

CHAIR'S STATEMENT FROM THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTERS MEETING

10 June 2010, Arctic Environmental Ministerial Meeting

At the Arctic Environmental Ministers Meeting in Ilulissat, Greenland on the 8-11 June 2010 the following Arctic countries were represented: Canada, Denmark/ Greenland/ The Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Permanent Participant to the Arctic Council and Germany, a permanent observer to the Arctic Council, were also represented.

The premises for the discussion of the meeting were the concern of the impacts of climate change, including the extensive reduction of sea ice coverage and thickness in the Arctic and the potential environmental impacts from increased shipping and oil and gas exploration and development.

Participants recognized climate change, ocean acidification and pollution including long range pollution as being necessary for the long term protection of the Arctic marine environment.

Participants recognized the sensitivity of the Arctic marine and coastal environment and the importance of these areas to people living in and around the region and to all Arctic states, for economic, social, recreational and cultural reasons. When protecting the Arctic and coastal marine environment there is a need to consider the limited infrastructure and harsh weather conditions of the region.

Participants of the meeting expressed deep concern about the devastating Gulf of Mexico oil spill incident and its impact on the marine and coastal environment. Recognizing the fragility of the Arctic environment, participants stressed the importance for Arctic states to exercise careful stewardship and a precautionary approach,

in considering possible offshore oil and gas development. Discussions focused on the need to apply high environmental and safety standards, the use of best available technologies, environmental impact assessments, the development of efficient emergency preparedness responses, the sharing of science, research and information, and international cooperation in these areas.

The meeting underlined the need to protect the Arctic marine environment for the benefit of present and future generations in implementing an ecosystem-based approach to management. It was stressed that efforts are needed to sustainably manage, protect, and when necessary restore species of the Arctic marine and coastal environment.

The need to carry out environmental measures, in accordance with international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and within the framework of the International Maritime Organization was emphasized.

Participants were encouraged to consider ratification of relevant international marine and maritime agreements without delay, such as the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships, International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships Ballast Water & Sediments and The "Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972", and "1996 Protocol to the London Convention".

Implementation of relevant environmental international conventions and obligations concerning risks to the fragile Arctic ecosystem were emphasized as well as the need to adopt and enforce national measures consistent with international law.

Participants expressed their strong support towards the ongoing work in the IMO to address important maritime safety and environmental protection issues in the Arctic area. It was stressed that there was a

need for establishment of mandatory requirements as part of a Polar Code would address a significant gap in the existing regulation for ships operating in Arctic area.

The participants underlined the importance of the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA) 2009 report approved at the 6th Ministerial Meeting of Arctic Council - the Tromsø Declaration from 29 April 2009, and the importance of the follow up of its recommendations.

Participants noted that release of oil through accidental or illegal discharges has been the most significant threat to the Arctic marine environment from shipping. They encourage the identification and consideration of effective measures to reduce this risk.

Participants encouraged the identification of areas of heightened ecological and cultural value that needs protection from shipping. Work on AMSA recommendations relevant to this will be expected to be considered at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2011, which will be an important step forward.

Participants noted that future steps would be to consider measures to protect areas of heightened ecological and cultural value from increased shipping activities, taking into account the economic implications.

The effort to collect data, as well as the lessons learned, and the continuous work being done under the Arctic Council with a proper understanding of the need to further strengthen coordination and sharing information regionally and around the Arctic were welcomed.

The participants emphasized the Environment Ministers' active role in the work of the Arctic Council and in implementing its recommendations, based on the work of all the Arctic Council's Working Groups.