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## Arctic: MEPs call for peace and reduced tension in the region

**Members stress the need for constructive international cooperation in the Arctic while issuing warnings over emerging threats to stability in the region.**

In a new report on geopolitical and security challenges in the Arctic, adopted by the [Foreign Affairs Committee](#) on Thursday, MEPs highlight that, in recent decades, the Arctic has been an area of peace, low tension and constructive cooperation and that Arctic states and the international community should keep it as such.

They also reconfirm that the Arctic is of strategic and political importance to the EU, as an Arctic stakeholder and global actor, and underlines the EU's commitment to be a responsible actor, seeking the long-term sustainable and peaceful development of the region by fully cooperating with international partners.

The report emphasises that the current Arctic governance model based on international law has benefited all Arctic states and the region as a whole and has provided predictability and stability in the area.

It also stresses the importance of a balanced EU Arctic policy and states that the EU is uniquely well-placed to help coordinate and complement Member States' Arctic policies.

### **Stability challenges due to climate change and respecting indigenous communities**

In the report, Members further call on all stakeholders, including the EU, to respond to the very alarming effects and consequences of climate change in the Arctic, including by keeping to the goals of the Paris Agreement. They also note that, as a result of climate change and the melting of ice in the region, the increased accessibility of the enormous hydrocarbon resources in the Arctic is changing the geo-strategic importance of the area, with potential consequences for international stability.

In the text, MEPs stress the need to ensure the preservation of the Arctic region's Indigenous Peoples' culture, traditions and languages and that all activities in the area, including management and sustainable use of Arctic natural resources, should respect the rights of and benefit Indigenous peoples and other local inhabitants.

### Russian activities in the Arctic

The report also expresses serious concern over the progressive Russian military build-up in the Arctic, which MEPs do not believe justified by the situation on the ground, as it significantly exceeds legitimate defensive purposes. Members underline that the EU and Russia have substantial common interests in a number of areas related to the Arctic. However, any cooperation should be consistent with the principle of selective EU engagement with Russia and should not jeopardise the goals of sanctions and restrictive measures adopted as a result of the Russian government's actions in other parts of the world.

MEPs also condemn Russia's actions that restrict navigation rights in the Northern Sea routes by designating them as internal waters and creating regulatory and administrative barriers to foreign vessels along the route.

### China as a 'polar power'

Members are also greatly concerned with far-reaching Chinese projects and initiatives in the Arctic. They say the EU needs to closely observe China's attempts to integrate the Arctic's Northern Sea Route into its Belt and Road Initiative, as this challenges any idea that the Arctic could be shielded from global geopolitics as a self-contained region.

The report further expresses worries over China's investment efforts in seaports along the Northern Sea Route and attempts to obtain mining rights in the region, as a way to establish its presence. MEPs urge all Arctic states to carry out a thorough screening of foreign investments in critical projects.

In addition, the text advocates that the Arctic should play a central role in boosting Europe's output of critical minerals, cutting the EU's dependency on Chinese rare earth metals and developing opportunities for green growth, which will be key in the fight against climate change.

MEPs call on the EU to include in its updated Arctic policy new actors such as China and a new dimension incorporating a comprehensive approach to security, which should include notably the notions of environment and health as well as maritime security issues.

### Quote

"I would welcome the updating of the EU's Arctic policy. It should reflect the region's new security realities, growing geopolitical tensions and new regional players, like China. President Putin sees an enhanced Russian presence in the Arctic as a central element of his legacy. Consequently, Moscow is taking a long view of the Arctic by seeking to establish a series of de facto legal, economic and military 'faits accomplis'. These are importing global tensions to a region that we want to preserve as an area of peaceful and beneficial cooperation. With rare-earth minerals being key to the development of green technology and the fight against climate change, the Arctic should play a central role in the European Raw Materials Alliance and Europe must cut its dependence on China for these minerals. We're calling for greater

European visibility in the region, more coordination at EU level, and cooperation with partners committed to peaceful collaboration and freedom of navigation”, said rapporteur [Anna Fotyga](#) (ECR, Poland) after the vote.

The text was approved by 52 votes in favour, 6 against with 10 abstentions.

### Next steps

The report will now be submitted to a vote in the European Parliament as a whole after the upcoming summer recess.

### Further information

[Procedure file](#)

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