

2022 Arctic Futures Symposium*“Arctic Cooperation in a Changing Global Landscape”*

Ladies and Gentleman,

- Let me first thank the organisers for gathering such an impressive audience discussing how we can reinforce our *Cooperation on Arctic matters*.
- On behalf of EU High Representative / Vice President Borrell, I am most grateful for the invitation to address this year’s Symposium. The HR/VP asked me to warmly welcome everyone in Brussels, with a special mention for all who have been working and again this year worked so hard to make this Symposium an annual success since 2010.
- At this very point in time, like-minded partners, countries, organisations, entities, peoples need to line up more, more urgently, more visibly, more effectively. The language of the European Union is a language of upholding international law, the UN Charter, of commitment to constructive dialogue and to reinforced multilateral cooperation. And so are our actions.
- The European security order is under threat. As for the Arctic, and in the context of today’s Symposium, we do not see the ongoing aggression and tensions originating in the High North. That is clear. But it is true that during recent years, Russia has reinforced its military assets across its Arctic regions, and Russian military exercises have become much more prevalent than they were two decades ago. The Arctic States as well as many of our NATO partners have responded by increasing their surveillance and by conducting large exercises.
- The EU, together with our 27 Member States, will continue to work for a safe, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous Arctic.
- Our ambitions for Arctic cooperation and development are set out in our policy paper you all know about -- the Joint Communication “A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic” which the High Representative developed and released together with the European Commission last October 2021.
- We jointly stress that the EU’s ambitions for Arctic cooperation are steadfast and we will continue to work, together with all Member States on the next steps.
- We like to say : “The EU is in the Arctic; the Arctic is in the EU”. There is the understanding that the Arctic States continue to hold the primary responsibility for tackling challenges within their territories; yet many issues affecting the Arctic regions and its people can be more effectively addressed through regional or multilateral cooperation. The recent COP27 in Sharm el Sheikh is a case in point, both in terms of the importance of global cooperation and of the challenges in reaching effective agreements. This is not easy. We know that. But there is a full understanding and willingness in the EU that effective regional and multilateral cooperation is more important than ever.

- With our overall aim to strengthen our Arctic engagement, our main objectives can be brought into three areas:
 1. **contributing to keeping the Arctic safe and stable**, by supporting regional cooperation and developing strategic foresight on emerging social, economic and -- as appropriate -- security challenges;
 2. **taking strong action to tackle climate change and environmental degradation**. Science and research play a pivotal role.
 3. **supporting the inclusive and sustainable development of the Arctic regions to the benefit of all inhabitants and of future generations**, men, women, youth, and investing in future-orientated jobs, in sustainable green and blue sectors of the economy – with full respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is clear that job creation in some areas can cause issues around social cohesion, if 300 - 500 workers come to a town of 2-3000 inhabitants.
- Let us then very briefly look at some specific areas that will see important developments:
 - **Infrastructure** across the most vulnerable parts of the Arctic regions may have to be re-furbished and others parts may see `managed retreat` due to the effects of climate change (ports, run-ways, roads, housing foundations). This will affect Alaska, Canada and Russia. As you know, appx 60% of Russia's territory sits on permafrost.
 - **Biodiversity** will come under pressure, affecting not least the vitally important fishing industries in the Arctic regions.
 - And thirdly, we expect to see a vast **increase in demand for raw materials and metals located in Arctic regions**, materials which are essential for the transition to a climate-neutral and digital economy. Cobalt, nickel and some Rare Earth Elements (REEs) [form a key pillar in the transition from combustion-based propulsion (eg gasoline motors) to battery and magnet-driven systems.] In this context, the EU, we have been pursuing a very ambitious agenda in the area of raw materials, including through the establishment of reliable partnerships with countries (such as Canada and the US) that share our environmental, social and governance standards. And yes, there is a potential for social tension in the most contested areas where such resources are located. Legal cases brought by local inhabitants, indigenous peoples' representatives, in certain jurisdictions show how delicate these matters are.
 - As said before, some areas will see a major demand for a new labour force, while others lose some of their population; therefore, the importance of listening to and understanding the priorities of young people cannot be over-estimated.
- All of these are hugely important issues and we need to fully realise that geopolitical dynamics and local transformations will inevitably result in changes across the Arctic regions in the coming years.
- Where we can contribute to face these changes and challenges, the EU will work, with States, partners, local authorities, representatives of indigenous peoples, NGOs, business, researchers, think tanks.
- I wish us all a fruitful Symposium, let us try to stay focused, even if the broader picture is quite complex at present – and let us aim at concrete action.
- Thank you for your attention.