

Statement by Iceland on the occasion of the Fourteenth meeting of the Arctic Council

Romsa – Tromsø 12 May 2025

Minister, dear colleagues, heads of delegations of the Permanent Participants,
ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address this meeting of the Arctic Council, albeit on-line and not in person, in beautiful Romsa - Tromsø.

We are meeting in this format in troubling times – the issues which were the *raison d'être* for the forming of the Arctic Council almost 30 years ago and the principles of the Ottawa declaration are being undermined. Iceland's views and grave concerns are very well known, and I will focus my short statement on the Chairships.

Hopefully, our next meeting in two years will take place in a different and a better world. Despite all, we need to reaffirm our commitment to the Arctic Council and the important role it plays as *the* forum for circumpolar co-operation.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Norway – Morten and his team - on the very successful completion of the Norwegian Chairship. Under Norway's steady and creative leadership, steering the Council through tumultuous seas, we have been able to resume work in the Arctic Council at the level of the Working Groups and subsidiary bodies.

We commend our Norwegian colleagues on their great work. We furthermore welcome the Statement of this meeting, which underlines all the key issues the Council has and will pursue for all our benefit.

I want to emphasise the role each of us plays in the well-functioning of the Arctic Council. Our common ground and common responsibility are the Arctic.

Our duty is to the people who call the Arctic home. We need to address their concerns, mitigate the sometimes-devastating effects of the climate crisis and ensure sustainable economic development. Allow me in this context, to acknowledge the Norwegian chair for the inclusion of Youth, which will continue during the Chairship of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Looking ahead and trying to envisage what the future could hold for us, we know that scientific research indicates that we can expect, due to climate change, more drastic changes to the Arctic environment in the foreseeable future than in the past hundred years. As a result, we must anticipate that the Arctic ice will continue to melt and that ice-free marine areas will grow during the summer months. Adapting to the continuing warming of the Arctic and building resilience will be a major challenge for many of the small Arctic communities, not least to indigenous peoples and their ways of life, livelihoods and culture.

The Council's focus on sustainable development and the scientific work that now has been resumed and is carried out by its subsidiary bodies, has yielded an important basis for discussions on a variety of pertinent challenges. This work has in the past and will hopefully continue to increase and broaden our understanding of the Arctic ecosystem, enabling us to make informed decisions on how we approach the region's environment and resources.

Working more closely with Observers of the Arctic Council is of utmost importance. Therefore, we welcome the will to **resume the review of the role of Observers, as outlined in the 2021 Reykjavik Declaration.**

Dear colleagues, leaders of Permanent participants organisations, observers,

In closing, I want to express how much Iceland looks forward to working with colleagues in Nuuk, in Copenhagen and in Tórshavn during the Chairship of the Kingdom of Denmark. Iceland fully aligns with the priorities of the Kingdom of Denmark. We welcome the key role Greenland in the Chair will play and the acknowledgment that is of the importance of including indigenous Peoples' knowledge, experience and awareness of the environment and nature in our work. The inclusive programme of the Kingdom of Denmark reflects this by prioritising issues of direct concern to the Peoples of the Arctic, medical preparedness, mental health, youth engagement and gender equality, but also sustainable economic development, climate change and the ocean, a source of life for so many communities in the Arctic.

I wish the Kingdom of Denmark a successful Chairship in keeping the work of the Arctic Council meaningful and relevant.