

Finland's Arctic Strategy

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Finland's Arctic Strategy



- Finland adopted her Arctic Strategy on 7th of June 2010.
- The strategy was prepared by a working group in which all the relevant ministries participated. The working group was appointed by Prime Minister's Office.
- The complete version of the strategy will be published in Finnish and in English in autumn.
(http://www.vn.fi/tiedostot/julkinen/pdf/2010/arktinen_strategia-0706/arktinen_strategia_070610.pdf)
- The follow up work will be monitored by Arctic advisory board.



Finland's Arctic Strategy



- The strategy focuses on external relations.
- The strategy defines Finland's goals in the Arctic Region as well as the means to reach them.
- The strategy is based around seven priority sectors: security, environment, economy, infrastructure, indigenous peoples, institutions and the European Union.
- The paper includes suggestions for the follow up work of Finland's Arctic policy and some concrete measures.



Why an Arctic Strategy?



- The importance of the Arctic Region has grown notably. Benefiting from the emerging opportunities and protecting the fragile Arctic environment requires real time information of the state of affairs.
- Out of the eight Arctic countries, Finland was seventh to draft an Arctic strategy.
- The strategy is not the final measure but rather a starting point in shaping Finland's Arctic policy.
- The strategy is useful in contributing to EU's Arctic Policy, which is currently a work in progress.



Content



- The biggest **security** threats are increasing seafaring and exploitation of the natural resources.
 - Activities in the region are and should continue to be based on the rule of the international law. There is no race to the natural resources in sight.
- The Arctic **environment** is fragile.
 - In order to protect the Arctic environment best practices and sustainable development must be pursued in activities throughout the region.
- The **economical potential** of the region is considerable.
 - Finland has Arctic expertise in various sectors and Finland's knowhow can be utilized in the large projects especially in the Barents Region.



Content



- The **infrastructure** is still lacking both onshore and offshore.
 - The infrastructure needs to be improved in collaboration with neighbouring countries. This requires a common vision.
- The **indigenous peoples** of the region (The Sámi in Finland) are most vulnerable to emerging threats and rapidly changing living environment.
 - The rights of the indigenous peoples must be secured.
- The most important **institution** in the Arctic Region is the circumpolar Arctic Council, which includes all eight Arctic countries and indigenous peoples (A8+). On the regional level the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Barents Regional Council are vital fora.



Arctic Council

Finnish proposals for strengthening the Arctic Council:

1. The mandate and working methods to be revisited
2. Better burden-sharing; a joint budget
3. A permanent secretariat
4. Expansion of the normative role of the Council. SAR.
5. Enhanced interaction with non-arctic actors. Observers to the Council
6. Communications and Outreach Strategy



Arctic Summit

Finnish political level proposal in June 2010 of an Arctic Conference at the highest level under the auspices of the Arctic Council.

To respond to:

- How to combine the exploitation of the natural resources with the environmental concerns?
- Who are legitimate actors in the Arctic?
- How to develop the Arctic Council?



Arctic Summit



The aim:

- to give new direction to the Arctic cooperation
- to strengthen the Arctic Council as the principal intergovernmental forum for the Arctic policies

Finland offers to host the Summit in Rovaniemi, which celebrates in July 2011 the 20th Anniversary of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy



European Union



- **European Union** is an Arctic player. Three out of eight Arctic countries are Member States of the Union.
- Finland welcomed EU's Arctic communication in November 2008.
- EU should consider the special features of the Arctic Region in the Union's various policy sectors and increase its input in the area.
- Finland supports establishing an Arctic Information Centre for the Union. A convenient location would be the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland.
- EU should be admitted as a permanent observer member of the Arctic Council.



Northern Dimension



- The **Northern Dimension** functions as an umbrella for the regional cooperation in the area.
- The Arctic window of the Northern Dimension should become a central tool for the EU's Arctic policy in terms of external relations.
- The Northern Dimension covers all eight Arctic countries thanks to the observer status of the United States and Canada.
- Although the Northern Dimension should be utilized better in EU's Arctic policy, it is not *per se* adequate to tackle all the issues.



Conclusions

- **Cooperation** is the key work in the Arctic.
 - No gold rush – actions are based on the rule of the law.
 - Countries share common interests in the region.
 - The difficult circumstances of the Arctic encourage cooperation.





Photo: Aker Arctic

