



## **Greenpeace Statement for the Environment Ministers Meeting in Jukkasjärvi - February 2013**

Greenpeace is strongly concerned about the multiple threats to the Arctic people and environment arising from climate change and from the potentially unsustainable exploitation of mineral and biological resources in the region, including the extraction of oil under very high risk conditions, and industrial-scale fishing in previously unfished waters.

We recognise the sovereignty of Arctic nations over their territory, and the rights of the people of the Arctic to pursue the sustainable use of their natural resources. However, it is also critical that the future management of the region protects its unique and vulnerable ecosystem, which is a global heritage; and takes into account the legitimate interests of the wider international community in, for instance, the protection of high seas biodiversity. Over two million citizens worldwide have supported the Greenpeace Arctic campaign and called for international action to protect of the Arctic.

**It is vital that the Environmental Ministers of Arctic nations inject urgency into the work of the Arctic council in protecting the sensitive Arctic environment, and make concrete proposals for implementing such protection.**

There is continuing high quality and important work carried out in the working groups of the Arctic Council, in terms of gathering and analyzing science and producing reports on the state of the Arctic environment. However, protection is not achieved by research; it is achieved by practical actions to tackle the issues highlighted by the working groups. Specific examples include action to marine protected areas and the urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions of the in the eight member states.

By proposing specific actions to protect the Arctic environment, Arctic Environmental ministers could take a vital step towards convincing citizens and the wider global community that the Arctic Council is maturing into its role as pre-eminent forum for the sustainable management of the region.

**The need for strong in-put with a measurements focus is especially urgent in the following areas:**

1. *Strong climate action by the Arctic states.* The Arctic council has repeatedly expressed strong concern about the effects of global warming on the Arctic. However, this has not been mirrored by measures within the Arctic states or in their stance in international negotiations, despite reports describing the need to keep at least 2/3 of already identified fossil fuels in the ground, if we are to stay within the agreed 2 degree global temperature goal. The initiative to tackle short-lived climate forcers is good and admirable, but current efforts to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions are wholly inadequate in several

of the Arctic states. For this to change, the discussion needs to be high-lighted and prioritized in a forum where all the Arctic states are present and where Governments are specifically required to engage with the impacts of their emissions on the Arctic environment for which they are responsible. The Arctic council has in its meetings not taken an overall approach on this topic and therefore, it would be appropriate if the Arctic environmental ministers could start a dialogue on this, and make a proposal to the ministerial meeting in Kiruna concerning the importance of the issue and the need to take strong action.

2. *Establishment and management of marine protected areas in the Arctic.* In November 2010, IUCN together with the National Resource Defense Council arranged a pan-Arctic conference to identify Ecological and Biological Significant Areas in the Arctic marine environment. Besides aiming to produce the first overarching review of vulnerable areas in the Arctic Ocean, the second goal was to increase the understanding of the necessity for eco-system based management of the Arctic marine environment. Scientists from several Arctic states participated and together they identified 77 areas as EBSA:s based on the CBD-criteria, among these, 13 were identified as super EBSA areas on the basis that they fulfill a majority of the CBD criteria. These areas have been cross-checked with the Arctic Council overview of LME:s. This process must now be formalized within the Arctic Council, and taken forward with the explicit purpose of establishing marine protected areas in the Arctic. These discussions could be held under the EBM-umbrella or under the work on implementing existing international agreements. Environment Ministers should give a strong signal that they support this work with a timetable for the final designation of marine protected areas in the Arctic.
3. *On-going off-shore oil drilling in the Arctic without techniques or infrastructure to cope with spills.* Currently, there are several off-shore oil exploitation projects in the Arctic (Alaska, Russia and Greenland) with oil drilling in icy waters. This in spite of the fact that there are no techniques or infra structure to handle a major oil spill such as the one in the Gulf of Mexico, should such a spill occur the ecosystems and the people who rely on them will be severely affected. Clearly, individual states retain sovereignty over activities in their territorial waters and economic zones. However, there is nothing to hinder an international discussion about the risks and potential and consequences of the current situation, with a view to producing a common set of rules governing extraction in the Arctic region entered into voluntarily by Arctic states. A discussion amongst the Arctic Environmental ministers regarding this issue is pre-requisite to developing common rules, since it is the Environmental ministers in each of the Arctic governments that have the most competence and experience concerning the environmental effects of oil spills. Ministers should conduct such a discussion and make recommendations for an Arctic Council initiative on common rules governing oil extraction in Arctic waters.
4. *Protect sensitive marine eco-systems and vital fish stocks from destructive fishing.* As sea ice retreats as a consequence of global climate change, fish stocks are moving north; it is now vital that the effects of destructive fishing (such as bottom-trawling) are recognized and that protection measures are put in place to protect these stocks for

the future. The Arctic marine eco-systems previously protected by the sea ice are now being uncovered, and at present lack of protection by any effective legal framework. Bottom-trawling operations are taking place further north every year, and have been observed north of Svalbard. Recent reports show that today there are 36 times more fishing vessels around Svalbard than in 2007. The USA have taken measures to protect its Arctic waters and closed them to commercial fishing. Canada has also limited their commercial fishing in Arctic waters. However, in other places of the Arctic, protection is lacking and a coherent approach needs to be taken, before the Arctic marine eco-systems and fish stocks are badly affected by destructive fishing. There is a strong scientific basis for this approach and more than 2000 scientists have signed a petition to protect the Arctic against destructive fishing. A recommendation is to place this discussion under the protection of Arctic biodiversity and Eco-system based management.