

EXPLORING COMMON SOLUTIONS

FINLAND'S
CHAIRMANSHIP
2017-2019



STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Timo Soini

On the Occasion of the Eleventh Ministerial meeting
of the Arctic Council
Rovaniemi 6-7 May 2019

The Ministers representing the eight Arctic States, joined by representatives of the six Permanent Participant organizations, gathered in Rovaniemi, Finland, at the conclusion of Finland's second Chairmanship, at the Eleventh Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council.

As the Chair of the Arctic Council, I have the honor to make the following statement.

Our meeting **reaffirmed** the commitment to maintain peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic,

It **emphasized** the role of Arctic States in providing leadership in addressing new opportunities and challenges in the Arctic, working in close cooperation with the Permanent Participants,

The meeting **acknowledged** the Arctic Council as the preeminent intergovernmental forum for the Arctic region, **noted** the progress made to advance Arctic cooperation, and reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen the Arctic Council and its activities,

A majority of us **regarded** climate change as a fundamental challenge facing the Arctic and **acknowledged** the urgent need to take mitigation and adaptation actions and to strengthen resilience, and **welcomed** the outcomes of the UNFCCC COP24 in Katowice, including the Paris agreement work programme,

The meeting **recognized** that activities outside the Arctic region can have significant effects within the Arctic and **noted** that the changes taking place are resulting in social, environmental and economic impacts,



The meeting **recognized** the value for the Arctic region of national efforts and cooperation inspired by the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development,

It **recognized** the diversity of the societies, cultures and economies in the Arctic, and **reaffirmed** the commitment to the well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic, to sustainable development and to the protection of the Arctic environment,

The meeting **recognized** the rights of Arctic indigenous peoples and the unique role of the Permanent Participants within the Arctic Council, as well as the commitment to consult and cooperate in good faith with Arctic indigenous peoples and to support their meaningful engagement in Arctic Council activities,

It **emphasized** the important role of scientific research, together with traditional knowledge and local knowledge, in Arctic decision-making and in the work of the Arctic Council,

The meeting **acknowledged** the contributions of local authorities and regional forums of cooperation, and **took note** of the interests of all Arctic residents and communities in the work of the Arctic Council,

The meeting **welcomed** the entry into force of the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation, the third legally binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council, and **encouraged** its implementation to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency in the development of scientific knowledge about the region,

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

The meeting **welcomed** the Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting held in 2018,

Our meeting **emphasized** the need for national efforts and cooperation on pollution prevention, emission reductions and conservation of biodiversity, while a majority of us particularly **emphasized** the need to reduce greenhouse gas and black carbon emissions and to enhance work on climate change adaptation,

The meeting **reiterated** the importance of developing comprehensive monitoring and observation networks in the Arctic,



A majority of us **noted with concern** the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C and its findings, and **emphasized** the importance of mitigation and adaptation actions to limit the impacts of climate change on Arctic communities as well as on Arctic cryosphere and ecosystems,

The meeting **welcomed** the Arctic Climate Change Update 2019 report, and a majority of us **underlined** that changes in Arctic ecosystems have serious consequences for people who rely on and benefit from them, and **called on** the Arctic Council to continue monitoring and assessing changes taking place in the Arctic, in collaboration with relevant international organizations,

The meeting **noted with appreciation** the convening of the 2nd Arctic Science Ministerial in 2018 and **noted** the joint statement of the Ministers adopted on that occasion,

Our meeting **welcomed** the outcomes of the Arctic Resilience Forum and **noted** the work carried out within the Arctic Resilience Action Framework to increase the capacity of Arctic States and Arctic communities to respond to risks and changes in ways that support positive socio-economic development and healthy, functioning ecosystems and ecosystem services,

The meeting **encouraged** further work to support Arctic communities in adapting to climate change impacts, such as those caused by permafrost thaw, and in responding to weather extremes and emergencies, including the increased risk of wildfires and other weather-related natural disasters,

It **noted** the value of international and national meteorological, cryospheric and oceanographic expertise to the work of the Arctic Council, and **encouraged** intensified meteorological cooperation to improve and support informed decision-making,

The meeting **welcomed** the efforts made by Sustaining Arctic Observation Network in enhancing a well-integrated Arctic observing system and promoting free and open access to Arctic observational data, and the progress achieved through the Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure, and **looked forward** to continued efforts to coordinate the management and sharing of data,

The meeting **approved** the report of the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane as a toolbox for future actions to curb emissions, **noted** with satisfaction that reported emissions of black carbon as well as methane are decreasing, **acknowledged** the



active participation of many Observers in the work, and **encouraged** non-Arctic States to consider enhancing their domestic actions,

Support was **expressed** for the continuation of the work of the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane to share best practices, identify and propose recommendations and review progress of reducing emissions of black carbon and methane, which improves air quality and health and limits Arctic warming,

Support was likewise **expressed** to enhanced national efforts and international cooperation to reduce black carbon and methane emissions, and the importance of concrete cooperative demonstration projects to reduce black carbon emissions in the Arctic was **underlined**,

The meeting **noted with appreciation** the scientific work under the Arctic Council on short-lived climate pollutants including socio-economic impacts associated with emission reductions,

It **welcomed** the results of the 2nd Arctic Biodiversity Congress held in 2018, **commended** efforts to mainstream biodiversity into Arctic development and Arctic Council decision-making where relevant, **called** for strengthened cooperation for conserving Arctic biodiversity, and a majority of us **stressed** climate change as a major threat to biodiversity,

The meeting **approved** the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program's State of the Arctic Freshwater Biodiversity report, and efforts to address biodiversity monitoring for other Arctic ecosystems were **encouraged**,

The meeting **welcomed** the progress in implementing the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative, and **looked forward** to further collaboration with Observers to secure the long-term sustainability of declining Arctic-breeding migratory bird populations,

It **approved** the Resilience and Management of Arctic Wetlands phase 1 report and **encouraged** further work in conservation and restoration of wetlands and supporting the ecosystem services they provide, and a majority of us **highlighted** that wetlands in the Arctic are critically important as a habitat and a carbon storage and sink and contribute to climate resilience,

The meeting **recognized** the need for actions to address the adverse impacts of invasive alien species, and **encouraged** the implementation of the Arctic Invasive Alien

Species Strategy and Action Plan including its recommendation to develop early detection/rapid response initiatives,

The meeting **approved** the assessment on Biological Effects of Contaminants on Arctic Wildlife and Fish highlighting the risk of pollutants and chemicals of emerging concern to Arctic species, particularly those at the top of the food chain, and food security,

It **recognized** the particular vulnerability of Arctic ecosystems and communities to mercury pollution and persistent organic pollutants, **looked forward** to an updated assessment on mercury in the Arctic, pilot projects and sharing of best practices, and a majority of us **highlighted** the importance of contributing to further efforts through the Minamata Convention and the Stockholm Convention,

The meeting **supported** the implementation of the Project Support Instrument (PSI) projects promoting best available technologies and practices aimed at environmental protection,

THE SEAS

The meeting **recognized** the importance of healthy and resilient marine ecosystems for Arctic communities and livelihoods of people in the Arctic, and **emphasized** the need to ensure sustainable use and conservation of Arctic marine resources, while it was **acknowledged** that Arctic marine ecosystems are under increasing pressure from multiple stressors including ocean warming and acidification, long-range pollution, invasive species and increased human activities,

The meeting **welcomed** the important work being done in accordance with Arctic Marine Strategic Plan for conservation and sustainable use of resources in the Arctic marine environment, and a majority of us **stressed** the need for adaptation to climate change,

The meeting **welcomed** the signing and **looked forward** to entry into force of the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, which provides for possible future fisheries regulation and strengthens future marine science cooperation in the area, acknowledging the need to apply the precautionary approach to ensure conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks in Arctic waters,

The meeting **noted** the importance of conservation and sustainable use of marine bioresources for Arctic communities, and **encouraged** studies and sharing of best practices on the blue bioeconomy in the Arctic,

The meeting **welcomed** the Guidelines for Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Management of Arctic Marine Ecosystems, and **looked forward** to the 2nd International Conference on Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Management in the Arctic,

Further cooperation on an ecologically connected, representative and effectively managed network of Marine Protected Areas was **encouraged**, drawing upon relevant area-based conservation measures applied by Arctic states in areas under their jurisdiction in accordance with their respective national policies and legislation,

Our meeting **adopted** the report of the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation II and its recommendations on complementary enhancements to existing Arctic Council institutions, **noted** that further work is required to meet all needs identified by the Task Force, and **decided** to establish a SAO based mechanism to coordinate marine issues in the Arctic Council,

It **welcomed** the report on Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities, and **noted** its findings and the publicly available information database for good practices,

The meeting **welcomed** the Arctic Ocean Acidification report and **noted** the vulnerability of Arctic marine ecosystems to the impacts of ocean acidification, the role of increasing carbon dioxide levels in the process of ocean acidification was **recognized**, and the need for enhanced research and monitoring of ocean acidification processes and their subsequent environmental and socio-economic impacts, including on Arctic communities and peoples, was **underlined**,

Our meeting **noted with concern** that marine litter, including plastic and microplastics, represents a serious environmental problem on a global scale, including in the Arctic, **welcomed** the Desktop Study on Marine Litter, and **supported** the development of an Arctic regional action plan for reducing marine litter,

The meeting **welcomed** the progress made to promote safe and sustainable Arctic marine shipping, consistent with the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment Recommendations, **noted** with satisfaction the launch of the Arctic Ship Traffic Database, and **welcomed** the Underwater Noise in the Arctic-State of Knowledge report,



The joint submission by all Arctic states to the International Maritime Organization on a proposal for regional arrangement for Arctic port waste reception facilities was **welcomed**, the operationalization of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum was **noted with satisfaction**, and further efforts for harmonized implementation of the Polar Code were **encouraged**,

The work to address the risks associated with the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil as fuel by ships in the Arctic, including within the IMO, was **acknowledged**, as well as the need to continue to provide relevant expertise and information, including on alternative fuels, to those involved in Arctic shipping matters,

The meeting **noted with satisfaction** the progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA) and **welcomed** the MOSPA 2018 After Action Report, the Exercise Planning Guidance, and the status report on the Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic,

The meeting **welcomed** the important work to engage the small communities in the Arctic in preparedness and response related to environmental and other emergencies, and **encouraged** its continuation to meet future challenges,

Our meeting **commended** the exercises that have advanced the implementation of the MOSPA and Search and Rescue (SAR) agreements and **encouraged** the continuation of exercise activities aiming at deepening practical cooperation with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum,

THE PEOPLE

The meeting **reaffirmed** the role of the Arctic Council in promoting sustainable social and cultural, economic and environmental development in the Arctic, and in harnessing the economic potential of the region for the benefit of Arctic inhabitants and communities, and **looked forward** to the opportunities provided by wider application of innovative, resource efficient circular economy in the Arctic,

It **recognized** the interconnected nature of human, environmental and wildlife health, **noted** the progress of and **encouraged** further work on the One Health initiative,



The meeting **noted with concern** that suicide rates continue to be at crisis levels in many Arctic communities, **welcomed** the Circumpolar Resilience, Engagement and Action through Story report and digital stories by youth, and **agreed** on the need to continue to prioritize the advancement of mental wellness and suicide prevention in the work of the Arctic Council,

It **welcomed** the report on the Arctic as a Food Producing Region and the success of the EALLU project in empowering youth in the promotion of Arctic indigenous food culture and **looked forward** to continued promotion of innovative approaches on Arctic food production and regional economic development,

The meeting **welcomed** the report on Best Waste Management Practices for Small and Remote Arctic Communities, and **encouraged** continued efforts to equip Arctic communities with the tools needed to reduce the environmental and human health impacts from waste,

The meeting **welcomed** the Good Practices for Environmental Impact Assessment and Meaningful Engagement in the Arctic report, while dissemination, and practical application of the good practice recommendations of the report in large-scale development projects in the Arctic was **encouraged**,

The meeting **welcomed** the Arctic Sustainable Energy Futures Toolkit and the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy achievements report, **noted** the outcomes of the Arctic Energy Summit and **looked forward** to further work on innovative energy solutions, renewable energy and related capacity building in the Arctic,

It **noted** the considerable growth in Arctic tourism and the economic opportunities for Arctic communities, and **encouraged** enhanced cooperation in developing and sharing best practices to ensure sustainable Arctic tourism,

Our meeting **adopted** the report of the Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic, **acknowledged** the importance of affordable, quality connectivity in order for Arctic inhabitants to participate in today's digital economy and to benefit from digital services, **welcomed** further cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council to enhance connectivity, and **recognized** public-private partnerships as an important tool for investments in new infrastructure to improve regional coverage,

The meeting **welcomed** the strengthened cooperation with the University of the Arctic, in particular in the area of improving educational opportunities for Arctic inhabitants, **noted with appreciation** the role of teachers and educators in fostering sustainable

development in the Arctic and for providing positive future perspectives for its inhabitants,

It **welcomed** the conclusions of the Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic project, including the call to promote indigenous languages in education, as well as national and regional measures taken in relation to the International Year of Indigenous Languages declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019,

The meeting **noted** the value of engaging youth and students in activities related to the Arctic Council,

It **welcomed** gender equality perspectives in the work of the Arctic Council and **encouraged** their mainstreaming,

STRENGTHENING THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

The meeting **welcomed** the ongoing strategic work, **instructed** the Senior Arctic Officials to continue strategic planning, in order to provide guidance and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Arctic Council, and **further instructed** the SAOs to review the roles of the Ministerial meetings, the Senior Arctic Officials and the Permanent Participants, and to report to Ministers in 2021,

It **recognized** the important role carried out by the Arctic Council Secretariat, the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat and the Secretariats of the Arctic Council Working Groups, **noted** the upcoming review of the Arctic Council Secretariat and **instructed** the Senior Arctic Officials to carry out the necessary changes that may result from the review,

Our meeting **recognized** the efforts to enhance the communications and outreach activities of the Council and **welcomed** the update of the Arctic Council Communications Strategy, and **committed** the Arctic Council to increase efforts in this area towards greater awareness of its work and Arctic issues more broadly both to those in the Arctic and globally,

It **welcomed** continued efforts to make public information about Arctic Council work available worldwide and **noted** the ongoing work to enhance the accountability and transparency of the Arctic Council,

The meeting **welcomed** the Memorandum of Understanding between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council to further our shared goals, **noted with appreciation** the report on Business Finance in the Arctic and **looked forward** to further cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council and private sector actors,

It **emphasized** the importance of enhancement of financing of Arctic Council projects, **took note** of the external evaluation of the Project Support Instrument (PSI) and the extension of the PSI pilot phase until the end of 2021, and **instructed** the Senior Arctic Officials to take action prior to the end of the PSI trial period with respect to its future and, if appropriate, to identify actions for Ministers,

The meeting **recognized** the crucial role played by Permanent Participants in the development, ongoing work and global profile of the Arctic Council, and **agreed** to continue working with the Permanent Participants to increase their capacity and financial ability to continue their important contribution to the Arctic Council,

It **recognized** the positive contributions of Observers to the work of the Arctic Council, its Working Groups and other subsidiary bodies, **welcomed** the Observer special sessions as a platform for dialogue with the Working Groups, and **encouraged** further Observer engagement, including through regular reporting and reviews,

The meeting **noted** the review of the Observers admitted to the Council in 2000-2013, **reaffirmed** their Observer status, and **instructed** the Senior Arctic Officials to review the Observers admitted earlier and those admitted in 2017,

Our meeting **welcomed** the International Maritime Organization as a new Observer,

The Senior Arctic Officials Report to Ministers, including its working group deliverables and work plans, forms a good basis for the work of the Arctic Council during the Icelandic Chairmanship,

The meeting **approved** the Arctic Council Secretariat budget for 2020 and 2021, and **instructed** the Senior Arctic Officials to review and adjust the mandates and work plans of the Arctic Council working groups and other subsidiary bodies as necessary.

Finally, our meeting **acknowledged with appreciation** Finland's role in chairing the Arctic Council during the period 2017-2019, and **accepted with appreciation** Iceland's offer to chair the Council for the period 2019-2021 and to host the twelfth Ministerial meeting in 2021.