

**Statement by Minister S.E. Donskoy at the Arctic Council  
Ministerial Meeting**

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**(Iqaluit, April 24, 2015)**

Dear Madam Chair, colleagues,

First of all, let me thank our Canadian colleagues for organizing and hosting today's meeting.

I would like to express appreciation of the fact that Arctic cooperation has been steadily developing despite the external circumstances. The results of our joint efforts achieved during the Canadian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council expand the horizons of cooperation in the Arctic region and represent examples of the effectiveness of collaborative work when addressing the issues of the region's sustainable development.

Russia sees the Arctic as a territory of dialogue and cooperation and is interested in strengthening international cooperation in this region, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis. In addition, we believe that only through collaboration can we bring prosperity, peace and stability to the Arctic. In that regard, we believe that there is an important role for the work of the Arctic Council.

Russia sees huge potential in the Arctic Council to promote and expand a constructive agenda for our common region, built on the basis of national interests of all the Arctic States. We are sure that it is this partnership that should and will determine the future of the Arctic. There is no room for confrontation or aggravation of tension in the Arctic region – especially from outside sources – and there is a strong public demand for joint responses to common challenges and for joint use of shared opportunities in the Arctic. Russia opposes any attempt to politicize the development of Arctic cooperation.

Russia is open to collaboration and joint implementation of large-scale projects in the Arctic, particularly in the Arctic region of the Russian Federation.

This entails not just extraction of natural resources, or energy, but also use of the Northern Sea Route as the shortest route for transportation of goods between Europe and Asia, as well as the development of infrastructure for industry, transport, communications and tourism.

Climate change and technological breakthroughs make the Arctic, its wealth and resources, accessible for commercial development.

We are convinced that this should happen only in accordance with the highest environmental requirements and with due respect to the people living in the region and their traditional ways of life. All collective initiatives in these areas have received and will receive Russia's support.

Russia welcomes the efforts of the Arctic Council to strengthen the environmental sustainability of the region. Our countries have taken another important step in that direction. Today we will adopt a Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic.

Although this document is not legally binding, Governments of the Arctic States have made a clear statement about their intention to prevent the occurrence of environmental threats in the Arctic resulting from economic activity. We absolutely support full adherence to environmental standards when implementing business projects in the Arctic region.

We enforce strict environmental requirements in our country. Already at this stage we are concerned with how to ensure that offshore development and development of other deposits in the Arctic is in compliance with the highest environmental standards, because the cost of a failure in the fragile and unique Arctic environment is too high.

I find it worth mentioning the Arctic Council Framework for Action on Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions. In our opinion, it is

a timely response to today's climate challenges posed by global warming. It is meaningful that the document calls for Observer States to join the Arctic States in addressing this problem.

In particular, Russia has prepared the National Inventory Report for Black Carbon and Methane Emissions in the Russian Arctic as part of fulfilling its international commitments under the Arctic Council.

Pressing issues of the development of the Arctic region cannot be addressed today without strengthening economic cooperation. We welcome the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, Russia being one of its initiators.

As Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation I would like to highlight the successful launch of the Project Support Instrument to support environmental projects of the Arctic Council, which took place last year. Russia contributed 5.0 million EUR to this fund in 2014 and the same amount has already been allocated this year. This is a concrete example of Russia's responsible attitude towards fulfilment of its international commitments, including the preservation of the fragile Arctic ecosystem.

Practical activities have already been started within the framework of this Instrument. In October 2014, funding for the first practical projects was approved.

The launch of the Project Support Instrument highlights the need for an increased use of joint international economic mechanisms to preserve the fragile Arctic ecosystem.

In this respect we consider it important to also use other existing financial mechanisms, including the Global Environment Facility, when implementing environmental projects in the Arctic. In connection to this, proposals have been submitted to the GEF for implementation of the project "Partnership of the Russian Federation and the GEF on Sustainable Management of the Arctic Environment in the Face of Rapid Climate Change" (a project within the so-called Arctic Agenda 2020 Program), as well as the project "Nomadic Reindeer Herders", aimed, among other things, to support indigenous peoples of the North.

We believe that the practical implementation of these projects will be our common contribution to the sustainable development of the Arctic region.

The human dimension is becoming more and more prominent within Arctic cooperation. It is important to continue to implement joint projects in this area.

It goes without saying that the Arctic States have a special responsibility for conditions in the region. However, cooperation should not develop according to the “insider principle”. Russia will welcome more active involvement of observers in the implementation of projects under the auspices of the Arctic Council.

In conclusion, allow me to wish good luck to the U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. New ideas, initiatives and projects of the U.S. Chairmanship should further strengthen cooperation between the Arctic States in the interests of responsible development in the Arctic and for the benefit of people living there.

Thank you for your attention!