

ARCTIC FUTURES SYMPOSIUM 2016

STRENGTHENING

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Wednesday, November 30

Master of ceremony: Mikael Janson, Director, North Sweden European Office

Opening Ceremony

The seventh Arctic Futures Symposium was held at the Diamant Conference Centre in Brussels on the 30th of November 2016 with the theme of Strengthening Sustainable Communities. The event was kicked off by the Minister of Greenland Vittus Qujaukitsoq who pointed out the increased international interest that has been shown towards Greenland lately. The visits by the United States Secretary of State John Kerry and the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have acted as indications of increased contemporary international interest towards Arctic issues. In his speech Mr. Qujaukitsoq stated that the EU is first and foremost regarded as “a force for good” despite some differences of opinion. He also spoke about the special living conditions of the Arctic that greatly differ from those of the first world countries. He stressed that sustainability has always been important for the Inuits and that they have a balanced approach towards it — they believe that if one mistreats the nature, the nature will show one the same hostility in return. He was delighted that events such as the Arctic Futures Symposium are being organised in order to spread the knowledge of Arctic regions. The Minister concluded by showcasing Greenland as a world class science hub in climate change research and emphasizing Greenland’s openness for European partnerships.

Speakers:

Hon. Minister Vittus Qujaukitsoq, Minister for Industry, Labour, Trade, Energy and Foreign Affairs, Government of Greenland

Piet Steel, Member of Board, Polar Secretariat, Belgium

Nighat F.D. Johnson-Amin, VP, International Polar Foundation

1st Panel Discussion: The Arctic Council 20 Years: Shared Opportunities, Challenges & Responsibilities

The seminar's first panel discussion addressed the opportunities and challenges the Arctic Council possesses. Pekka Shemeikka, a Senior Adviser of Arctic Cooperation at the Government of Finland started the discussion by shedding light to the mutually complementing work done by the United Nations (UN), the Arctic Council (AC) and the European Union on sustainable development. He defined the Council as a knowledge based forum that has a record of successful work in the past 20 years. Shemeikka will be chairing the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group during the Finnish chairmanship 2017-2019. Ambassador Anniken Ramberg Krutnes emphasized the three principles that should be remembered when dealing with the Arctic: respect for international law in the arctic regions, constructive international cooperation within the regions and responsible management of resources. She pointed out that both the climate change and the changes in geopolitics have accelerated the interest towards the Arctic and thus also the work of the Arctic Council. Ramberg Krutnes concluded by saying that the AC works as a hub for Arctic related agreements.

The third speaker of the panel, Ambassador Andrés Jato, elaborated on the importance of peace and stability in the Arctic. He stressed that the EU could not face another conflict in its neighborhood and that we need to work together in order to keep the area safe. Both Jato and Ramberg Krutnes agreed that the observing members of the AC should be increasingly engaged in the work of the Council. He concluded by reminding the audience that the North has the same right to develop as other countries. Gunn-Britt Retter from the Saami Council spoke about the The lack of funding for indigenous peoples' organisation in the Arctic Council, stating that achieving a stable and reliable source of funding should be a priority in order to improve the involvement of indigenous people in the work of the AC. She also brought up the worrisome nature of the lessening involvement of the Russian indigenous people in the Arctic cooperation. Danish senior Arctic adviser Jesper Stig Andersen reminded the audience that the Arctic is not museum, but a home to many. He continued by stating that the people who live in the Arctic have a legitimate right to use their lands. That said he stressed the role of sustainable development goals that also apply to the Arctic regions. He concluded by highlighting the EU's role in the Arctic: he hoped to see the EU for example facilitate the growth of science and research conducted within the Arctic regions. Tómas Orri Ragnarsson and Bob Paquin finished the first panel discussions by talking about the importance of UNCLOS, the COP21 agreements and the conservation of Arctic biodiversity.

Speakers:

Nils Andreassen, Executive Director, Institute of the North, Alaska, USA

Pekka Shemeikka, Senior Adviser, Arctic Cooperation, Government of Finland

Ambassador Anniken Ramberg Krutnes, Senior Arctic Official, Norway

Ambassador Andrés Jato, Senior Arctic Official, Sweden

Gunn-Britt Retter, Head of the Arctic and Environment Unit, Saami Council

Jesper Stig Andersen, Senior Arctic Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Tómas Orri Ragnarsson, Counsellor, Arctic Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Iceland

Bob Paquin, Head of the Canadian International Centre for the Arctic, Norway

2nd Panel Discussion: The new European Union policy for the Arctic – a new Impulse for Arctic Cooperation?

The second panel of the day was built around the new European Union policy for the Arctic. Commission's joint communication came out in April and is currently waiting for the European Parliament's comments. Boris Iarochévitch from the EEAS emphasized the importance of four points: keeping the Arctic regions free of tensions; safeguarding the Arctic's unique nature; enhancing sustainability in development and maintaining constructive international co-operation in the North. He pointed out that the Joint Communication concentrated on the soft issues regarding the Arctic rather than addressing the hard ones. Felix Leinemann, representing DG Mare, talked about the Commission's initiative to establish an Arctic Stakeholder Forum, that will work until the end of 2017. Later on, the Commission aims to organise an annual Arctic conference.

MEP Urmás Paet (ALDE group) is one of the rapporteurs on the Parliament's report on Integrated EU policy for the Arctic. He spoke about the possible threats the current geopolitical developments might pose on the Arctic areas. He said that the Parliament welcomes the Commission's initiative to draft a joint policy and explained that currently around ten EU member states have their own Arctic strategies. Paet said that we should not close our eyes from the changes in the amounts of military presence in the Arctic areas and stressed the importance of having proper infrastructure and IT systems in the regions as of ways to make them more secure.

Mika Riipi, the governor of the County of Lapland introduced his region as one of the most developed areas in the circumpolar Arctic due to its expertise in metals, forestry, mining, high-tech industry and high-level tourism. He welcomed the Commission's report and said that it created a good base for the future talks and highlighted the right things although it fell short on the concrete actions that should be taken in order to achieve solutions on a pragmatic, regional level. He emphasized that the regions and their businesses should be put in a leading position when it comes to the development of the European Arctic. In this work, their knowledge concerning the regional smart specialisation strategies should be utilized. Riipi added that the Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council can be used as an opportunity to build constructive links between the EU and the AC. Panelists agreed that peaceful co-operation on a regional level should be maintained and promoted throughout the Arctic areas.

Speakers:

Timo Koivurova, Director of Arctic Centre

Boris Iarochévitch, Head of Division, Eastern partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, EU External Action Service (EEAS)

Felix Leinemann, Head of Unit, Maritime policy Atlantic, Outermost Regions and Arctic, DG MARE, European Commission

Urmás Paet, MEP (ALDE), Rapporteur on Integrated EU policy for the Arctic, European Parliament

Mika Riipi, Governor, County of Lapland, Finland

Rod Downie, Polar Policy and Programme Officer, WWF UK

3rd Panel Discussion: Remote Community Infrastructure (parallel session)

The third panel concentrated on the Remote Community Infrastructure. Meinhard Eliassen, a senior energy advisor of the Environment Agency of the Faroe Islands, talked about the islands' energy supply. He told the audience that they are heavily dependent on diesel due to the fact that it is easy to purchase and store and it suits many different purposes. Eliassen believed that especially wind power has huge potential in the area but that the installment of the necessary cables and grids would require enormous investments. Margareta Johansson from the University of Lund introduced the INTERACT-project that acts as a networking platform that brings together 78 different research stations studying for example biodiversity, permafrost, ecology and the human dimensions related to them. After her performance, Lorents Burman, the Mayor of the city of Skellefteå briefly presented the Bothnian Corridor project that is of high importance for the Swedish government and that has been endorsed from the EU's side as well. Halldor Johannsson showcased the Arctic Portal platform that functions as a gateway to Arctic related info and data. He also mentioned the Sustaining Arctic Observing Network (SAON) — a system that manages Arctic related data and knowledge. He brought up the various funding problems related to Arctic projects — without continuous funding possibilities, the projects are unable to continue their work of gathering and analyzing the data. Many sites end up having extensive databases that are not valid anymore. One of the main problems is the fact that the Arctic Council receives no permanent funding. In relation to this, the problem with EU funding is its inability to enhance pan-Arctic co-operation where the US and/or Canada are involved in.

Greg Poelzer, a Professor of the University of Saskatchewan talked about the need to accelerate deployment of renewable energy and the recognition of the role of indigenous peoples in climate change strategies. He said that parts of the Arctic are similar to developing countries when it comes to energy access and energy security. There has been a research paper made on the subject by the name of Developing renewable energy in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions & Communities. At the end of the panel connectivity in the form of telecommunications, was discussed with Tim Stelzig talking about Alaska's various wireless solutions.

Speakers:

Damien Degeorges, Director, Degeorges Consulting

Meinhard Eliassen, Senior Energy Advisor, Energy Department, Environment Agency of the Faroe Islands

Margareta Johansson, University of Lund, Sweden

Lorents Burman, Mayor, City of Skellefteå, Västerbotten region, and chair the North Botnia Line (Bothnian Corridor), Sweden

Halldor Johannsson, Arctic Portal, Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks, Iceland

Greg Poelzer, Arctic Fulbright Scholar, Professor School of Environment & Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Tim Stelzig, General Communications Incorporated (GCI), telecoms company, USA

Lisbeth Iversen, Associate, Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Centre (NERSC), Norway

4th Panel Discussion: The EU - Arctic Stakeholder Forum (parallel session)

The parallel session gave the panelists an opportunity to discuss the Arctic Stakeholder Forum. Bernhard Friess from DG Mare started the panel by presenting the reasons behind the creation of the Stakeholder Forum. He said that there is need for sustainable business development in the European Arctic, and that this development should have a people-centered approach. Friess stressed that the people in the regions are crucial for the success of the temporary Forum. According to him, the identification of investment priorities is at the heart of the project.

Päivi Ekdahl talked about the longitude of the preparations around the Kolarctic program's financing agreement. She foresees the start of the call to take place on the 23rd of January 2016. Ekdahl, on behalf of Lena Anttila also pointed out the similarities and overlaps in the areas of the Interreg Nord 2014-2020 programme and the CBC-programme. There is need for more simplification and a more result-oriented approach. Ole Damsgaard from the NPA Programme said that they have a strong focus on tangible results. He talked about their short term pilot project with an aim of creating a roadmap for cooperation including shared communication activities, shared project development within Arctic themes, clustering of funded projects and common annual conferences.

Aile Javo welcomed the Stakeholder Forum initiative but stressed that investors and businesses should not harm the indigenous peoples' livelihood. She said there is need for investments in knowledge institutions in the indigenous communities, entrepreneurship, micro business, design, food, culturally appropriate tourism as well as the cultural sector. Andrés Jato explained that there are various types of Arctic — one with nature and very few people, and one with developed cities, universities and space industries. These differences are reflected also in the various needs of the different regions.

Speakers:

Alessia Clocchiatti, DG MARE, European Commission

Bernhard Friess, Director for Atlantic, Arctic and Outermost Regions, EU Commission DG MARE

Päivi Ekdahl, Development Director, Managing Authority of Kolarctic ENPI, Regional Council of Lapland, Finland

Lena Anttila, Head of Unit International Affairs, Managing Authority, Interreg V Nord, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden

Ole Damsgaard, Head of Secretariat, NPA Programme, Copenhagen, Denmark

Peter Larsson, Nordic Business Support, Swedish Lapland Chamber of Commerce

Comments: Aile Javo, President of the Saami Council, Jarle Aarbakke, Deputy Mayor, City of Tromsø, Norway & Andrés Jato, Senior Arctic Official, Sweden

5th Panel Discussion: Northern Communities' Perspective on Sustainability

The following session was built on the Northern communities' perspective on sustainability. The moderator of the session, Peter Sköld, opened the panel by explaining the complexity of the challenges that the people in the Arctic regions face. Svein Vigeland Rottem from the Fridtjof Nansens Institute talked about the development opportunities of the Arctic Council. According to him, the Council should establish a more coherent and clear vision of its work — now the short-term focus changes every time the chairing country changes. He also pointed out that the Council should benefit more of the local and regional stakeholders — it is important to get the local communities to engage in the work of the Council.

Niklas Sirén, the Deputy Mayor of the City of Kiruna talked about the city's plans of relocating the entire city due to the growing instability of the ground below Kiruna. The city has the world's largest underground iron mine; Kiruna is Europe's main supplier of iron ore. By moving the city they are creating the first sustainable city situated in an Arctic climate.

Peter Larsson from the Swedish Lapland Chamber of Commerce commented that for them international trade is both a focus point and an enabler. According to Larsson sustainability takes place in an economic, environmental and social form. He explained that in the Swedish Lapland businesses often struggle with business development. He pointed out that it is very important for the businesses to know how to add more value to their businesses, how to build their brand and how to create innovation. In exports, he said, the success factors lay in branding, market analysis, managing cultural differences, direct selling, managing cash flow and using all the available support.

Jarle Aarbakke talked about the balance between environmental protection and sustainable development. He said that all the Arctic regions shared the same challenges and that they should be the ones first and foremost to find out the solutions. Decline in population was identified as one of the challenges. Aarbakke pointed out that the reason behind Tromsø's stable population net size is the flow of people coming in from the outside; according to him for example the fishing industry is maintained by the incoming people.

Speakers:

Peter Sköld, Professor, IASSA President, Director Arctic Research Center at Umeå University, ARCUM, Sweden

Jarle Aarbakke, Deputy Mayor, City of Tromsø, Norway

Svein Vigeland Rottem, Director, Polar Programme, Fridtjof Nansens Institute,

Niklas Sirén, Deputy Mayor, City of Kiruna, Norrbotten County, Sweden

6th Panel Discussion: Investments and Business Opportunities in the Arctic regions

The last session of the day, moderated by Henry Burgess from the NERC, dealt with investments and business opportunities in the Arctic regions. Stephen Hart from the EIB shed light on the various EIB projects that have been initiated in the last couple of years in the Arctic regions. As examples he mentioned the build-up of a geothermal power station in Iceland and an expansion of the Bergen airport in Norway.

Chris McDonald from the OECD talked about growth and key drivers for productivity in rural remote areas. As for policy implications for the Arctic areas he stressed the importance of smart specialization strategies that help the regions focus on what they are good at. The Arctic areas need to identify their drivers for growth (e.g. in renewable energy, fisheries or forestry) in order to find their niche. After that

the focus should be put on the enabling factors such as skills, access to finance, infrastructure and connectivity.

Lise Lotte Terp introduced the work done by Arctic Consensus and its quandro helix nature where the private sector, civil society, public sector and research work together. Anna Karlsdóttir from Nordregio ended the final panel by talking about the demographic challenges facing the Arctic in the future and the research done around that.

The Arctic Council has undergone a transition from obscurity to hyper-attention during its 20 years' existence. It was noted that the EU plays a role in the Arctic for example in the role of fostering the North's peace and stability. During the conference various bottlenecks such as the lack of proper infrastructure and investments within the Arctic regions were identified. These extensive structural issues cannot be left for one institution to solve but it is important to discuss and identify them. As for the future, it was summed up that the Arctic Council should aim at creating strong, prosperous communities, work to retain peace and stability and help the Arctic regions to combat the future challenges. This should be done with the active engagement of the various stakeholders of the Arctic.

Speakers:

Henry Burgess, NERC, UK

Stephen Hart, Head of Copenhagen Office, European Investment Bank, Denmark

Chris McDonald, Policy Analyst, Regional Development Policy Division, OECD

Lise-Lotte Terp, CEO, Arctic Consensus, Denmark

Anna Karlsdóttir, Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio, Sweden

