

EXPLORING COMMON SOLUTIONS

ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS' MEETING

11–12 October 2018, Rovaniemi

FINLAND'S
CHAIRMANSHIP
2017–2019



ARCTIC COUNCIL

Arctic Talanoa: Changes in the Arctic

11 October 2018, Rovaniemi, Finland

Report

Finland organized the Arctic Environment Ministers' Meeting (AEMM) between the eight Arctic States and the six Permanent Participants representing the indigenous peoples¹ of the Arctic, in Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland, on 11-12 October 2018. The objective of the meeting was to present and address environmental challenges in the Arctic.

The AEMM included a lunch session titled "Changes in the Arctic" which followed the format and spirit of the Talanoa Dialogue organized within the framework of the UNFCCC process.

Climate change and sustainable development form a broad framework for the Arctic Council Chairmanship (2017-2019) program of Finland. As global warming already has considerable impacts on the Arctic, it is necessary to continue working to mitigate climate change and strengthen resilience and adaptation, and to raise awareness of Arctic issues in global climate talks.

This report is a summary of the Arctic Talanoa dialogue and it is compiled by Finland, as the current Chair of the Arctic Council.

Background about climate change in the Arctic

The Arctic is shifting – rapidly and in unexpected ways – into a new state. If current trends are allowed to continue, they will have increasingly profound impacts on human health and safety, on industries and economies, and on ecosystems around the world. Implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement would limit the extent to which the Arctic climate changes over the remaining decades of this century.

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Arctic States: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, United States of America

Permanent Participants: Aleut International Association (AIA), Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Gwich'in Council International (GCI), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), Saami Council (SC)

The warming of the Arctic, marked by record-setting temperatures in recent years, is leading to continued or accelerating losses in sea ice and snow, melting of glaciers and ice sheets, freshening and warming of the Arctic Ocean, thawing of permafrost, and ecological shifts.

Because the climate system takes time to fully respond to changes in greenhouse gas emissions, some additional climate change is inevitable regardless of efforts to reduce emissions. Changes are expected to be greatest in the Arctic, with ripple effects throughout the world. For that reason, action is also needed to help Arctic communities and global society reduce vulnerabilities to impacts such as sea-level rise, changes in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and changes in precipitation patterns.

Beyond natural factors, global, social, economic, political and cultural changes also directly affect the adaptability of the environment and societies. Indigenous communities face a greater range of challenges including loss of identity, language, traditional food culture, and land.

Changing food availability, loss of ice habitat, increases in contagious diseases, and the impending invasion of southern species are taking their toll on Arctic marine animals, and pointing to an ecosystem on the verge of a shift.

Summary of the dialogue

The participants of the dialogue were Ministers and high-level civil servants of the eight Arctic States, and leaders from the six Arctic Council Permanent Participant organizations. The participants could choose to address all three questions or focus on some of them. Some guiding questions for the discussion were shared. In addition, the background material for the Arctic Environment Ministers' Meeting was used for this Talanoa dialogue. The dialogue was organized as a tour de table where each speaker could talk and was moderated by Mr. Oras Tynkkynen, Finnish expert on international climate policy, and Ms. Jannie Staffansson from the Saami Council.

The Talanoa dialogue was initiated by a powerful story by the Gwich'in Council International on how climate is changing and impacting their everyday lives in the Arctic. Traditional stories told by the Arctic Indigenous peoples tell new generations "how things came to be". Indigenous stories are important method of passing on Indigenous knowledge from generation to generation. These stories interpret the changes that Indigenous peoples experience within their environment. This story-telling was followed by the Saami Council's rendering of the poem "My home is in my heart" by Saami poet Nils-Aslak Valkeapää.

<https://reflectionsonbeingintheworld.wordpress.com/2013/03/17/my-home-is-in-my-heart/>

The discussion focused on sharing experiences and knowledge of Arctic change based on the following questions: where are we, where do we want to go and how do we get there:

The inhabitants of the Arctic already see the impacts of climate change on the environment. In the Arctic, the change is real and rapid, and it is now. Climate change affects Arctic peoples, with Indigenous peoples the first to recognize and be affected by the changes. Concerns were raised about food security and infrastructure problems. Links to health issues were noted.

Many speakers noted the key Arctic findings of the recent IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C of Global Warming and the reports call for immediate and substantial global GHG reductions and far-reaching transitions in all sectors. Participants discussed what this new information and these changes mean for the Arctic.

Attention was drawn to the need to launch the Platform for Indigenous Peoples within the UNFCCC in order to advance the contributions Indigenous peoples can make through Indigenous knowledge on mitigation and adaptation.

Participants shared their visions for a sustainable and resilient Arctic. Information, data and Indigenous knowledge are available. However, the pathways for decision-making needs to be strengthened. Many participants noted the need for increased support and respect for Indigenous knowledge. The human rights aspect is important. The need to enhance the meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples', their participation and capacity in decision-making was highlighted. Adaptation measures and resilience to climate change in the Arctic need to be supported and strengthened. Information and research through equitable partnerships are needed to support decision-making and action.

Participants shared information about present and future initiatives to reduce emissions to mitigate changes. Many countries have adopted national goals to become climate neutral by mid-century and national goal addressing climate change have been set. Successes were described and possible actions were proposed, including innovation, new technologies, renewables, legislation, incentives, taxes and other fiscal tools, participatory approaches, and access to affordable energy resources.

Participants expressed that, we need to act faster and work together. We need to listen, understand, respect, trust and learn from each other. Share tools and knowledge. Be smart, do things effectively. We need political will and leadership. We have hope, because there are tools available. We have courage, because we have people with us.

Many participants emphasized the need for leadership by the Arctic states to address the challenges that this distinct region is facing in favor of Arctic Indigenous peoples and all others within the region and across the globe.

PRELIMINARY GUIDING QUESTIONS OF THE ARCTIC TALANOA DIALOGUE:

1) Where we are:

- Last winter was the warmest on record in the Arctic. The 2017 maximum extent coverage of Arctic sea ice was the lowest in the 38-year record . This summer in the circumarctic region was exceptionally warm, resulting in droughts and forest fires How should we react?
- What does the message of the recent IPCC Special Report on 1.5C of Global Warming mean for the Arctic?
- What are the needs to enhance adaptation measures to rapidly changing conditions?

2) Where do we want to go:

- What is our vision for sustainable and resilient Arctic?
- How can this vision inform and support broader efforts under the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals?

3) How do we get there?

- How could we reduce emissions? What are our possibilities to mitigate changes in the Arctic?

- What are the most promising initiatives in this regard and how can we support them?
- How do we enhance indigenous peoples' engagement, participation and capacity in decision making?
- How to strengthen arctic resilience?

Arctic Council products on changing Arctic

Where are we?

- Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA): Summary for Policy-makers (AMAP)
- State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report, Summary report (CAFF)
- Arctic Climate Issues 2015. Short-lived Climate Pollutants: Summary for Policy-makers (AMAP)
- The Arctic Freshwater System in a Changing Climate (AMAP, WCRP/CLiC, IASC)

Where do we want to go?

- Arctic Resilience Action Framework; cooperating for a More Resilient and Prosperous Arctic Region (SDWG)
- Arctic Resilience Assessment Synthesis for Arctic Leaders 2017
- Arctic Ocean Acidification (AMAP) (2018)

How do we get there?

- Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane; Summary of Progress and Recommendations
- Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic: Barents Region Overview (AMAP)
- Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic: Baffin Bay / Davis Strait Region Overview (AMAP)
- Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic: Bering / Chukchi / Beaufort Region Overview (AMAP)
- Report of the 1st Arctic Resilience Forum, 10-11 September 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland (SDWG)