

Arctic Environment Ministers' Meeting

Exploring Common Solutions for the Arctic Environment

Session 3, Finland

Climate change

The message of the IPCC report is clear: In order to achieve the targets of the Paris Agreement enhanced early and ambitious climate change mitigation actions are needed at all levels. As for Finland, our long-term goal is to become a carbon-neutral society. This should be possible to achieve by 2045 in Finland by further strengthening our present climate policy.

Finland wants to speed up action on black carbon

- We cooperate in the Arctic to reduce emissions of black carbon. Arctic Council adopted in its Ministerial meeting in Fairbanks last year an aspirational collective goal. We need enhanced emission reduction actions to achieve that goal. Reducing the black carbon emissions is the quickest way to slow-down the rapid changes in the Arctic.
- Many sectors in Finland have introduced clean air and energy efficiency solutions that reduce the emissions of black carbon. Emissions can be reduced both by companies' own activity and through policy instruments and guidance.
- The Arctic Council's biannual national reporting on black carbon and methane is a very useful platform for sharing best practices. We encourage all Arctic Council states and the Observer States to continue enhance reduction of black carbon emission reductions and to submit their national reports to the Arctic Council . However, we also need to allocate funding to implement the plans.
- Finland will make significant financial contributions to catalyze actions to reduce the emissions of black carbon at international level. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland has prepared an over 2 million euros financing package to black carbon actions. A major part of this contribution will be allocated to international work to reduce gas flaring. Finland is also considering to allocate additional financing to Arctic Council projects focusing on black carbon

- In addition, the Ministries of the Environment and for Foreign Affairs have decided to jointly contribute 200 000 Euros to the global Climate and Clean Air Coalition Trust Fund. We hope this will be used on actions impacting the Arctic region.
- Finland is pleased that the Arctic Council and the OECD have decided to co-operate on the economics of black carbon. This will help in identifying cost-effective actions to be implemented in the Arctic States and the Observer countries. Finland is going to allocate funding to this study.
- Finland is contributing resources to black carbon research and atmospheric monitoring. Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI) operates a major Arctic atmospheric monitoring activity in Pallas, Finland, including atmospheric measurements of black carbon and methane.
- It is necessary to continue and speed up sharing of experiences and implementing of joint actions in reducing black carbon, and allocate needed financing to this work.

What we can do more in enhancing actions and cooperation in the Arctic?

- There are untapped renewable energy sources, as well as potential to improve energy efficiency. Investments in local renewable energy bring economic opportunities for the communities and work for the local people.
- Regional actors have a major role to play here. In the Arctic cooperation we should strengthen the link to the local level.
- In Finland carbon-neutral municipalities network in a HINKU forum. These municipalities are committed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 80% between 2007 and 2030. One of the network's municipalities, Ii in Northern Finland, won the European Commission's Regio Stars award in 2017. I think this is a great model for other countries, as well. [You find more information about this project outside this room]
- Changing weather and environmental conditions require new solutions in built environment. Therefore, Finland has launched a new circumpolar project in which we are looking how the construction needs in the Arctic could be carried out in a carbon neutral manner.

We need cooperate on adaptation in order to strengthen the resilience in the Arctic:

- The preparedness for extreme weather conditions and natural disasters needs further improvement. Transboundary cooperation and climate and weather services are key

issues in risk management. Finland has strong expertise in forecasting and observing ice conditions and operating in various kinds of ice situations.

- This summer has shown in Finland that forest fire management has been able to live up to very high standards, despite extreme conditions. Modern ICT technologies combined with remote sensing technologies and meteorological co-operation can significantly improve fire prevention and fire fighting.
- Local communities have important role in knowledge production on the rapidly changing climate. We can do more to engage Indigenous peoples and their knowledge, especially in observations and decisions concerning adaptation.

Mr Chairman, I now turn to biodiversity:

Huge interest in the Arctic Biodiversity Congress this week here in Rovaniemi, shows the commitment to cooperate on biodiversity conservation

- Arctic Council has done very valuable work on ecosystem approach to management. This work deserves revitalization. The Arctic council could identify key themes for implementation of Ecosystem approach to management. These themes could relate to the pressures from human activities on the ecosystems and to the needs to enhance their resilience. The themes could help consolidate current wide and diverse work by the Arctic States and Arctic Council working groups.
- We should recognize that conservation and sustainable use really go hand in hand. At the global level there has been no halt in the overall trend of biodiversity declining. We need to mainstream biodiversity in all sectors.
- There are responsible companies operating in the Arctic, which do not want to cause adverse impacts to the fragile nature. These companies would benefit from the knowledge about the Arctic biodiversity, people and culture. The knowledge and information would help the companies to operate in a sustainable way.
- There are expectations towards the Arctic Council to show leadership in developing marine protected areas network. Some Arctic states have recently taken important steps in strengthening the marine protected areas within their exclusive economic zone.
- However, I would like to stress, that the protection in the Central Arctic Ocean is at present 0%. This is the reason why Finland has proposed that the Arctic Council would launch a process of looking into different protection opportunities for the Central Arctic

Ocean. This work would support and enhance efficiency of the national protection efforts in the whole Arctic.

- Finland is cooperating with the Saami people based on the Akwé: Kon Guidelines under Article 8 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. This cooperation and applying the global guidelines to a local level has strengthened the co-production of biodiversity related knowledge.

Now turning to pollution prevention

- As the human activities increase in the Arctic region, we are also exposing the fragile Arctic environment to new man-made chemicals. There is growing concern about impacts of many new and largely uncontrolled chemicals, the sources of which are often unknown.

- The Arctic States and the Arctic Council should show leadership on international pollution control. International agreements offer the most effective means of reducing contamination in the Arctic, but agreements are only effective when they are implemented.

- In addition, the recent AMAP Assessment on Chemicals of Emerging Arctic Concern provides evidence of presence of many such chemicals in the Arctic, which cannot be regulated through the existing international conventions. Additional unilateral, regional or global actions such as Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, SAICM, needs to be considered.

- In 1991 the Declaration on the Protection of the Arctic Environment emphasized our responsibility to protect and preserve the Arctic environment. In this context I would to highlight the continuity of research and monitoring activities.

- **Marine litter and microplastics** are a pressing concern both in the Arctic as well as globally. Because of the transboundary nature of the problem, we need a holistic global response to marine litter and microplastics. I would like to encourage all to take an active role in supporting international efforts to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics in relevant fora such as the Basel Convention, IMO, FAO, and regional seas conventions. We support Arctic Council planned work to establish a regional action plan on marine litter in the Arctic.

- I would like to highlight the important work under UNEA where an ad hoc expert group is tasked to identify potential options for the next steps forward. These options will be considered by UNEA-4 in next March.

- In Finland, we are currently finalising a national roadmap to find solutions to the challenges caused by plastics more widely. We will be happy to share more of our ideas and experience on this issue as our work progresses.

Managing cumulative pressures in the Arctic is an emerging challenge

- Environmental Impact Assessment is an existing tool in every Arctic country's legislation. A full utilization of this tool is important in reaching out for sustainable development in the Arctic.

- Arctic EIA project is aimed to strengthen the good practices of environmental impact assessment in the context of economic activities in the Arctic. Assessing social impacts will be an important part of the project. Finland wishes that the Arctic EIA recommendations will be endorsed in the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in 2019 and the implementation can start in the next workplan period.

- Risk management and minimising environmental damages are a key element in terms of safety of maritime transport and Arctic expertise. In Finland measures related to preparedness and combating environmental damages include comprehensive training, purchasing and introducing new equipment. We have a good know-how in this area both in the public and private sector.

- Finland has strong expertise in the **circular economy**. I would like to shortly highlight solutions from Finnish Lapland

- The city of Rovaniemi is one of the trailblazer municipalities participating in the Circwaste circular economy project of the Ministry of the Environment. Not far away from here, in Kemi-Tornio industrial area industrial symbioses are developed. Solutions are sought to utilise side-streams from industrial processes. In the Lapland University of Applied Sciences there is a project on biowaste as raw material.

Mr Chairman, last but not least,

I would emphasize that we need to build long-term human capacity to support observations and research. Understanding the vulnerability and resilience of Arctic environment and societies requires increased international scientific cooperation, strong Arctic networks and contributions from Arctic Council Observers.