

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON ARCTIC ISSUES, TORILL EIDSHEIM, FOR THE 28TH OSCE PA ANNUAL SESSION

It is a great pleasure to have been appointed as Special Representative on Arctic Issues for the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, and to report to you for the first time.

My mandate is to:

- Raise awareness in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly regarding Arctic issues
- Place a specific focus on challenges stemming from climate change and on its effects on society and security in and beyond the Arctic, working in close co-operation with the OSCE PA Second Committee
- Promote co-operation on Arctic issues within the OSCE PA among all Delegations, particularly within the Arctic region
- Maintain contact with and follow-up on the work of the OSCE regarding Arctic issues
- Maintain contact with and follow-up on the work of other international organizations, civil society, academia and all relevant stakeholders dealing with and involved in the Arctic region
- Monitor the situation in the Arctic region and report to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and to the President on relevant developments, proposing possible follow-ups when needed.

The challenges for the Arctic region are geopolitical, environmental and economic, and human rights-related. They extend across all the dimensions of human security that the OSCE works on. In my capacity as Special Representative, I would like to place special emphasis on matters relating to the second dimension of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

What we know is that the temperature in the Arctic is rising rapidly. This is a true indicator of climate change.

What we can see here are serious environmental, security-related and social challenges, including special challenges for indigenous peoples. On the other hand, the changes we are witnessing are also creating new opportunities for economic development in the region. With this, the Arctic, the High North, is starting to take on great political and economic significance, not only to those of us living in the North, but to the OSCE region, including northern America and Central Asia, as a whole.

At this early stage of working on these matters, it strikes me: is our biggest challenge what we already know or what we have yet to find out?

The impact of 2 degrees is said to cause...

- the melting of mainland ice leading to 6m higher sea levels
- thawing permafrost which might double the warming from greenhouse gases released from tundra. The impacts of thawing permafrost on Earth's climate could be twice that expected from the current models, which already worry us.
- rapid increase of ocean acidification, threatening sea life and food supply the world over.

A life of unpredictability will threaten our stability!

I am honoured to be given the opportunity to lift Arctic related issues into our assembly. And I would like to applaud the ongoing work and established cooperation between the Arctic states' participants as well as Iceland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2019-2021. Our common approach should be solution oriented!

What happens in the High North has an impact on us all. I believe in the strength of our cooperation here in the OSCE PA. History shows that our bond can be used wisely to prevent conflicts. It can also be used to prevent the negative impact of climate change. Together we can contribute to raising awareness, providing better understanding and using our established cooperation skills to maintain security and stability in the OSCE region.

Activities, meetings and resources so far:

Arctic Council Secretariat
Nina Buvang Vaaja, Director

Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)
Rolf Rødven, Executive Secretary

Arctic Economic Council Secretariat
Maria Östensson, Senior Adviser

Centre for the Ocean and the Arctic
Jan-Gunnar Winther, Director

Norwegian Polar Institute
Kim Holmén, International Director
Sebastian Gerland, Section Leader Oceans and Sea Ice

Institute of Marine Research, Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen
Sigrid Lind, Researcher

The Governor of Svalbard
Ms Kjerstin Askholt
Police Chief Superintendent Ole Jakob Malmo
Morten Wedege, Head of Environmental Department

Longyearbyen Local Government

University Centre Svalbard
Harald Ellingsen, Director
UNIS, PhD candidate Malte Jochmann
Arctic Safety Centre, HSE and infrastructure director Fred Skancke Hansen
SIOS, Information officer Christiane Hübner

Svalbard Satellite Station (SvalSat)

Ole Petter Storstad, Director SvalSat Station

Norwegian Space Agency
Bo Andersen, Deputy Director General

Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research
Tore Furrevik

High North dialog with the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs

Planned activities so far:

Arctic Circle, 2019 Assembly, Reykjavík, Iceland, 10 - 13 October

Arctic Frontiers 2020, Power of Knowledge, Tromsø, Norway 26 - 30 January

Side-event OSCE PA 29th Annual Session, Vancouver, Canada