



SCOTLAND MODEL ARCTIC COUNCIL

OBAN
DECLARATION

MARCH 2022

SCOTMAC

OBAN DECLARATION

On the occasion of the First Ministerial Meeting of the Scotland Model Arctic Council

1. **WE**, the Ministers of the Arctic States of the Scotland Model Arctic Council (SCOTMAC), joined by representatives of the Indigenous Permanent Participant organisations of SCOTMAC;
2. **HAVING GATHERED** in Oban, Scotland, United Kingdom, on 13th March 2022 at the First Ministerial Meeting of SCOTMAC;
3. **REGRETTING** the absence due to illness of the SCOTMAC representatives of the Gwich'in Council International and the Inuit Circumpolar Council, and **WISHING** them speedy recovery;
4. **CONFIRMING** the commitment of SCOTMAC to raise awareness of the Arctic as a region; promote respect for Arctic peoples and their Indigenous rights; and enhance understanding of the diverse societies, economies, cultures and ecosystems of the Arctic;

HEREBY DECLARE:

Growth of Arctic shipping

5. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the negative impacts that marine ecosystems face as a result of climate change, and **FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING** the previous commitment of Arctic States to monitor and reduce these negative impacts in order to protect the livelihoods, cultures and social identities of Arctic Indigenous communities;
6. **RECOGNISING** the importance in the Arctic of higher standards for marine safety, of the monitoring of shipping and sea-ice conditions, and of education about the characteristics of the marine environment;
7. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the need in the Arctic to identify safe shipping corridors, and to improve satellite cover and navigational maps, including by incorporating Indigenous Knowledge;

8. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the need for the benefits of the growth of Arctic shipping to be distributed fairly between Arctic communities, including transnational Indigenous communities across the region;
9. **AFFIRMING** that the development of Arctic shipping should promote the resupply of all Arctic communities, with the aim of improving their quality of life, taking into account their individual needs;
10. **ACKNOWLEDGING WITH CONCERN** that the use of heavy fuel oils (HFOs) is highly detrimental to the environment;
11. **RECOGNISING** the value of identifying and creating Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Arctic as a regulatory tool to ensure the protection of environments precious to Indigenous peoples;
12. **REAFFIRMING** our commitment to the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes in accordance with international law;

HEREBY:

13. **DIRECT** the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group to:
 - a. Identify areas where the Polar Code could be strengthened to ensure safer and more sustainable Arctic shipping practices;
 - b. Establish a multilateral, openly available database for monitoring Arctic marine conditions and vessels;
 - c. Conduct further research into sustainable alternative methods of disposing of grey water and other ship-waste discharges;
 - d. Conduct further research on the impacts of pollution, including noise pollution, on Arctic marine ecosystems and the health of Arctic Indigenous peoples;
 - e. Conduct further research on the development and implementation of safe and biodegradable fishing equipment;
 - f. Assess the potential for, and identify ways to address, future pollution in Arctic waters;

14. **ESTABLISH** an Expert Group on Arctic sea-surface currents to identify areas of marine litter and plastic accumulation in Arctic waters, and to develop guidance on environmental standards to address these problems across the Arctic region;
15. **CONSIDER** further funding for PAME's current Arctic Coastal Cleanup Project in order to manage removal of waste and pollution, with special focus on marine areas and resources on which Arctic Indigenous communities rely;
16. **CONSIDER** conducting a comprehensive survey among Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous communities and the fishing industry to obtain baseline information as a first step to mitigate marine litter produced by the fishing industry;
17. **CONSIDER** increased funding for the development of biodegradable fishing nets to be used in Arctic waters;
18. **ESTABLISH** a Task Force to identify sustainable alternatives to HFOs for powering vessels, and to identify and recommend legislative changes that Arctic States could make to reduce HFO usage;
19. **COMMIT** to transitioning to greener alternatives to HFO use, taking into account the need to mitigate potential adverse impacts on Arctic Indigenous communities;
20. **CONSIDER** the continued identification of sites for MPAs in the Arctic, and the creation of MPAs as appropriate, with the aim of continuing to protect environments precious to Arctic Indigenous peoples;
21. **CONSIDER** acknowledging areas for conservation set aside by Indigenous communities in Environmental Impact Assessments prior to infrastructure development;
22. **CONSIDER** creating safe shipping corridors that avoid conservation areas, in consultation with, and taking into account the concerns of, Arctic Indigenous peoples;
23. **AGREE** to take steps to strengthen existing maritime search-and-rescue agreements, including the 2011 Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, in consultation and collaboration with Arctic coastal communities;

24. **CONSIDER** taking cooperative steps to ensure that the transnational nature of Indigenous communities is taken into account with regard to the development of Arctic shipping and its benefits;
25. **ENCOURAGE** the fishing industry to make sustainable plans for growth that acknowledge and include Arctic Indigenous Knowledge;

Passing Indigenous Knowledge from elders to youth

26. **RECOGNISING** the value of Indigenous Knowledge and the need to preserve and promote its transmission, taking into account the needs and unique qualities of each Indigenous community across the Arctic States, including Indigenous communities that transcend national borders;
27. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the role that Indigenous Knowledge can play in the mitigation of climate change and in sustainable development;
28. **RECOGNISING** that Indigenous Knowledge is sacred, that it is traditionally passed from elders to youths via oral and practical means, and that it can only be supplemented by digitisation;
29. **NOTING** that Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasises the obligatory nature of primary schooling;

HEREBY:

30. **CREATE** an Expert Group to explore in what ways Arctic Indigenous Knowledge can contribute to sustainable development and climate change mitigation, with specific attention to the unique needs and contribution of Arctic Indigenous communities;
31. **AGREE** to propose to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development a new Sustainable Development Goal explicitly protecting and promoting Indigenous Knowledge and its ability to build resilience to climate change;
32. **INVITE** proposals for research into Arctic Indigenous language vitality, including methods for collecting data on language use in the Arctic, to be conducted by Indigenous researchers affiliated with educational or community centres within Arctic Indigenous communities, in collaboration with non-Indigenous researchers

who can contribute to capacity-building and educational opportunities within Arctic communities;

33. **CONSIDER** increased funding to:
 - a. Establish community centres in Arctic Indigenous communities dedicated specifically to Indigenous Knowledge transmission and Indigenous language preservation, and suited to the specific needs and circumstances of different Indigenous communities;
 - b. Expand bilingual education programmes where requested by Arctic Indigenous schools and communities, in such a way as recognises the importance of both Western education and the preservation of Arctic Indigenous languages;
 - c. Introduce digital technology as an optional format for assisting with the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge within Arctic Indigenous communities;
34. **COMMIT** to facilitating strong, continuous collaboration between Arctic Indigenous Knowledge and Western science and technology, to create a unique understanding that can effectively inform environmental and climate decisions.
35. **COMMIT** to prioritising collaborative and accessible knowledge exchange through the development digital infrastructure and connectivity, and by supplementing the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge through digitised material heritage.

Disclaimer

This Oban Declaration represents the collective agreement of the student delegates to the Scotland Model Arctic Council (SCOTMAC) of March 2022, an educational initiative for universities, and it does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Polar Aspect; the Scottish-Arctic Network; the Scottish Association for Marine Science; the University of Highlands and Islands; Trent University; the Scottish Government; or the Scottish Alliance for Geoscience, Environment and Security.



SCOTLAND MODEL ARCTIC COUNCIL IS AN EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE OF POLAR ASPECT AND THE SCOTTISH-ARCTIC NETWORK
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