



UARctic Congress 2021 Declaration: Towards a Sustainable Arctic

May 18, 2021

On behalf of UARctic and the Icelandic host organizations of the UARctic Congress, we make the following Declaration.

During the past year's pandemic, we have learned how distances can be reduced through online meetings and collaboration. Online meetings provide more equal access to everyone to attend the meetings and conferences – if broadband internet connectivity is available. Connectivity and accessibility, in the broad sense, have thus become even more important key needs for northern communities. Online connectivity must improve to allow equal participation by northerners in meetings, conferences and other activities important to livelihoods and sustainability.

The UARctic Congress 2021 has gathered over 500 online participants from the circumpolar world and beyond “virtually” here in Iceland, in strong partnership with the Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Our common goals of employing knowledge-based decision-making are reflected in the themes of the Congress and its program, which focuses on the priorities of the Icelandic Arctic Council chairmanship: the Arctic Marine Environment, Climate and Green Energy Solutions, Communities in the Arctic, and UARctic as a platform of joint education and research.

To move towards our vision of “A strong, engaged, informed, and dynamic North, creating better lives and environments for all northerners.”, the delegates of the UARctic Congress 2021 declare the following:

1. We continue to stress the importance of academic and scientific cooperation for peace and stability. The Arctic is a region of remarkable peace and stability that is committed to dialogue and cooperation.
2. We recognize our strong partnership with the Arctic Council and other regional actors to support knowledge-based decision-making, science advice, and science diplomacy.
3. In partnership with Indigenous Peoples and communities, we seek to transform our education institutions and systems to be inclusive, relevant and responsive to Indigenous peoples, their perspectives, interests, and knowledge systems.
4. We support the continued work on gender equality in the Arctic, under the auspices of the Arctic Council's SDWG and UARctic Thematic Networks. Gender equality is an important pillar of sustainable development and the Pan-Arctic Gender Equality in the Arctic Report is an important stepping stone in consolidating knowledge on subjects relating to gender equality in the Arctic.
5. We call attention to the key societal challenge of plastic waste and we call for integrated monitoring and for prioritizing actions that may reduce the impact of

plastics in the Arctic marine environment. Enhanced cooperation is needed for a sustainable Arctic Ocean including existing UArctic Thematic Network on Arctic Plastic pollution.

6. We recognize that the development and application of green energy solutions in the Arctic region can only take place through a broad coalition of specialists and concerned stakeholders, where communities share their needs, knowledge, and expertise. Renewable development should support and enhance the social and economic values of northern and Indigenous communities, and highlight the excellent work of the UArctic Thematic Network on Renewable Energy in this sphere.
7. We see education as the essential element in forging better lives and livelihoods for all northerners.
8. We recognize international mobility, and the continued need for us to meet face-to-face, even as we are increasingly connected online. UArctic invites the Arctic Council to take a more active part in cooperation, recognizing the importance of mobility in combination with online meetings to create a strong sense of community and cooperation.
9. We see that cooperation in education and research can contribute significantly to all of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals, particularly because UArctic embodies the objective of the final goal: "partnerships for the goals."
10. We ask our members to encourage more effective integration of Indigenous and local knowledge by engaging northern communities as full partners in research and in the dissemination of findings.
11. We thank the Icelandic hosts for their excellent work in organizing the UArctic Congress 2021 as well as our partners in the Icelandic chairmanship program of the Arctic Council, especially in the challenging circumstances of the past year. We also look forward to continuing that relationship with the Russian chairmanship period and the UArctic Congress 2022 in Moscow.

It is also of utmost importance that as the UArctic's membership grows that the original spirit of cooperation for the north, by northerners, is maintained as a core value of the UArctic. Cooperation between the north and south is necessary in order to tackle our current global issues on climate and sustainability. That cooperation should be based on respect, understanding and true sharing of knowledge between northern and southern communities. It is imperative that within the UArctic itself there is a full understanding on the importance of not losing sight of that vision and that the UArctic builds on past experiences from our cooperation, and how that truly brings better livelihood to northern communities.

Finally, we celebrate our 20 years of cooperation and collaboration since the University of the Arctic was formally launched in Rovaniemi, Finland in 2001. Having been created through the initiative of the Arctic Council it is essential for UArctic to maintain and strengthen this close relationship, and we congratulate it on its own 25-year anniversary.

The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a network of universities, colleges, research institutes, and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North. UArctic builds and strengthens collective resources and infrastructures that enable member institutions to better serve their constituents and their regions. Through cooperation in education, research, and outreach we enhance human capacity in the North, promote viable communities and sustainable economies, and forge global partnerships.