

CANADA, DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY, RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, SWEDEN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT TO UNFCCC COP XVII

The effects of global warming in the Arctic region are becoming ever more evident. Higher surface temperatures are driving changes in the cryosphere such as loss of summer sea ice cover, melting of the Greenland ice sheet and thawing permafrost with methane emissions as a result. These are key findings in the Arctic Council Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost Assessment, SWIPA, of 2011.

These changes present fundamental threats to Arctic ecosystems and Arctic societies. They affect Arctic livelihoods and living conditions. Changes to ecosystems can affect supplies of water, fish, timber, traditional/local foods and grazing lands. Diminishing sea ice reduces opportunities for subsistence hunting by indigenous peoples and also impacts local fauna, including polar bears and marine mammals. Thawing permafrost increases the risk of damage to infrastructure affecting transport on land.

The effects of climate variability and change in the Arctic region will have significant local, regional and global implications.

The accelerating melting of the Greenland ice sheet increasingly contributes to global sea level rise. Recent models project a rise of as much as one meter or more by the end of this century. A rise of this magnitude will have severe consequences for low lying coastal regions around the planet.

Combating climate change is an urgent common challenge for the international community and requires immediate global action.

We therefore urge all countries to take decisive action, recognizing that deep cuts in global GHG emissions are required according to science with a view to reducing global GHG emissions so as to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 C above pre-industrial levels.

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Chair of the Arctic Council

