



THE ARCTIC COUNCIL AND THE NORTHERN FORUM

A Northern Forum Position Paper

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What is The Northern Forum?

The Northern Forum is a non-profit organisation of nearly thirty subnational or regional governments from nine northern countries. The Forum's Board of Governors consists of senior governmental executives such as Premiers, Presidents, Heads of Republics and Governors.

Northern regions share characteristics that create unique challenges for northern national and subnational leaders. These complex factors precipitated the formation of The Northern Forum. They include:

- Harsh climates and vulnerable ecosystems
- Small populations, diverse and strong indigenous cultures
- Economies based primarily upon extraction of natural resources and out-sourcing of goods
- Limited internal investment capital and high operating costs
- Limited infrastructure, mostly oriented in North-South directions
- Limited influence on national government and multinational corporate decision making

The idea of creating an organisation of northern regional governments was raised in 1974 by the government of Hokkaido, Japan, during the first of a series of international conferences on northern issues. The Northern Forum developed from a Northern Regions Conference held in 1990 in Anchorage, Alaska. The organisation was formally established in November 1991.

The Northern Forum's Mission

The Forum was established to respond to the common characteristics shared by the world's Northern Regions. Its mission is:

- ***to improve the quality of life of Northern peoples by providing Northern regional leaders a means to share their knowledge and experience in addressing common challenges;***
- ***and to support sustainable development and the implementation of co-operative socio-economic initiatives among Northern regions and through international fora.***

Arctic Council - Northern Forum Relations

The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum that provides a mechanism to address the common concerns and challenges faced by the Arctic governments and the people of the Arctic. Its members are the national governments of the world's eight Arctic states.

The Northern Forum is the world's only group representing subnational or regional governments from throughout the North. For ten years, the Forum has worked at the leading edge of trends in broader international representation of subnational interests. During this time, the Forum's

members have passed seven Resolutions regarding the Council and its predecessor the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS).

Several of the Forum's current and completed inter-governmental projects are compatible with the work of the Council. Both groups should support joint implementation of projects, and the synergies that would develop as a result. To benefit all northern residents, preserve northern and Arctic environments, and promote peaceful international relations, the Council and the Forum should enjoy strong and effective relations.

Cooperation. It has long been the position of the Forum to cooperate with the AEPS and the Arctic Council to "promote the transformation of the Arctic and North to a region of peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity."¹

In its program for 2000-2002, The Finnish Chair of the Arctic Council states:

The Arctic Council should strengthen co-operation at regional level and enhance the Council's interaction with the Arctic. For co-operation among northern regions, The Northern Forum has been established. . . . **Co-operation between the Council and the Forum should be enhanced.** ²

The Northern Forum congratulates the Arctic Council on its evolution since 1996, noting particularly its involvement of Arctic indigenous peoples. The Forum seeks to develop a working relationship with the Arctic Council by:

- continuing to promote joint project implementation (see below);
- participating in plenary Senior Arctic Officials and Ministerial meetings of the Council, including briefing the Council on behalf of the Forum's members;
- inviting the nations' Senior Arctic Officials and Working Group Chairs to participate in Northern Forum General Assemblies and other meetings, including briefings on the activities of the Council;
- promoting better co-ordination among regional and subnational actors that are working with the Council on specific issues; and
- joining with the Council to raise global awareness of Arctic and northern issues, in order to address issues best resolved in national capitals and international arenas.

Northern Forum's Status with the Arctic Council. As the Arctic Council was being established in 1995, the Forum's members sought Permanent Participant status.³ The Forum has been a permanent Observer of the Council since the latter's creation in 1996.

The Northern Forum appreciates its status as permanent Observer of the Arctic Council, and seeks to help the Council better to utilise the capabilities of its growing list of Observers.

Sustainable Development. Fostering good relations among its members, which is a foundation for sustainable economic development, is a key aspect of the Forum's work. In 1994, the Forum's members endorsed the Rovaniemi Code of Conduct regarding business operations in the North.⁴ The Forum in 1992 urged the national governments to address sustainable development, and noted that "coordinated work between national and regional governments will promote better environmental protection and sustainable development in the North by avoiding duplicative efforts."⁵

The Northern Forum has particular interest in cooperating with the Arctic Council on sustainable development, including its economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects. The Forum welcomes the creation of the Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), and

¹ Northern Forum Resolution 53, "Concerning the Status of The Northern Forum within the Arctic Council," 6 September 1996.

² *Program for the Finnish Chair of the Arctic Council 2000-2002*, page 7 (emphasis in the original).

³ Northern Forum Resolution 38, "Concerning the Arctic Council," 14 September 1995.

⁴ The Rovaniemi Code of Conduct: Principles Related to the Conduct Of Business Operations in the Circumpolar North, Arctic Opportunities Conference, Rovaniemi, 12-15 September 1994.

⁵ Northern Forum Resolution 7, "Cooperation with the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy," 4 September 1992.

applauds Finland's intent to work cooperatively on tourism. In its program for 2000-2002, The Finnish Chair of the Arctic Council states:

Finland aims at strengthening co-operation on tourism that supports sustainable development, by utilising and co-ordinating the work done in this field by other bodies, such as the WWF and The Northern Forum.⁶

In keeping with the Forum's mission, its members seek to strengthen meaningful cooperation with the Council and the SDWG through the following and other means:

- continuing to participate in meetings of the SDWG;
- exploring closer cooperation, including joint implementation, regarding projects in:
 1. Tourism (e.g., The Northern Forum has a Priority Project "Sustainable Tourism in the North");
 2. Reindeer (the Forum's Priority Project "Reindeer Management" has operated for several years);
 3. Northern timberline forests (the Forum endorses a "Boreal Forest Management" project);
 4. Infrastructure development (the Forum endorses the development of the Northern Sea Route; improvement of circumpolar and small-craft aviation in the North; a northern international financial institution and the "Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force");
 5. Coastal fishery management (the Forum completed a wildlife management project in "Management of Marine Resources");
 6. Information & Communications Technology – ITC (including telemedicine and distance education);
 7. Health (the Forum endorses a project "Sobriety Among Northern Peoples");
 8. Education and training (the Forum oversees the operations of the Northern Forum Academy, and the Forum's Secretariat operates a thriving internship program);
 9. Children and youth (The Northern Forum has a Youth Eco-Forum Priority Project called "Environmental Education in Northern Regions," and endorses its members' summer camps for children); and
 10. The position of women and gender equality; and
- advancing the participation of Indigenous peoples in northern economies.

Environment. Some of the Forum's most successful projects have been environmental in scope. The Forum recently completed an "Environmental Research and Monitoring of the Atmosphere and Oceans" project, which the Japanese government decided to continue.

The Northern Forum promotes closer collaboration with the Arctic Council regarding environmental issues, particularly at the project level. The Forum will seek:

- to participate in meetings of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP) and Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Working Groups as possible and appropriate; and
- to cooperate in the acquisition and use of data for projects relating to monitoring of contaminants in the environment, conservation of biodiversity and minimization of habitat fragmentation, circumpolar protected areas, conservation of biodiversity and (particularly) migratory bird species, climate change and assessment.

Disaster Response. The Northern Forum has a history of using its unique abilities to help respond to emergency situations in Northern Regions. In 1994, the Komi Republic in Russia received \$120 million in funding to clean up a major oil spill from the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, primarily due to the efforts of The Northern Forum. In 1995, the Forum assisted with disaster response after an earthquake on Sakhalin Island. During the summer of 1998 the group was instrumental in regional and international efforts addressing spring flooding in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Russia and in Heilongjiang Province, China. In 2001, the Forum again helped Sakha respond to devastating 100-year floods. The Northern Forum

⁶ *Program for the Finnish Chair of the Arctic Council 2000-2002*, page 7 (emphasis in the original).

has promoted safe practices in the transportation and storage of nuclear waste and petroleum, and the development of related emergency response and monitoring systems.⁷

In keeping with its mission and its history of responding to disasters in the Northern Regions, The Northern Forum will continue to promote closer collaboration with the Arctic Council regarding international emergencies and disasters through the following and other means:

- participating in meetings of the Environmental Preparation, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) Working Group;
- helping to develop northern oil spill and nuclear emission response systems that will improve coordination among regional and national governments and other appropriate entities (the Forum completed a project in " Environmental Health and Emergency Response" and endorses a potential "Oil Spill Response in the Northern Regions" project); and
- co-sponsoring a Workshop on International Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, to be held in spring 2002 in Alaska.

About The Northern Forum

Northern Forum Activities

The Northern Forum's cooperative projects, international meetings, and other operations focus on four types of activities:

- Environment
- Sustainable Economic Development
- Society and Culture; and
- Governance and Policy

Current Northern Forum Priority Projects

For ten years, The Northern Forum's members have sponsored and implemented inter-regional projects. The Forum also endorses other activities. Current **Priority Projects** include:

- **Wildlife Management.** This "umbrella" project currently involves three subprojects: a Bear Working Group; a Protected Area Working Group, and a Shorebird Working Group. Past subprojects included a compilation of regional wildlife management guidelines and a comparison of fisheries management regimes.
- **Reindeer Management.** This economic development project involves the transfer of Nordic reindeer processing and management techniques to northern Russian regions, emphasising the preservation of indigenous cultures and economies. This project's focus is compatible with the Arctic Council's new project in reindeer husbandry.
- **Environmental Education in Northern Regions.** The project seeks to raise young northerners' knowledge of environmental issues by holding one or more international "Youth Eco-Forums." The project will enable student representatives to report directly to The Northern Forum and the United Nations on their findings. It also includes production of an eco-handbook in Chinese, English, Japanese and Russian for use in classrooms throughout the North.
- **Waterbird Surveys in Arctic Russia.** Supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this project will enhance understanding of waterbirds that summer in some Northern Forum regions in the Russian Far East.
- **Sustainable Tourism in the North.** This project's objectives include: 1) strengthening the development of sustainable tourism practices in Northern Regions; 2) exploration and use of Information Technologies to promote sustainable practice; and 3) achievement of an environmentally orientated image for Northern tourism. Cooperation with the Council's tourism efforts has begun to develop.

⁷ Northern Forum resolution 13, 3 October 1993. Northern Forum resolution 22, "In Support of Environmental Health and Emergency Response," 16 September 1994.

- **[Development of Technologies to Improve Living Standards in the North.** This new project's goals include: 1) collecting information about new technologies; 2) contact with manufacturers of Northern-oriented products; 3) familiarizing inhabitants of Northern Forum regions about these technologies, and creating publicity-related jobs in the process; and 4) careful and sensitive introduction of some new technologies into traditional northern economies.]
- **[Cold Climate Workshop – International Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance.** This new project involves a single workshop, to be held in spring 2002 in conjunction with a meeting of the Arctic Council's EPPR working group. The workshop should enable practitioners of disaster response to improve the effectiveness of international efforts in cold climate environments, wherever they occur. Workshop participants will identify "best practices," improve contacts, and perhaps produce a draft set of guidelines for practical use.]
- **[Development of Science Education in the North.** This new project's goals include: 1) cooperation to improve use St. Petersburg's scientific potential to strengthen scientific and educational efforts among Northern Regions; 2) raising funds to implement educational programs in Northern Regions; and 3) retraining ex-military, youth and others in skills needed in the North.]
- **[Geo-informational Project for Northern Indigenous Peoples.** This new project seeks to create a databases to support northern indigenous peoples. Information, data and analyses would be made available on the Internet. The project will include efforts to increase user access in Russia and other northern countries to a greater variety of materials about northern indigenous peoples.]

The Northern Forum also has several **Endorsed Projects**, which are initiatives that do not meet all requirements of priority projects, but which the Forum's members wish to encourage. One such project is "Oil Spill Preparation and Response in Northern Regions." Its primary objectives are to compile regional oil spill response notification networks, technologies and practices into a comprehensive report; and to develop a manual for oil spill response for regional governments. **Endorsed Activities** undertaken by individual regional members are also encouraged by the Northern Forum.

Completed Northern Forum Projects

Following is a list of projects completed by the Forum's members; other activities are not included:

1. First Circumpolar Aviation Expedition (1994)
2. Oil Spill Response in the Komi Republic (1994-95)
3. Environmental Status Report on the Northern Regions (1995)
4. Northern Lights International Film Festival (1995)
5. Kamchatka Tourism and Parks Development (1996)
6. Wildlife Management I: Guidelines for Wildlife Management in Northern Regions (1996)
7. Environmental Health and Emergency Response (1996)
8. Wildlife Management II: Management of Marine Resources (1998)
9. Environmental Research and Monitoring of the Atmosphere and Oceans (1999)
10. Shorebird Sister School Internet Website (2000)

Northern Forum Memberships

Membership falls into four categories:

1. Northern regional governments
2. Northern national governments without internal sub-jurisdictions
3. Associate (non-voting): businesses and institutions
4. Advocate (non-voting): non-profit and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Current **Regional Members** include:

Canada

Province of Alberta
Northwest Territories
Yukon Territory

Russian Federation

Arkhangelsk Oblast
Chukotka Autonomous Okrug
Evenk Autonomous Okrug

Peoples' Republic of China	Kamchatka Oblast
Heilongjiang Province	Khanty Mansi Autonomous Okrug
Finland	Komi Republic
Province of Lapland	Magadan Oblast
Japan	Nenets Autonomous Okrug
Hokkaido Prefecture	City of Saint Petersburg
Mongolia	Sakha Republic (Yakutia)
Dornod Aimag	Sakhalin Oblast
Norway	Vologda Oblast
Landsdelsutvalget (Regional Association of Northern Norway)	Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug
	Sweden
	Norrbottn County
	Västerbotten County
	United States of America
	State of Alaska

The Republic of Korea falls into membership category two.

Current **Business Members** include:

1. Taiga Trading Company, Alaska
2. Kometos Oy, Finland
3. Fortum Oil and Gas Oy, Finland
4. OAO Zvezda-Energetika, St. Petersburg

Secretariats

The main office of The Northern Forum, or Secretariat, is located in Anchorage, Alaska. It performs a number of duties, including: providing information to and assisting communications among members; translation; co-ordinating meetings, and securing project funding. The Sakha Republic (Yakutia) and the City of St. Petersburg operate Russian Associate Secretariats. Lapland in northern Finland hosts a North European Associate Secretariat. These branch offices are vital to the coordination of the group's activities.

Funding

The Northern Forum's primary sources of funding are membership dues and special grants from members. Northern Forum Priority Projects are funded by participating members. Backing for specific projects and operations is sought from external sources.

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