Eighth Conference of Parliamentarians of the
Arctic Region, Fairbanks, the United States of America,
12-14 August 2008

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

We, the elected representatives of Canada, Denmark/Greenland, the European Parliament, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States of America;

In collaboration with indigenous peoples of the Arctic;

Meeting to discuss maritime policy, human health, renewable energy, and adaptation to climate change in the Arctic region;

Ask governments in the Arctic Region, the Arctic Council and the institutions of the European Union:

Regarding human health in the Arctic, to

1. Form a strategic plan on human health policy in the Arctic Council where the synergies from existing work on this issue are utilized to provide for better human health in the Arctic in harmony with cultural values.

2. Provide an assessment of the positive and negative effects of a changing climate on human health in the Arctic.

3. Continue to support exchange programmes for young people in the Arctic Region.

4. Urge the Arctic Council to give priority to the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse and suicide, and to exchange best practices on how to deal with these problems, with the participation of states, regions and indigenous peoples.

5. Commission the University of the Arctic to provide specialized training for health care personnel, with special focus on Arctic conditions.

6. Place the issue of alcohol and drug abuse, and best practices from efforts to reduce this problem, on the agenda of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the World Health Organisation.

7. Further engage relevant NGOs in the Arctic Region in the work of human development, risk reduction, access to health care, preventive health care and disaster preparedness in the sparsely populated areas in the Arctic.

Regarding development of an Arctic maritime policy for safety at sea, to

8. Work to develop harmonized, effective regulations to reduce all forms of pollution from ships sailing in the Arctic Ocean.

9. Strengthen cooperation, consultation and coordination among nations regarding search and rescue matters in the region to ensure an appropriate response from states to any accident.

10. Take an active role in updating the "Guidelines for Ships Operating in Ice-covered Waters" within the International Maritime Organisation, and making these guidelines mandatory.

11. Strengthen existing measures and develop new measures to improve the safety of maritime navigation.

12. Support the completion of the Arctic Council's Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment and develop an action plan on the basis of its findings.

13. Support action and investment by Arctic nations, and the maritime industry, to put appropriate resources in place to provide for emergency response capability, search and rescue capability, and spill response capability, as the Arctic opens to marine shipping, and to take preventive measures to avoid shipping accidents.

14. Make concerted efforts to develop environmentally friendly technology for transport and economic activity in the Arctic to protect its vulnerable nature and the way of life for the Arctic peoples.

15. Support the solid foundation for responsible management of the Arctic Ocean by all Arctic States and other users of the Arctic Ocean through the existing, comprehensive international legal regime that governs the Arctic Ocean.

Regarding adaptation to climate change, to

16. Raise a strong Arctic message to combat climate change at the COP 15 negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.

17. Support the “Indigenous Peoples Global Summit on Climate Change”and promote the inclusion of the summit report at the COP 15 and other related venues.

18. Speed up the promotion and conduct, by the end of IPY 2008, of the International Conferences “The Arctic – a region of global cooperation” and “Global climate changes and human challenges” under the auspices of the UN.

19. Provide an assessment on how Arctic nations can prepare for new opportunities as a result of a changing Arctic.

20. Further build capacity in Arctic communities to adapt to climate change, including the development of new education programmes and skills training initiatives, to allow individuals in these communities to be prepared for new job opportunities and to implement projects at a local level.

21. Increase research on adaptation to climate change with a focus on the social and economic needs of the people living in the Arctic.

22. Ensure availability of data, including research data and accessibility to geographical areas for research purposes.

23. Implement the recommendations from the International workshop in Helsinki in October 2008 on "Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks", (SAON), as a legacy of the International Polar Year 2007 – 2009.

24. Ensure the inclusion of an appropriate contribution from elected representatives of the Arctic region to the COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009.

Regarding development of renewable energy resources, to

25. Promote and invest in research, development and deployment of alternative and renewable energy sources suitable for the Arctic region. Special emphasis should be placed on the replacement of fossil fuels by solar, wind, biomass and other alternative energy sources.

26. Address the challenges of access to energy by communities in the Arctic given the vast distances between communities, limited infrastructure, and smaller economies of scale for investment opportunities.

Ask the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, to

27. Work to promote the 2010 targets to reduce the loss of biodiversity in the Arctic.

28. Promote the Fairbanks Statement in the development of an Arctic policy in the European Union and the Arctic states, and involve the national parliaments and the European Parliament in this process.

29. Take note of the intention of the European Commission to release a Communication on Arctic policy in the autumn of 2009.

30. Actively support the development of a Northern Dimension Partnership in Transport and Logistics, and the further strengthening of the existing partnerships in Environment and in Public Health and Social Well-being.

31. Encourage the Arctic States and the European Union to work together on an agenda for issues of Arctic and northern interest, and to promote it on a global level in cooperation

with international organizations and forums, which are taking a growing interest in Arctic issues of global importance.

32. To continue the discussion on legal regimes that impact the Arctic, and in particular to promote ideas to strengthen the legal and economic base of the Arctic Council.

33. Take initiatives on a domestic level, where necessary, to draw up national strategies for northern regions.

34. Encourage the University of the Arctic to build practical capacity in the north to address the challenges of adaptation to climate change, and to solve the Arctic's needs for energy, from technical, cultural, economic as well as environmental perspectives, and to provide further education of health care personnel with special focus on Arctic conditions.

Furthermore the Conference

35. Acknowledges the interest and presence of parliamentary observers and representatives from governments and non-government agencies at this Conference, and recognises their important role in relaying the messages and supporting the actions herein discussed.

36. Underlines the growing geopolitical and strategic importance of the Arctic.

37. Is convinced that the political role of the Arctic Council should be enhanced given the many challenges facing the region, particularly by ensuring more regular ministerial meetings with all participants, no less than once a year, and to ensure its full engagement with other international bodies working on the same issues, particuly the United Nations.

38. Welcomes the forthcoming Danish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and looks forward to continued cooperation with the Arctic Council.

39. Notes the information from the Danish delegation concerning the Ilulissat Declaration, and the concerns of the Icelandic delegation regarding full participation of all states of the Arctic Council.

40. Welcomes and accepts the kind invitation of the European Parliament to host the Ninth Conference in 2010.