combined with *qaujimajatuqangit* or traditional knowledge. The survival of indigenous people under harsh Arctic conditions has been due in large measure to their knowledge of the land accumulated over millennia.

Under Canada's chairmanship, the Council developed

recommendations to use more consistently traditional and local knowledge in the work of the Arctic Council.

We also collaborated with the [Arctic Council] Permanent Participants to develop a collection of best practices from across the region showcasing how the traditional ways of life of Arctic indigenous peoples can co-exist with modern ways to support healthy communities.

It is also important the Council continue its work to protect the environment.

During Canada's chairmanship, the Council has shown leadership by addressing short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon and methane.

Taking action on this will see both important health and climate outcomes. The outcome is a framework for action, which will support all Arctic states as we move to reduce these pollutants.

We also developed an online portal on climate change adaptation so that Arctic residents can share information and best practices on how to respond to a changing climate.

We have developed an overarching action plan to implement the Council's Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, as well as an action plan to conserve priority migratory bird species.

And recognizing the need to protect the Arctic marine environment and local communities as activity in the region increases, we have also put in place a framework plan to prevent oil pollution.

In addition, the Council has worked to ensure that it remains effective, relevant and strong.

This has been an overarching priority during Canada's chairmanship.

In particular, we have enhanced the capacity of the Permanent Participant organizations to contribute to the Council, engaged our young people and helped to get the Arctic Council Secretariat up and running.

We have also strengthened transparency and accountability by creating the Amarok: Arctic Council Tracker. This [tool] will allow

Northerners to better understand what the Arctic Council is doing and hold it accountable for its commitments.

As Canada concludes our chairmanship today, I know this: a successful Arctic means we must incorporate the people into our future decisions.

That is why Canada has focused on supporting and strengthening our North.

We must continue to support the economic and social development and environmental protection of our Arctic peoples.

By balancing these pillars, we will be able to improve the lives of Northerners: their interests, their well-being and their prosperity.

Now that we have started the second round of chairmanships, I would ask that we all recommit to the principles of the [1996] Ottawa Declaration.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic, [to] economic and social development and to the protection of the Arctic environment.

Let us reiterate our recognition of the traditional knowledge of indigenous people, and of Arctic science and research, to our understanding of the circumpolar Arctic.

Our dedication to the Arctic has helped carry the Arctic Council forward so that we can benefit Northerners.

Our work here will continue to see real benefits for the people who call the Arctic their home.

Qujannamiik. Thank you.

Contacts

Media Relations Office
Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada
343-203-7700

media@international.gc.ca

Follow us on Twitter: [@CanadaFP](https://twitter.com/CanadaFP)

Like us on Facebook: [Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada-DFATD](#)