

## The Nuuk Declaration

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We, the Ministers of the Arctic Countries,  
Recognizing special role and responsibilities of the Arctic Countries with respect to the protection of the Arctic environment,

Acknowledging that the Arctic environment consists of ecosystems with unique features and resources which are especially slow to recover from the impact of human activities, and as such, require special protective measures,

Further acknowledging that the indigenous peoples who have been permanent residents of the Arctic for millenia, are at risk from environmental degradation,

Determined, individually and jointly, to conserve and protect the Arctic environment for the benefit of present and future generations, as well as for the global environment,

Noting that in order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it,

Recognizing the importance of applying the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to the Arctic region,

Welcoming the efforts of the eight Arctic Countries to implement, through the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, relevant provisions of the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the Forest Principles, efforts which include the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), and the Working Groups on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, and the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment,

Affirming Principle 2 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development which affirms that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction,

Further affirming Principle 22 of the Rio Declaration, which states that: "indigenous people and their communities .... have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development."

hereby make the following Declaration:

1. We reaffirm our commitment to the protection of the Arctic Environment as a priority and to the implementation of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.

2. We adopt the report of the Second Ministerial Conference of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, and endorse its provisions to implement the Strategy, in particular:

- seeking resources to enable each country to fully participate in the program activities under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy;
- endeavouring to support, through these resources, joint projects in order to ensure that each country is able to participate in the activities of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), including the completion of national implementation plans and the comprehensive assessment of results;
- establishing a working group to assess the need for further action or instruments to prevent pollution of the Arctic marine environment and to evaluate the need for action in appropriate international fora to obtain international recognition of the particularly sensitive character of the ice-covered sea areas of the Arctic;
- reaffirming the commitment to sustainable development, including the sustainable use of renewable resources by indigenous peoples, and to that end agreeing to establish a Task Force for this purpose.
- underlining the necessity of a notification system and improved cooperation for mutual aid in case of accidents in the Arctic area;
- reaffirming that management, planning and development activities shall provide for the conservation, sustainable use and protection of Arctic flora and fauna for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, including local populations and indigenous peoples.

3. We will cooperate to conserve, protect and, as appropriate, restore the ecosystems of the Arctic. We will in particular cooperate to strengthen the knowledge base and to develop information and monitoring systems for the Arctic region.

4. We recognize that effective domestic environmental legislation is a prerequisite to the protection of the environment. As Ministers we shall promote legislation required for the protection of the Arctic environment.

5. We support the achievements of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and state our beliefs that the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development have particular relevance with respect to sustainable development in the Arctic.

6. We believe that decisions relating to Arctic activities must be made in a transparent fashion and therefore undertake to facilitate, through national rules and legislation, appropriate access to information concerning such decisions, to participation in such decisions and to judicial and administrative proceedings.

7. We recognize the special role of the indigenous peoples in environmental management and development in the Arctic, and of the significance of their knowledge and traditional

practices, and will promote their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development in the Arctic.

8. We believe that development in the Arctic must incorporate the application of precautionary approaches to development with environmental implications, including prior assessment and systematic observation of the impacts of such development. Therefore we shall maintain, as appropriate, or put into place as quickly as possible, an internationally transparent domestic process for the environmental impact assessment of proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the Arctic environment and are subject to decisions by competent national authorities. To this end we support the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

9. We underline the importance of prior and timely notification and consultation regarding activities that may have significant adverse transboundary environmental effects, including preparedness for natural disasters and other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the Arctic environment or its peoples.

10. We recognize the need for effective application of existing legal instruments relevant to protection of the Arctic environment, and will cooperate in the future development of such instruments, as needed. We support the early ratification of the United Nations Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change.

11. We undertake to consider the development of regional instruments concerned with the protection of the Arctic environment.

In witness whereof we have signed the present Declaration.

For the Government of Canada:  
LEE CLARK

For the Government of Denmark:  
NIELS HELVEG PETERSEN                      SVEND AUKEN

For the Government of Finland:  
SIRPA PIETIKAINEN

For the Government of Iceland:  
ÖSSUR SKARPHÉÐINSSON

For the Government of Norway:  
BØRRE PETTERSEN

For the Government of the Russian Federation:

VICTOR I. DANILOV-DANILIAN

For the Government of Sweden:

GÖRAN A. PERSSON

For the Government of the United States of America:

DAVID A. COLSON

Nuuk, 16 September 1993