

Day of Higher Education Report to the Arctic Council

April 10, 2003

Agenda item 14.

Senior Arctic Officials, Indigenous leaders and Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council, representatives of the Arctic States, observer states and other observers, Friends and Colleagues,

Circumpolar cooperation in the area of Higher Education has played a leading role in demonstrating that the future sustainability of the Arctic region lies in developing our human capacity. On April 8, the Day of Higher Education hosted by the Minister of Higher Education and Science of Iceland in Akureyri, Iceland, began a new level of dialogue among authorities responsible for higher education in the circumpolar countries, and with other representatives of higher education in the region. This event marks the emergence of a new network between the ministries of Education and Science that supports and strengthens the cooperation that exists in the Arctic Council. This new engagement opens for a new area of cooperation between the ministries of Higher Education and counterparts in environment and foreign affairs in the Arctic states.

The representatives of the Day of Higher Education saw our first meeting as an important step in the formation of a circumpolar agenda on higher education. This is an agenda that integrates with the vision already established by the Arctic Council, addressing the challenges of sustainable development, capacity building, environmental protection, and the aspirations of Arctic peoples. We recognize that education lies at the heart of the ability of the northerners to address these challenges themselves. Through these priorities, we wish to highlight opportunities to establish linkages between the activities and outcomes of the Arctic Council working groups and higher education institutions and networks, including the University of the Arctic, in the region.

We see as priorities for the states and peoples of the Arctic:

Higher education and research as key tools in building Human Capital in the Arctic

- Developing appropriate infrastructures and pedagogies that create opportunities for educational access and improved delivery
- Reducing physical barriers to education through communications infrastructure in peripheral areas, including the creation of a network of community learning centres
- Developing non-technical pedagogies that support the particular needs of northern learners
- Focussing on the creation of new northern partnerships to leverage existing capacity

Higher education and research as a means to support a sustainable North.

- Promoting a dialogue among scientists, policy makers, industry and the general public on major issues of sustainability in the Arctic
- Improving the ability of northern educational institutions to meet the needs of northern learners
- Addressing specific community needs, including skills development and professional training
- Supporting the creation of new northern knowledge for the creation of a curriculum relevant to northern learners

Capacity building and higher education needs identified in the Arctic Council programs.

- Creating new mechanisms that facilitate the flow of knowledge between science, policy, and education, making use of the progress made by the Arctic Council working groups
- Highlighting the interrelationship between the Arctic Council's current priorities, including the University of the Arctic, the Arctic Human Development Report, the Northern Research Forum, and information and communications technology (ICT)
- Addressing the education of the Arctic's indigenous peoples and the cooperative development of new educational opportunities to meet their aspirations, including supporting small Arctic languages

Mobility

- Supporting mobility across the region to foster the creation of a new form of circumpolar citizenship
- Encouraging all Arctic governments to support the University of the Arctic's north2north student exchange program
- Engaging in cooperation to reduce barriers to mobility between the Arctic countries, including facilitating credit transfer and streamlining student visa requirements

The participants of the Day of Higher Education encourage the members of the Arctic Council to:

- support the core activities of the University of the Arctic, which, in a comprehensive way, address the priorities of this circumpolar agenda on higher education.
- recommend that the authorities responsible for higher education in each of the Arctic Council member states designate an individual to coordinate issues of higher education in the Arctic, and to act as liaison to their respective Senior Arctic Officials.
- consider the merits and possible modalities of how the Sustainable Development Working Group may promote activity on the priorities highlighted here.