

**The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**Intervention at Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting, May 11, 2017, Fairbanks, Alaska**

Thank you very much.

Normally it is a pleasure for Canadians to do anything in a hockey rink, but I have to say it feels like you're rubbing it in today because the Oilers suffered a terrible defeat last night and I know Chief Bill Erasmus feels the pain that Oilers fans are feeling.

[Russian]

Right from the start, I would like to welcome our Russian neighbours and in particular Indigenous peoples. We are your neighbours but on certain issues we have different points of view and as always in the Arctic Council we have been able and will be able to discuss and address our joint issues in the North.

[English]

The Arctic Council is so valuable to all of us and very much for Canada. It is a place where we the Arctic nations can set aside issues outside the Arctic, and appreciate that we have the real honour of shared stewardship of this incredibly beautiful and precious region. It's a real honour for Canada to be here and to be a part of this conversation.

I am grateful to our American host for starting the conversation today with a very moving statement, dance and singing from the Indigenous people here.

50% of the population of the Canadian Arctic is Indigenous peoples and that is a very important focus for us in the Arctic. I do want to say especially to the Indigenous people represented here that an absolute priority of our government, as our Prime Minister says, is our relationship with the Indigenous people of Canada. We have done terrible things in the past and a priority for us is to have truth and reconciliation and to build a strong nation-to-nation relationship. The conversation here today with representatives of Indigenous peoples, where that have a seat at the table with us, is a really important part of that and I am glad we are able to do that together.

I am really glad Rex [the U.S. Chair] mentioned the RISING SUN project. We had a workshop in Iqaluit a few months ago. It is a very painful issue in Canada right now and anything we can do together on suicide and mental wellbeing, especially in Indigenous communities, is really important.

When you speak with the Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Okalik Egeesiak, you will hear that something very important for Canada and the Indigenous people is the trade in Indigenous products. That is part of the life on the land that we heard about and a good priority for us to be sharing here.

The environment is so important for all of us. I want to thank the United States, and all of our officials, for reaching a strong statement which says something very important to the world and I am really proud and glad that we got there.

Finally, last week in Ottawa I hosted a lunch with our Arctic Ambassadors and the Russian Ambassador to Canada made a great point: “the Arctic is not just a place on the map, for all of our countries, it is a home.”

It is a beautiful home. It is a home that is an important resource for the planet. It is also a home where people need to earn a living.

I hope that we can all work to support innovation and economic growth. We are jealous of Norwegian colleagues who talk about having stronger growth North of the Arctic Circle than South – we have a lot to learn from that.

We also signed a new science agreement. Data-based policy is very important and really promising and a place where we can collaborate together.

Thanks to our U.S. hosts for your hard work and it will be a pleasure to work with Finland.

[Repetition in French].

Merci.