

Notes for an address by the Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada
to the 12th Arctic Council Ministerial meeting – Reykjavík, Iceland – May 20, 2021

Je suis très content d'être ici à Reykjavik afin de souligner le passage réussi de l'Islande à la présidence du Conseil de l'Arctique et afin poursuivre notre dialogue sur cette région importante.

Je remercie l'équipe islandaise d'avoir coordonné cette réunion des ministres des Affaires étrangères.

Since being founded in Ottawa, Canada, 25 years ago, this Council has evolved into the main forum for Arctic cooperation.

Our work here makes a real difference, whether its -- promoting cooperation among Arctic states and Indigenous peoples, advancing sustainable development or environmental protection in the region.

Global challenges such as the pandemic the climate change crisis and threats to the rules-based international order demand that we work together in a collaborative way.

The Council helps ensure the Arctic remains a place of peaceful cooperation, which remains a priority for Canada.

Indeed, since our 2019 meeting in Finland, Canada has released its Arctic and Northern Policy Framework – which is our roadmap to a future where Arctic and Northern communities are thriving, strong, and safer.

The Framework was co-developed with federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners, with Canada's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples top of mind, and it reflects the priorities of the people living in Canada's North.

It also guides Canada's investments in the North and activities across the circumpolar Arctic.

We have made a number of investments in Canada's domestic and international priorities through this new policy.

They include additional support for Canada's contributions to the Arctic Council.

Canada's Council priorities put people first.

They include a greater focus on the well-being of Northern peoples and communities.

We support sustainable economic, social and cultural development that benefits all who live in the region.

We also want to ensure Indigenous voices are heard loud and clear and continue to influence Arctic Council actions through the participation of Permanent Participants.

We want Indigenous knowledge to be incorporated in working group projects.

Canada also supports the participation of young people in domestic and international forums.

Northern youth are a strong and growing demographic and they must be at the forefront of the work we do.

Much of this work is carried out by the Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. Canada was glad to help establish this group, we have long backed its efforts, and I am delighted to announce our support for the establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the Working Group.

The Secretariat will be hosted at l'Institut Nordique du Québec (INQ) à l'Université Laval in Quebec City.

It will strengthen the Working Group and put this council on firmer footing as it advances human dimension issues.

Le Canada appuiera toujours la science, particulièrement lorsqu'il est question des changements climatiques et de ses impacts sur la région Arctique.

The climate crisis is our most serious long-term threat.

With the Arctic warming three times faster than anywhere else on the planet, the Council's efforts through the working groups have been invaluable and must continue.

The Council has also shown its efficiency and responded remarkably quickly to new priorities – particularly COVID-19.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges faced by many Arctic and Northern communities.

They include infrastructure and connectivity gaps, and economic development.

Once again, these communities have proven their incredible ability to adapt, and we are committed to continuing to support them and work to address these gaps.

Lastly, Canada looks forward to continuing this Arctic dialogue under Russia's leadership of the Council.

We are keen to continue to engage collectively on Arctic Council governance, culture and socioeconomic development, climate change and pollutants, biodiversity, oceans management, and the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples in all Arctic decision-making.

Merci à tous.