

Global Agenda Council on the Arctic 2012-2014



Understanding/Context

For longer parts of the year, Arctic sea ice is melting and the permafrost on land is thawing, with different implications for accessibility at an international level and way of life at a local level. The region possesses unique natural and cultural landscapes that are sensitive to a warming climate and enhanced human activity. Some changes, like increased risk of oil spills, are perceived as negative impacts. Other shifts present new opportunities, such as economic empowerment of native communities and seasonal shipping routes. However, keeping opportunities viable and minimizing negative climate change impacts require conscientious environmental and cultural stewardship that focuses on sustainable change. Diplomatic and economic actions can greatly affect the extent to which factors such as climate change and global commodity price fluctuations lead to economic, environmental and social changes. Future developments in the Arctic region are critically dependent upon environmental policy and business decisions made at national, regional and international scales; this is humanity's chance to get it right.

Shaping the Agenda

The complexities of transformations reshaping the region are profound, often lending themselves to misinterpretation and misplaced emotions. The natural starting point for the Council was to write a short booklet highlighting the five most prevalent myths, opportunities and challenges facing the region.

This booklet was presented to targeted participants at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2013 in Davos – both in the public programme featuring a session entitled “Arctic Development” and in private meetings. Although it has not yet been published in its entirety, the main messages

have been repackaged and featured on Thomson Reuters, strategy+business, the Global Economic Symposium and the Forum Blog.

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For the Annual Meeting 2014, the Council is finalizing a more substantial report that focuses on four challenges facing the Arctic and provides specific recommendations to decision-makers. The key messages of this work will be:

1. Promoting sustainable practices in a unique area that faces development, with the goal of empowering local populations and minimizing negative effects on the environment
2. Attracting desirable sustainable investments to develop a more prosperous regional economy and prioritizing infrastructure projects
3. Supporting mechanisms that better ensure the safety of life and protection of the environment at sea
4. Promoting a broader scope of scientific research as the region remains one of the least explored and studied areas on the planet

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