

# The Arctic World Region – Fact Sheet

*There is nothing that should unite quite like our concerns for both the promises and the challenges of the northernmost reaches of the earth ... the consequences of our nations' decision don't stop at the 66th parallel. – Secretary of State, John Kerry, Arctic Council Meeting, Kiruna, 2013*

*We must now speak environment, economy, foreign policy, health and human rights in the same breath. Everything is connected. – Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Nobel Peace Prize Nominee, Inuk activist, Nunavut, Canada*

## BASIC FACTS

- “Arctic” derives from the Greek meaning “bear” referring to the northern constellations Ursa Major or Ursa Minor.
- The Arctic is the region north of the Arctic Circle, the 10° C (50° F) isotherm, or the treeline and includes the Arctic Ocean.
- The Arctic covers 1/6th of the earth's landmass.
- There are approximately 4 million inhabitants in the Arctic – 400,000 (or 10%) are Arctic indigenous peoples.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- Average temperatures in the Arctic region are rising twice as fast as they are elsewhere in the world. The polar ice cap is shrinking affecting Arctic indigenous peoples, flora and fauna (in 2012, Arctic sea ice reached its smallest extent ever recorded). “The Arctic is the health barometer of the world and we, the Inuit, are the mercury of that barometer,” says Sheila Watt-Cloutier.
- A warming Arctic is affecting weather patterns and agricultural production globally. The melting ice cap is also opening new shipping lanes and access to natural resources.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE ARCTIC – THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Arctic Council (est. 1996 in Ottawa), is a high-level, intergovernmental forum for political and scientific discussions on issues common to the governments of the Arctic region and its inhabitants.

## CANADA'S ARCTIC COUNCIL CHAIRMANSHIP (2013-15)

*The Arctic Council was formed by northerners, for northerners, long before the region was of interest to the rest of the world ... As someone with deep attachment to the Arctic, my Arctic home, I understand the vital importance of traditional ways of life to the indigenous people. Throughout Canada's chairmanship, we will work to increase awareness of the importance of traditional ways of life of Arctic indigenous peoples. – The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Chair, Arctic Council, Arctic Council Meeting, Kiruna, 2013*

At the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting on 15 May 2013, Canada assumed the two-year Chairmanship of the Arctic Council from Sweden (the United States will assume chairmanship in 2015). The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, an Inuk from Nunavut (the first Inuk to lead the Arctic Council), is Canada's Minister for the Arctic Council and Chair of the Council during Canada's Chairmanship. Canada's chairmanship will put Northerners first. The theme of Canada's chairmanship is “development for the people of the North,” with a focus on responsible Arctic resource development, safe Arctic shipping and sustainable circumpolar communities.

## ARCTIC COUNCIL MEMBER STATES

*(representing Arctic nation-states)*

1. Canada
2. Denmark (Greenland & Faroe Islands)
3. Finland
4. Iceland
5. Norway
6. Russian Federation
7. Sweden
8. United States

## ARCTIC COUNCIL PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS

*(representing Arctic Indigenous Peoples)*

1. Aleut International Association
2. Arctic Athabaskan Council
3. Gwich'in Council International
4. Inuit Circumpolar Council (world's most northerly people)
5. Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East
6. Saami Council

## ARCTIC COUNCIL NATION-STATE OBSERVERS

1. China (2013)
2. France
3. Germany
4. India (2013)
5. Italy (2013)
6. Japan (2013)
7. Netherlands
8. Poland
9. Singapore (2013)
10. South Korea (2013)
11. Spain
12. United Kingdom



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[http://www.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/states-organizations-and-strategical-issues-in-the-arctic-people-across-borders\\_39d8](http://www.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/states-organizations-and-strategical-issues-in-the-arctic-people-across-borders_39d8)