

ROUND TABLE 2:
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC
William Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada

TALKING POINTS

- Canada is very pleased to hear that progress on the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) is continuing. Along with all Arctic countries, we eagerly await the results of this assessment. In Canada, stories are emerging continually from the North providing first-hand accounts that climate changes are already occurring in the Arctic and that the environment and people of the Arctic are struggling to adapt to these changes. We anticipate that the ACIA will provide much-needed guidance on developing appropriate responses.
- Climate change is expected to be both extreme and highly variable in its impacts in the North. It is a prime example of the need to build local capacity to respond quickly to changing circumstances, that is, to convert knowledge into action. It is critical that we find means to reduce the vulnerability of Arctic communities to climate change, contaminants and the social, economic and cultural impacts of globalization. We need to help communities identify means to anticipate the impacts of change and to build the local institutional capacity that is required to adapt.
- I thank Iceland for its willingness to lead the Arctic Human Development Report and I would also like to congratulate the Standing Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians for initiating this project. The report will provide baseline data that will be critical to understanding the current situation and future trends in the Arctic.
- One of the key distinguishing features of the Arctic Council is the role of Indigenous peoples. The Arctic Council remains unique in that there is a seat at the table for each of six international indigenous organizations as Permanent Participants. I strongly believe that it is a model that can work elsewhere and that should be promoted in other international fora. The Arctic Council has benefited tremendously from the contribution of Permanent Participants who are bringing their ideas, knowledge and wisdom to the table, as well as their direct experience of the human face of Arctic issues.
- However, Indigenous peoples do not have the same financial resources as states and they cannot participate fully in the Arctic Council without financial support. I urge the member states to provide sustained financial support to the Permanent Participants because, if Permanent Participants are unable to be present and cannot exert influence on the decisions that affect them, the Arctic Council will lose an important part of its legitimacy and an essential mechanism in its effectiveness.