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## Report on the 2021 Stefansson Memorial Lecture & Roundtable on Gender Equality in the Arctic

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### 3 NOVEMBER 2021

By invitation of the Stefansson Arctic Institute (SAI), Iceland, and the Institute of Arctic Studies (IAS), Dartmouth College. Supported by the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Endowment. Hosted by the CER-ARCTIC, the Arctic Research Center, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB).

Co-sponsors: The Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network; UArctic Thematic Network (TN) on Gender in the Arctic Knowledge Production; the EU H2020 JUSTNORTH project, and the Nordic Centre of Excellence ARCPATH project.

### The Stefansson Memorial Lecture

*Mr. Michael Mann, EU Special Envoy for Arctic matters. "The EU's Stronger Arctic Engagement."*

After welcome introductions by Dr. Eduard Ariza, CER- ARCTIC Director, Dr. Margarita Freixas, Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities of the UAB and Dr. Anna Badia, Chair of the Geography Department of the UAB, Dr. Melody B. Burkins, Director of IAS and Dr. Niels Einarsson, Director of SAI, Mr. Mann presented the background to the European Union's engagement in Arctic matters and set out the main strands of the EU's updated Arctic policy, which was published on October 13th 2021. The text below presents the highlights of his lecture and the overviews of the question-and-answer session that followed.

The fact that Arctic interest is growing in Spain is important to consider because what happens in the Arctic of course does not matter only for the Arctic. The EU considers itself as a leader in the global effort to act on climate change, for example the EU was the first to announce climate goals for 2050. The EU wants more EU in the Arctic and more Arctic in the EU, however the EU needs to consider carefully how to interact with old and new players in the Arctic, and examples of Russia and China were discussed, linked with global security and sustainable resource extraction.

In terms of EU Arctic engagement, it is a priority to contribute to good policy to maintain peaceful dialogue and constructive developments. For example, the EU prioritizes addressing ecological, social, economic and political consequences of climate change and taking action to support inclusive and sustainable development, with particular focus on indigenous inhabitants, women and youth. The EU celebrates the cooperative spirit in the Arctic and takes a people-centered approach by focusing on policies that keep the liveability in the Arctic at centre.

Although there are eight sovereign Arctic states, the EU believes international and regional cooperation is key. Therefore, Arctic involvement of the EU is important regarding issues such as safety and security concerns and in order to mainstream Arctic matters in diplomacy. The EU will therefore maintain their application of Arctic Council observer status and continues to be involved in the working level structures of the AC. The hope is that more non-Arctic members maintain interest in what happens in the high north.

Fears of security problems are overexaggerated. There are good examples of EU collaboration in the area of Arctic security for example with fisheries, cruise ships, LNG tankers, and military submarine activity. There are of course other Arctic issues to address: forest fires highlight the need for civil protection mechanisms; failing infrastructure is a problem; and permafrost melting and even

pandemics present threats to traditional livelihoods. All of these topics also have underlying gender equality issues that must be addressed.

In order to address the many issues facing the Arctic, the EU has given the clear message that oil gas and coal must stay in the ground. Less extraction of hydrocarbons and more production of minerals can stimulate green transitions in the Arctic, working towards carbon neutral consumption and production. Demand for oil and gas is not coming from the Arctic. Of course, there is the dilemma of the value for local economies of hydrocarbon extraction vs the long term negative impacts. Supporting mineral extraction is the path forward, but the EU wants to highlight the importance of balancing precaution and development. Mineral extraction on indigenous lands can conflict with indigenous ways of life, and any activity needs to be supportive of *free, prior and informed consent* (FPIC) principles.

The path forward for the EU in the Arctic also includes continued support through Arctic research funding, regional funding, cohesion funding, just transitions fund, and the support of innovative companies. All of this shows the people-first approach of the EU, helping to improve sustainability and circularity of sustainable development with jobs and quality of life for the people in Arctic regions.

#### *Question topics from the audience.*

Science diplomacy. Considering the power of Europe in the Arctic, the question was raised whether the scientific power and science competence in the Arctic also be used better for science diplomacy – with Russia for example. Perhaps this is the moment to step out with increased cooperative research. It was noted that the MOSAIC project is a big success and science can certainly be a tool to keep difficult relationships going.

Complexities of societal challenges like inclusive growth and inclusions of public sector. The public sector can be seen as an engine for innovation and growth to address challenges. There is a concrete Arctic policy in the new EU document – regarding sustainable Arctic development – and there is the important point of using EU money for innovative ventures that link business and science. There can be a mismatch here because the EU can't tell people what to do because these things are management on a regional level. However, you can't do anything without the innovators so by supporting innovators and business, the EU can support regional level development. Again it is important to remember the Arctic should be considered as a homeland and the EU people-centric policy does this. Horizon Europe is bigger than Horizon 2020 and has a strong focus on climate change, the public sector has access to this. Again related to science diplomacy, it was mentioned that the social component of polar research is growing more important.

Mineral extraction and Indigenous rights. The question was posed, How will the EU balance the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People with the call for increased mineral extraction?

Indigenous representatives noted that they do not currently have legal competence to enforce FPIC on their member states, how would it be with these new EU policies? The EU policy supports strict environmental standards but also social standards as well that should include FPIC, but in the end the EU believes these minerals are critical for energy transition.

Mineral recycling. There was a question about EU plans to fund recycling of minerals (phones, etc). The Critical Raw Materials Alliance has been established given the call for extraction in the policy. There are co-funding opportunities and loans to support extraction, and the policy also supports recycling and circularity.

Public consultation and timing. A question surrounding the willingness to learn and listen, whether Indigenous people were included in the writing process of policies, and how could the social aspects

already be included in policy documents be augmented. The preparation of the EU Arctic Policy included internal and external processes of consultation and comments. There was public consultation in terms of webinars, and here there is always a flux. During the drafting of certain issues, the policy development team did not go to communities but worked with for example the Saami Council and also consulted with the three EU Arctic states. There was also testing of the ground with certain stakeholder, this can be difficult because there are many stakeholders, for example the oil industry and the greens. It used to be that only bigger organizations could apply to calls for tender but the EU is trying to make it more accessible for smaller operators. There was also a question if there was a plan that results from funded projects could be fed into the next policy document. Considering the research timeline, it was unfortunate that this new policy was published without results and consultation from currently funded EU projects. The timing of this particular document was simply internal, and that it was published before COP. However the policy document is not static, so new information can still be built into what the EU is doing.



*Dr. Niels Einarsson, Director of the Stefansson Arctic Institute, introducing the 2021 Stefansson Memorial Lecturer.*



*Hosts and sponsors of the 2021 Stefansson Memorial Lecture. From left to right: Dr. Tanja Joona, Mr. Gustav Sigeman, Dr. Corine Wood-Donnelly, Dr. Niels Einarsson, Ms. Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Dr. Melody Burkins, Mr. Michael Mann, Dr. Eduard Ariza.*

### *Roundtable on Gender Equality in the Arctic – Taking stock, sharing knowledge*

Ms. Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director of the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network, lead of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group Project Gender Equality in the Arctic (GEA). Embla introduced the history leading up to the latest report entitled “The Pan-Arctic Gender Equality in the Arctic Report, phase 3.” While the Arctic Council has previously emphasized issues of gender in its work, there was in fact somewhat of a pause for a few years, until 2013 when GEA began.

The report signals the completion of GEAll and during the development of the report valuable lessons were learned. Of central importance to the successful outcome of phase III was the engagement process, including with Indigenous Representatives and youth. The report identifies over seventy policy relevant highlights and provides three concrete recommendations for the Arctic Council: 1) the need for gender mainstreaming in the work of the Arctic Council, 2) the difficulties of obtaining data and accessibility to gender and ethnic disaggregated data, and 3) the question of how to assist in carrying through on recommendations.

#### **Perspectives:**

The following four panelists gave a short reflection on the report, summarized broadly below.

*Mr. Michael Mann, EU Ambassador at large, Special Envoy for Arctic matters*

*Ms. Tonje Margrete Winsnes Johansen, Saami Council*

*Ms. Anastasia Ulturgasheva, PhD candidate, Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University*

*Dr. Maria Prats Ferret, Director, UAB Observatory for Equality*

Empowering women and girls is a critical component in a peaceful and prosperous society. For a gender-equal Europe we need to tackle structural issues of gender inequality. Gender aspects have become high politics and this gender report was considered in forming the EU Arctic policy. The Arctic is still considered a masculinized space, there are fewer opportunities for women which causes outmigration and further increases gender imbalances. It is important to note too that difficulties with data access and gender-based data are also shared outside the Arctic, but qualitative approaches can help explain the data trends in the future and should be supported. There could be better research on the food processing industries and fly-in/fly-out extractive industries, where women often have executive and technical positions. Also more research is needed on the role of women in other emerging industries in the Arctic, for example the creative industries, and tourism. It would also be interesting to research how levels of immigration relate to depopulation. Future research could also take into account environmental risk in general, not just impacts of climate change on women but the role women play in climate adaptation. Women are less represented in governmental councils or academia but they are very active in environmental activism.

Women are visible as change makers in communities but would be good to have more information on women’s own perspectives in their Indigenous communities. Structural changes must be made because bottom-up approaches to gender issues are complex. In many Indigenous communities, so much energy goes into fighting for basic human rights like land or health, it can be hard to find the time to think about gender as a topic. But it is still very important, Indigenous women experience gender-based violence at higher-rates than majority women, and at the same time the women are often community leaders and have many responsibilities. It was noted that we also need to go beyond binary Western perspectives of gender. This means including LGBTQIA+ aspects, and also considering how age as cultural construction and other life course positions intersects with gender. Addressing what constitutes decolonization of gender issues was noted to be of key importance and this includes a move away from damage-based focus. A key to all of these points is the concrete action of promoting Indigenous scholarship. Finally, the gender equality project report was noted as a good example of

including local and Indigenous knowledge but we should more often consider the immediate disadvantaged participation in decision-making, it is not just gender but language, travel times, etc. Supporting and increasing Indigenous scholarship would create more equity in not only such knowledge production but in decision-making as well.

### **Roundtable Open Dialogue**

The discussion was then opened up to all participants, focusing on the following three questions.

*Question 1 - The GEA III report recommends that the Arctic Council create an expert group responsible for formally advancing and mainstreaming Arctic gender equality principles and guidelines. If the Arctic Council were to create this group, who should be part of it, when and where should it be created, and what should be its first tasks?*

The group should involve trans people, black scholars, and Indigenous scholars who have understanding of non-Western gender concepts, going beyond the binary. The group should operate on the principle that gender is defined according to socially expected behavior, therefore including all gender identities is crucial, because gender inequality harms creativity. Also including experts from outside the Arctic would be important, because they ask different questions and can add a good comparative aspect. The group could explore the tasks mainstreaming active bystander intervention training, and unconscious bias training. Also, this group could contribute to science diplomacy.

Projects in the Arctic Council are at the local level, so Council projects need to have local gender considerations, which means that we need to consider the difficulty of gender mainstreaming. It would also be important to pay for the time of all participants in any expert group, not just professors. Funding can be very difficult to find for these kinds of things, and even when funding is found, many bureaucratic and institutional processes make it hard to pay people for their time to begin to acknowledge the burden of participation and the problems of knowledge-taking. For example, there might be people who don't have bank accounts.

*Question 2 - The GEA III report recommends that gender equality guidelines be informed by data that is disaggregated by both gender and ethnicity, ensuring more intersectional and diverse knowledge informs Arctic policy. How might the Arctic Council ensure it collects, analyzes, and shares this critical data? And should this data gathering and analysis be done by existing individual Arctic Council Working Groups or led and coordinated by a separate body?*

There are big challenges here, Nordic countries do not collect data on ethnicity, because this can be a sensitive topic. It is very important to consider how such data are gathered and who owns the data. There could be more funding towards national projects that are based within local communities. For example, there are ethical guidelines of health data, communities want the national bodies to fund research but not to own the data. Communities must be comfortable with data collection, repository, ownership, etc. There is much work to be done to ensure that data can be converted into something that can be shared. But we cannot forget the importance of contextualized data and knowledge. Also important is the understanding of old data and the need for continual data collection. The lack of data could also be seen as a good thing because it might show that people know they can refuse data collection – data can also give those in power the right to create their own narratives with the data.

*Question 3 - What does "Gender Equality in the Arctic" look like 10 years from now? More specifically, how do we wish to measure success in the advancement and realization of gender equality in Arctic organizations, institutions, and networks?*

It would be nice to envision the inclusion of non-binary and other gender identities, and introducing equality laws, however while still being aware that progress can take a step back. In ten years could we have a better way to address balance in women's lives considering family, career and the pressure of everybody being everywhere? Considering self-determination and choice could be interesting in future efforts for gender equality. There needs to be human and monetary resources for communities to have the peace to address climate change, therefore adherence to UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People and Free Prior and Informed Consent is still crucial.

Reflections (various participants): How can we set up something to address this, including the importance to include women, Indigenous voices and all peoples in Arctic concerns? Projects working in the Arctic include lots of local data, but gender-diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous locals need to be involved in the project structures, initial ideas and design. In this, locals need to be compensated, not just the professors and outside researchers. It was noted that in the Just North project, funding to pay locals was very hard to find, and to distribute as locals were not a static stationary group.

### **Summary and Closing Remarks**

Dr. Melody Burkins & Embla Eir Oddsdóttir

One issue of gender considerations is that gender is still too often seen as a “women's issue”. This is important to change, considering the overall ramifications of gender inequality. When people are fighting for survival, gender equality is often pushed back, allowing equality to slip backwards. Gender equality is a fundamental part of sustainable development and acknowledging the wide range of cultural understandings of gender is crucial to move forward. A major take-home point from the roundtable was the question of how to know when we've reached gender equality. The response was that we've reached gender equality when we've stopped talking about it. This of course does not mean that silence on gender issues should be taken as a sign that there is nothing to address. However, the round table participants agreed that they looked forward to a day when there would not be as much work to do on researching and addressing gender equality, and that strong institutional standards and regulatory policies would be in place to ensure gender equality.

The roundtable on Gender Equality in the Arctic provided an excellent opportunity for a diverse discussion on issues relating to equality in the Arctic, also in a broader understanding of equality. It provided for a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts from both within the Arctic region and out, including perspectives from our European partners and colleagues. The discussions and findings of the roundtable are an important contribution to the ongoing work of the GEA project, which will be moving into phase IV in the year 2022. The roundtable outcomes will feed into the GEAI V project proposal, to be tabled at the SDWG in February 2022.

We thank all participants for their valuable contributions and look forward to a repeat event in the future.



*The group gathered for the roundtable discussion.*

## Appendix 1: Agenda

### *10.00 – 11:00 The 2021 Stefansson Memorial Lecture*

*Faculty of Philosophy Auditorium*

**Welcome:** Dr. Eduard Ariza, CER- ARCTIC Director

**Short introductions:** Dr. Melody B. Burkins, Director of IAS and Dr. Níels Einarsson, Director of SAI

**The Stefansson Memorial Lecture - *The EU's Stronger Arctic Engagement*:** Mr. Michael Mann, EU Special Envoy for Arctic matters (30 minutes)

**Discussion** with audience (20 minutes). Moderator Dr. Ariza

### *11:00 – 11:30 Coffee and refreshments*

### *11:30 – 13:30 Roundtable on Gender Equality in the Arctic – Taking stock, sharing knowledge*

**Roundtable discussions** among invited participants including Arctic researchers, Indigenous representatives, UAB and other experts, policy experts. Chatham House rules apply.

#### **Moderator and Welcome Remarks**

Dr. Melody Burkins

#### **Introductory presentation - *The Pan-Arctic Gender Equality in the Arctic Report, phase 3 – From assessment to policy***

Ms. Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director, Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network, Lead, Arctic Council Gender Equality in the Arctic project (5-10 min).

#### **Perspectives:**

Mr. Michael Mann, EU Ambassador at large, Special Envoy for Arctic matters (5 min)

Ms. Tonje Margrete Winsnes Johansen, Saami Council (5 min)

Ms. Anastasia Ulturgasheva, PhD candidate, Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University (5 min)

Dr. Maria Prats Ferret, Director, UAB Observatory for Equality (5 min)

#### **Roundtable Open Dialogue**

Question 1 - The GEA III report recommends that the Arctic Council create an expert group responsible for formally advancing and mainstreaming Arctic gender equality principles and guidelines. If the Arctic Council were to create this group, who should be part of it, when and where should it be created, and what should be its first tasks? (25 min)

Question 2 - The GEA III report recommends that gender equality guidelines be informed by data that is disaggregated by both gender and ethnicity, ensuring more intersectional and diverse knowledge informs Arctic policy. How might the Arctic Council ensure it collects, analyzes, and shares this critical data? And should this data gathering and analysis be done by existing individual Arctic Council Working Groups or led and coordinated by a separate body? (25 min)

Question 3 - What does “Gender Equality in the Arctic” look like 10 years from now? More specifically, how do we wish to measure success in the advancement and realization of gender equality in Arctic organizations, institutions, and networks? (25 min)

**Summary and Closing Remarks:** Dr. Melody Burkins & Embla Eir Oddsdóttir

### *14:00 – 15:00 Light lunch (UAB Cantine)*

### *20.00 – 23:00 Dinner*

## **Appendix 2: List of participants**

Mr. Michael Mann, EU Ambassador at large, Special Envoy for Arctic matters  
Ms. Tonje Margrete Winsnes Johansen, Saami Council  
Ms. Anastasia Ulturgasheva, PhD candidate, Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University  
Dr. Maria Prats Ferret, Director, UAB Observatory for Equality  
Dr. Níels Einarsson, Director, Stefansson Arctic Institute  
Dr. Melody B. Burkins, Director, Institute of Arctic Studies, Dartmouth College  
Dr. Eduard Ariza, Director, CER-ARCTIC  
Ms. Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director, Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network and Lead Gender Equality in the Arctic  
Dr. Corine Wood-Donnelly, University of Bodo, Scientific Coordinator, JUSTNORTH  
Dr. Catherine Chambers, Stefansson Arctic Institute and the University Centre of the Westfjords  
Dr. Margaret Willson, University of Washington/Stefansson Arctic Institute  
Mr. Gustav Sigeman, University of Bodo, JUSTNORTH, EU Polarnet II/EU Polar cluster  
Ms. Jade Zoghbi, PhD Candidate, UAB  
Ms. Sveinbjörg Smáradóttir, Researcher, Stefansson Arctic Institute/ARCPATH  
Ms. Sif Jóhannesar Ástudóttir, Project Manager, Stefansson Arctic Institute  
Dr. Tanja Joonas, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Finnish Institutional Leader of JUSTNORTH, EU Polarnet II/EU Polar cluster  
Dr. Mireia Baylina. Head of the Gender Group, UAB Geography Department  
Dr. Marga Gual, SCIDIP Global  
Dr. Margarita Freixas, Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities of the UAB  
Dr. Anna Badia, Chair of the Geography Department of the UAB  
Dr. Antonio Quesada, Spanish Polar Committee

### **Appendix 3: Resources**

Gender Equality for a Thriving Sustainable Arctic - [Sustainability | Free Full-Text | Gender Equality for a Thriving, Sustainable Arctic \(mdpi.com\)](#)

[Pan-Arctic Report — Gender Equality in the Arctic \(arcticgenderequality.network\)](#)

[A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic](#)

## **Appendix 4: Mr. Michael Mann's speech in whole**

Thank you very much indeed for your invitation to give this year's Stefansson Memorial Lecture. It is a great honour. Thank you to Dr Melody Burkins, to Dr Niels Einarsson and to Dr Eduard Ariza for his kind words of introduction. It's great to be back in Barcelona, a wonderful city I only visited for the very first time just before the pandemic made all our lives very difficult. I think it's extremely significant that only my second foreign trip since the pandemic is to a non-Arctic state to talk about the EU's Arctic policy. This illustrates how it is now clear to everyone that what happens in the Arctic matters not just for the countries north of the Arctic Circle, but for everyone. Spain is, I know, very active in Arctic research, and is an Observer state to the Arctic Council. And it is fantastic to see the opening of the Arctic Research Centre here in Barcelona. I wish you well in your future work. Since finishing my posting to Iceland in March 2020, I have had the great privilege to be the 'public face' of the EU's Arctic policy. I was also lucky enough to be one of the writers of our new policy document, of which more later. Niels has asked me to present that policy to you today. But first, let me take a little trip back in time to explain the rationale behind the EU's interest in Arctic matters, a little bit of history and a little bit of geopolitical context.

### **The EU in the Arctic**

Why is the EU active in the Arctic regions? Why should people take the EU seriously as an Arctic player? First point: the EU is in the Arctic. Three of our Member States have Arctic territories: Finland, Sweden and the Kingdom of Denmark. Two other Arctic nations, Norway and Iceland, are in the European Economic Area which means that they implement a great deal of EU legislation and are part of the Single Market. Second: The EU is a major consumer of Arctic resources: oil, gas, fish, and in the future, minerals which will play a crucial role in the transformation of our economy away from its dependence on hydrocarbons. The EU also plays a significant role simply because of its size and geopolitical role in the world of today. As a group of advanced industrialised countries, the EU also contributes to the negative changes that are happening there, producing about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, it leads global efforts to slow the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. We are working hard at the COP26, currently underway in Glasgow, to encourage our international partners to follow our lead and take bold and brave decisions. In short, the EU has both strategic and day-to-day interests in the region. We want more EU in the Arctic and more Arctic in the EU.

### **Structures**

The EU's engagement in Arctic matters began in the 1990's and has gradually increased since. In 1993, the EU was party to the establishment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. In 1999, we launched the Northern Dimension policy framework, with Norway, Iceland and Russia. This encourages cooperation on the environment, public health, transport and culture. By 2008, the European Commission had published a first Communication outlining key elements of an EU Arctic policy and had applied for observer status with the Arctic Council. In 2012, the Commission and the High Representative published a Joint Communication, further detailing the EU's Arctic policy and reiterating its application for observer status in the Arctic Council. This reflected the fact that the EU was already a major actor in the Arctic region. In Brussels, there was a growing consensus that the EU had to be more ambitious in its approach to the Arctic. And that it should draw more attention to its considerable activities there – both for domestic and foreign policy goals. In this context, a further Joint Communication was published in April 2016 with the title 'An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic'. That document focused on advancing international cooperation in responding to the impacts of climate change on the Arctic's fragile environment, and on promoting and contributing to sustainable development, particularly in the European part of the Arctic. Later in 2016, the EU Global Strategy was published by the High

Representative. It emphasizes that a safe, stable, sustainable and prosperous Arctic is important not just for the region itself, but for the EU and the entire world. And that the EU has a strategic interest in playing a key role in the Arctic.

### Climate change

As we all know, the Arctic regions have changed particularly rapidly in the 5 years since our last policy paper was released. Climate change is having a dramatic effect. The Arctic is warming three times faster than the global average. In other words, +2 degrees globally mean +4 to +6 degrees in Arctic regions. That leads to irreversible local melting of ice on land and at sea, causing rising sea levels globally. Melting ice and thawing permafrost threaten the livelihoods of communities which have lived in the Arctic for centuries, and cause untold damage to fragile Arctic ecosystems. The thawing of permafrost, which is a local Arctic phenomenon, releases methane locked up in the ground for millennia. This in turn leads to additional heating of the global atmosphere and has enormous ramifications for global climate patterns.

### Geopolitics

Yet despite the alarm bells that climate change has set off, some see new opportunities emerging from the melting ice, and geopolitical interest in Arctic matters has grown hugely. That of course means that the EU has to consider carefully how we interact with all parties. New players, including China, are increasingly active, attracted by easier access to resources and to transport routes. China's self-appointed position as a 'near-Arctic state' is tricky. It has added a Polar Silk Road to its Belt and Road Initiative. Clearly, China is not geographically in the Arctic. But its political and economic ambitions are projected into the Arctic via oil and gas extraction projects in Russia, the development of the Northern Sea Route, research facilities, and interest in infrastructure in Greenland and Finland. Arctic science and research is important to China. Arctic climate change, fisheries and cold weather technologies are examples of areas where we could potentially work with China, for instance in the context of the Arctic Council. We also want to see China being even more ambitious on climate action, and adhering to international law. Russia is looking to increase the exploitation of oil and gas, and encourage shipping through the Northern Sea Route. As the ice melts, Russia's Arctic coastline becomes more exposed. These factors, combined with global strategic considerations, have influenced an increase in Russian military activity. Russia's military build-up across its Arctic regions is not an Arctic-specific development, but is linked to security posturing which we also see in the Baltic, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, in Africa and in the Far East. We do not want these global security dynamics to contaminate Arctic cooperation, which can be very constructive. While key disagreements do persist between the EU and Russia, there are also areas where the EU and Russia should continue to cooperate. The Arctic is one such area. Science and research in climate change, environmental projects in the Barents region, preservation of fish stocks and maritime surveillance are good examples. In some sectors, we need to speak frankly. The necessary transition from massive use of hydrocarbons globally and the transition to carbon neutral technologies both offer major challenges and opportunities. Russia could play a much more ambitious role in this transition. In Washington DC, there is a strong emphasis on security issues in the Arctic. Again, this is not an Arctic-specific development, but is linked to global positioning of the US, China and Russia. It is related, among other things, to strategic issues regarding freedom of navigation across the globe, new weapons systems, and the absence of agreements on reduction of nuclear weapons. The geographic position of Greenland is vital for US security interests. Again, that is not in essence an Arctic-specific issue but linked to global security issues. Oil and gas extraction from Alaska is important to the US economy, and science and research are important to the US Administration as a whole. Arctic climate change, fisheries and cold weather technologies are examples of areas where we can work with Alaska and the US.

## EU as major geopolitical and economic player

Against this political background, the EU, as a major geopolitical and economic player, must react to the new challenges. It must also bring its Arctic policy into line with its political priorities, not least the EU Green Deal. That is why, just three weeks ago, the High Representative and the European Commission published our updated Arctic policy document. It is entitled: "A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic". The paper sets out the EU's commitment to strengthen its Arctic engagement through the following key objectives: Contributing to maintaining peaceful and constructive dialogue and cooperation in a changing geopolitical landscape, to keep the Arctic safe and stable. Addressing the ecological, social, economic and political challenges arising as a consequence of climate change and taking strong action to tackle climate change and environmental degradation. Support the inclusive and sustainable development of the Arctic regions to the benefit of its current inhabitants and future generations, focusing on the needs of Indigenous Peoples, women and the young, and investing in future-orientated jobs and the blue economy. To maintain the cooperative spirit in the Arctic, and to tackle the climate and environmental crises, we must always take a people-centred approach.

## Sovereignty

We recognise that the eight Arctic states have the primary responsibility for what happens on their sovereign territory. Yet many of the challenges the Arctic faces can best be tackled through regional or international cooperation. This is especially true of climate change, which brings with it new safety and security challenges. For the first time, our Arctic policy has a separate chapter on the geopolitics of the Arctic and how the EU wishes to position itself. Since the release of our new policy, many – especially in Russia – have questioned our right to operate in Arctic regions and our claim to having a role there. But EU Arctic involvement is a reality, and is important. When I took this job 18 months ago, I admit that I was surprised at the level of EU engagement in Arctic affairs. It ranges from science and research, to fisheries management, environmental legislation and satellite monitoring, to name but a few. And in designing our updated policy, we were very careful to ensure we stayed in line with the powers the EU is granted in its Treaty – our basic rule book. In some areas – management of marine resources or environmental legislation – the EU has full legal competence in its Member States. In others – such as hard security issues – it does not. This does not stop us, however, from having a geopolitical role in the Arctic and an interest in safety and security concerns, in the broadest sense of the word. We will seek to mainstream Arctic matters in our diplomacy and enhance our work in Arctic regional fora. We maintain our application for Observer status in the Arctic Council, opposed by Russia following the imposition of sanctions following the annexation of Crimea. The EU's original application for observer status was formally ignored at the ministerial meetings in 2009 and 2011 due to the EU's ban on imports of seal products, which caused massive frustration among indigenous peoples in Canada and Greenland. In 2012, the EU re-submitted an application for observer status, which was formally acknowledged at the 2013 ministerial meeting in Kiruna. But the continued existence of the EU's seal ban meant that the Arctic Council decided to issue only a standing invitation for the EU to attend meetings on terms similar to observers, until a decision could be reached giving access to the EU markets for seal products originating from indigenous hunting. Such a solution in the form of an "Inuit exemption" was formally introduced in 2015 and the Canadian reservation was lifted. But in 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and the EU introduced sanctions. Since then, Russia has held back on granting the EU observer status with the Arctic Council. This has been the situation at the ministerial meetings in 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021. However, this does not stop us participating in the working level structures of the Arctic Council - for instance, the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane. Observer status has been granted to a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations as well as 13 states, including six EU members. Three other EU states have also applied, but not yet been granted Observer status. And we still work productively with Russia in the Arctic context, not least on

environmental issues under the Northern Dimension policy framework, and of course in line with the five principles established by our Member States for our interaction with Russia. Given the challenges we all face, it will be important for us to work together with all Arctic partners in Europe, with the US and Canada, and with other players involved in Arctic affairs. And we hope that non-Arctic EU states, such as Spain, will continue to take a greater interest in what happens in the High North. It genuinely matters. Such international cooperation is vital to keep the Arctic a region of peaceful cooperation.

### **Safety and security**

Whenever I speak to a Think Tank or a journalist, it is not long before the issue of Arctic security comes up, and speculation about a possible military flare-up in the Arctic. While we are not complacent, we think such fears are exaggerated. In the security field, we have a preference for seeing things as running along a spectrum from soft civilian safety to hard security with some delicate interlinked dual-use implications along the way. Our new policy looks at how the EU can contribute to mitigating security and safety challenges in the broadest sense. For example, maritime search and rescue capacity can be better coordinated and increased in order to help in a number of different circumstances, each of which has different implications: A local fishing vessel in national waters (few people, local implications, no major political implications). A cruise ship with hundreds of passengers out of its national waters (many passengers, public communications implications, legal and political implications). An industrial-style problem in international or national waters (an LNG tanker running aground or being hit by a storm or an iceberg). A military vessel in trouble (a submarine, with major political and secrecy implications). Forest fires are increasingly the norm in some parts of the Arctic. We can fight this and improve safety at sea through the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism. Collapsing infrastructure is a reality which led last summer to a huge oil slick in Norilsk in Russia.

We can use our state-of-the-art satellite systems and our expertise in Arctic research to start the fight against permafrost thaw. Long frozen pathogens pose potential future health threats as they are released from the permafrost. We can put in place health mechanisms to be ready for the next pandemic. EU governments have also tasked us with looking at the relationship between climate change and security. We will improve our strategic foresight, working with our partners, including NATO. In this work, we will look at the medium to longer term security impact of climate change and share studies and data, as part of the broader ongoing exchange with NATO on climate change and security. And allow me here to make a little hook to the roundtable discussion on gender equality which is next on the programme. Seeing the Arctic through a lens of human security, we also must prepare for the threats to traditional livelihoods as habitats disappear - which can have a gender bias. We can use EU funds and programmes to help the process of mitigation and adaptation.

### **Reactions to our JC**

Following the publication of our paper, two of our proposals gained the media headlines: Firstly, our push for oil, gas and coal to 'stay in the ground' and to work with our partners towards a moratorium on further hydrocarbon reserve development in the Arctic. And secondly, our plan to establish a European Commission Office in Nuuk, Greenland. The EU sends more than 30 million euros a year to Greenland to support education there. We hope that a physical presence there can enhance our cooperation with Greenland in the future and also raise awareness of the EU's work in the Arctic.

### **The oil and gas question**

As we all know, global demand for hydrocarbons is at the root of Arctic climate change, but this demand is not controlled in the Arctic. It is not the 4 million people living in the Arctic regions who consume the oil, gas and coal, which causes temperature increases; it is the 7.8 billion people living

south of the Arctic Circle. This is why we need multilateral agreements in combination with ambitious regional and national legislation to drive an effective transition to carbon neutral consumption and production systems. Arctic resources are important for local economies and global demand, but their exploitation is a concern. The dilemma is between -- on the one hand -- the global demand for gas, oil and coal from Arctic locations and their major value for local economies. And -- on the other hand -- the general interest in halting the climate change caused by the use of hydrocarbons and in preserving the fragile Arctic environment. Our new policy therefore advocates that we collectively work on agreements to keep these resources in the ground, also in the Arctic. At the same time, the transition towards a carbon-neutral economy will require major increases in the production of critical minerals, which can be found around the world, including in Arctic locations. The EU has a strong interest in seeing transitions in these two fields: less extraction of hydrocarbons and increasing production of minerals. But at the same time, it is critically important to ensure appropriate prior assessment of the environmental impact of any exploitation projects and to abide by regulatory standards. In the Arctic, the need to balance precaution and development is particularly important.

### **More to the JC than that**

While the issue of oil, gas and coal grabbed the headlines, aficionados of Arctic issues will know that there is much more to our new policy than that. We have put the European Green Deal at the heart of the EU's Arctic engagement, together with the Fit for 55 package, our biodiversity policy and the EU's approach for a sustainable blue economy, supported by science, innovation and regional investment. The Green Deal and Fit for 55 set the ambition for Europe to be carbon-neutral by 2050, and to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. We aim to act against major sources of pollution affecting the Arctic regions in the air, on land and at sea, such as plastics and marine litter, black carbon, chemicals, and transport emissions, as well as the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. We will contribute actively to the implementation of the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean. We will support marine protection in the Arctic Ocean by pushing for the establishment of Marine Protected Areas. As I mentioned before, one of the biggest challenges the Arctic faces is the thawing of permafrost. The EU will promote research and international cooperation on the effects of thawing permafrost. We will promote sustainable solutions in the European Arctic for extracting minerals which are critical for the green transition. This will include setting high standards with global partners for reducing the environmental and social impact of mining and processing. We will use our research budget and expertise in Earth observation to better understand and counter the effects of climate change. We aim to stimulate a green transition so that Arctic regions can showcase future-compatible job creation in sectors including green energy and sustainable approaches to connectivity, tourism, and innovation. Over the last seven years, the EU funded around 250 Mio € of Arctic research under the Horizon 2020 Programme, notably on climate change, biodiversity & sustainable development. This commitment will continue under Horizon Europe. Northern Sweden and Finland received around a billion euros of EU regional funding in the same period. They will continue to benefit from cohesion funding and will also qualify for additional funds, such as the Just Transition Fund and InvestEU to name but two.

### **Putting people first**

Whatever we do, our Arctic policy is nothing without the people who live there. We will use funding available from several programmes, for instance Horizon Europe, our regional funds, and our connectivity and space programmes, to create opportunities for innovative companies. We will work with the Arctic States, local authorities, business and civil society to seek robust conditions for those who live and work in Arctic locations, while also taking into account the global concerns, not least in the climate change context. Arctic inhabitants, including indigenous peoples, value the principle of free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures

or launching development projects that may affect them. The EU is supportive of this principle. The Arctic offers a particular potential for innovation and sustainable use of resources, geothermal, wind and hydro projects, the carbon-free production of steel, and greener battery production. Science, research, innovation and technology are at the heart of EU policies and actions in the Arctic. We will in the future do more to take account of indigenous knowledge in our research, a process that has already begun under Horizon 2020 and which is reflected in the conclusions of the Arctic Science Ministerial meetings. Innovative technologies such as satellites, big data, artificial intelligence and advanced modelling are likely to transform the Arctic economies. They can enable sectors such as shipping, fisheries and tourism to improve their sustainability and circularity. Emerging sectors such as blue technologies, offshore renewable energy, hydrogen and maritime security also rely on innovation and technology. In a nutshell: we will invest in people and sustainable jobs, and push for more involvement of the people who live there in the decisions that affect them. We are well aware of the demographic changes which are taking place in the Arctic regions. Without the full involvement and buy-in of all parts of society – men and women, young people, the indigenous populations – there can be no sustainable development in the Arctic. That is why our policy aims to put people first. I hope I have managed to put across the rationale behind the EU's activities in Arctic regions and the broad scope of what we do there. Drawing together the different strands into a cohesive policy document was a considerable job of work. But now the real work begins: on making these ideas a reality. Thank you.