

**Nordic Council of Ministers,**

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## NCM WRITTEN STATEMENT – ARCTIC COUNCIL MINISTERIAL MEETING IN REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND

Nordic Council of Ministers would like to use the occasion to thank Iceland for the efforts and commitment to the Arctic cooperation during its chairmanship of the Arctic Council the past two years. International cooperation has faced many challenges under the Covid-19 pandemic but nevertheless the Arctic Council has been able to make important progress both at the political and working level, as the adoption of the 10-year Strategic plan for the Council clearly demonstrates.

The Arctic is an important part of the geography and territory of the Nordic countries. As members of the Arctic Council and active contributors to various international efforts to ensure sustainable development and environmental protection in the region the Nordic countries play an integral part in shaping the future of the Arctic. The NCM Arctic Cooperation program has since 1996 been the primary tool for the Nordic regional cooperation on the Arctic in this respect.

The NCM is now in the process of adopting a new Arctic Cooperation program for 2022-2024. The current vision for the Nordic region is to make the region the most integrated and sustainable region in the world by 2030. This focus will be important element in the upcoming program as well as continued linkages to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals.

As we move forward towards 2030 and beyond, we must further increase international cooperation in the Arctic. Collectively, we must work together to lower greenhouse gas emissions in line with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement as well as continue efforts to protect the fragile Arctic environment from further contamination, increased pollution and loss of biodiversity.

Under the current review process the NCM has taken stock of its contribution to the work of the Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies. As outlined in the NCM observer review submission, dated June 2020, substantial contributions have been made to the projects of the Arctic Council Working Groups. We would like to thank the Chairmanship and the Secretariat in Tromsø for their cooperation during the review process.

The observer status gives the NCM the opportunity to contribute to ongoing projects and follow the important political discussion within the Arctic Council. On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arctic Council the Nordic Council of Ministers would like to reiterate the NCM commitment to the Arctic Council's important work and wish the Russian Federation every success in the upcoming chairmanship period, 2021-2023.