



## Model Arctic Council

### Ilisimatusarfik

16. september 2017

Opening speech by First Vice Premier Sara Olsvig, Naalakkersuisut/Government of Greenland

Thank you for the invitation to speak this morning.

The Government of Greenland believes that the Arctic cooperation is of vital importance. Especially the work of the Arctic Council, which now during two decades has grown stronger and stronger, is important for our region and our peoples.

It is the peoples of the Arctic that must be the driving force and the foundation of the Arctic cooperation.

Therefore we are in the Government of Greenland satisfied, that we have the opportunity to present our priorities today. Greenland plays an important role in the Arctic and in the Arctic Council.

Internally in The Kingdom of Denmark, as Greenland together with Faroe Islands and Denmark is called in this forum, we must ensure that the responsible authorities and stakeholders are represented and heard at all times, especially on matters that we already have taken over from Denmark. In the case of the Arctic, most issues are of great relevance for Greenland.

Greenland has played a key role in the Arctic Council since the establishment of the council, and we see it as our responsibility to continue and further develop this role in the Arctic, and internationally.

Sustainable development of the Arctic is key, for us and for our descendants. Those who come after us will bear which ever burden we leave for them, light or heavy, easy or difficult.

The Government of Greenland has a holistic approach to sustainable development. This development includes the opportunities for economic, social and cultural development, for us and for those who come after us.

Therefore, the Arctic Council must not become a forum that only focuses on conservation. The social, environmental, economic and cultural dimensions of all cultures and societies are ever changing, also here in the Arctic.

Environmental protection has been a main focus since the signing of the Ottawa Declaration that defines the work of this council. But the Arctic Council has developed to embrace a vast number of other areas and we must secure a strong focus and cooperation on in the interest of the peoples of the Arctic. We have so much to share.

The eight Arctic States have a unique form of cooperation in the Arctic Council. Think about how different our eight Arctic States are. Despite our differences and our history we have built this cooperation on mutual respect and on consensus based decision making.

The uniqueness of the Arctic Council is also evident by the structure of the council. With Indigenous Peoples represented through six Permanent Participants we show the world the importance of being inclusive. The peoples of the Arctic are divided by eight nation state borders, but we are united by being richer in numbers of cultures, peoples and societies that live peacefully side by side around the North Pole.

This is a unique structure that must be recognized and protected, and our Arctic Council will only continue to succeed if we manage to truly include all Arctic peoples in all aspects of the work of the council.

The inclusiveness of the Arctic Council is also proven by the continuing approval of observers to the council. This is a development I know you will debate today. An important development to make sure that the world around us is properly informed of the development and policies of the Arctic. But also a development where we must be aware of the power structures in our work. The Government of Greenland welcomes observers to the Arctic Council, of course following the right procedures.

It is also important for our government to make clear, that in regards to our Arctic waters, it is the Arctic coastal states that must have a bearing role, such as in the work of the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation in the Arctic Council.

We must ensure that the Arctic Council continues to make decisions based on data and the expert knowledge developed in our Working Groups.

The Arctic Council must not duplicate what is already going on in other international fora. We must use our limited resources wisely.

Finally, it is essential that the development of the Arctic Council is of a form and a size, that continues to allow local peoples to speak and be heard at the meetings of the Arctic Council, and allow for the meetings to be held locally in the Arctic.

..

On behalf of the Government I wish to thank Ilisimatusarfik and Inuit Ataqatigiit Folketingimi, and not less you students for preparing and participating in this Model Arctic Council.

I wish you an exciting day with good deliberations. I will be very interested in reading your end result this afternoon, when you sign your Model Arctic Council Declaration.

What you learn and discover today will be part of your development into Arctic diplomacy.

You are the Arctic future – and you must be the clear Greenlandic voice internationally and in the Arctic.

Thank you, qujanaq.