

Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde's statement at the 12th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting on 20 May 2021 in Reykjavik

- Excellencies, colleagues, Arctic friends, it is truly a great pleasure to meet you all here in person in beautiful Iceland. We meet under very special circumstances. I want to thank you Guðlaugur (Thór Thórdarson) for making the meeting possible.
- I congratulate the Icelandic team to a very successful chairpersonship. Your dedication, leadership and professionalism has been highly appreciated.
- Today we commemorate a quarter of a century of close and constructive cooperation through the Arctic Council. We should be proud of our achievements. Our cooperation based on international law has contributed to peace and stability in the Arctic. The Council should continue to provide leadership in addressing new challenges and opportunities in the Arctic.
- Arctic is the region most effected by global warming. The strong and clear message from the scientific community, that has been voiced throughout decades, is now being increasingly confirmed with measurements and scientific data. According to the latest reports warming of the Arctic is three times faster than the global average.
- I welcome our joint message in the declaration on the importance of achieving the Paris agreement goals, on reducing greenhouse gases and short-lived pollutants. The green transition, including a drastic increase of the use of renewable energy sources will be key in our endeavours. It is needed for the protection of the Arctic and its inhabitants.
- Business and industry have an important role to play in this regard. In the Swedish Arctic the HYBRIT initiative shows the way to fossil steel making, as an example.
- The scope of Arctic Council's agenda is growing. We want a strong Council and we need to ensure that we are equipped to deal with new challenges and cross-cutting themes. I welcome the strategic plan. It will help focus our work. We should also ensure active engagement by and with our international partners.

- I welcome the strengthened focus on marine issues. Sweden will chair PAME for next two years. We are proud that we today as part of the SAO report, welcome the Swedish scientific model aimed at helping in the very complex process of designing and establishing marine protected areas. Sweden will continue the research and include the Central Arctic Ocean in the model. We look forward to continued collaboration with you all.

- Rising temperatures is the main driver for change in the Arctic. As the Arctic is opening up, we must be able to ensure that the fragile and unique Arctic environment is protected. We must ensure that the development is aligned with Agenda 2030.

- The rights and interests of indigenous peoples, as well as traditional knowledge must be respected in the development of the Arctic. Increased economic activity in the Arctic must benefit local economic growth.

We're in this together.

We should make the most of the opportunities our cooperation creates to realize the great potential inherent in our Arctic region.

I wish Minister Lavrov and his Arctic team all the best as the Russian chairpersonship commences. We will support you, and we encourage you to maintain and seek consensus in the Council to ensure continued constructive cooperation.

Thank you.