

# News Release

Secretary of  
State for  
External Affairs



# Communiqué

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extérieures

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## EIGHT ARCTIC COUNTRIES AGREE TO MINISTERIAL MEETING ON ENVIRONMENT

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today welcomed the recommendation of a meeting of the eight Arctic countries in Yellowknife to hold a ministerial meeting on protecting the Arctic environment next year in Finland.

"Canada puts a very high priority on environmental protection in the Arctic and on developing closer relations with our circumpolar neighbours," said Mr. Clark. "I am greatly encouraged by the progress we have made at Yellowknife in establishing ongoing cooperation."

At their April 18-23 meeting in the Northwest Territories, officials from Canada, the USSR, the USA, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland prepared the elements of a comprehensive strategy for Arctic environmental protection. This strategy will serve as the basis for discussions at the ministerial level meeting planned for next year.

In Yellowknife, Canada proposed an international agreement that would commit circumpolar nations to cooperate to preserve plant and animal life in the Arctic. Other participants welcomed the draft agreement, entitled the "Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna", and agreed it should be examined in detail at future meetings of the circumpolar nations.

Canada also presented a comprehensive study detailing the threat of contamination of the Arctic food chain by organic contaminants. The study flowed from a 1989 commitment made by the Canadian government to northern indigenous peoples.

"The integrity of the Arctic food chain is a grave matter for Canada, and indeed all northern nations. We are determined to resolve this and other Arctic environmental problems through an overall circumpolar strategy that combines environmental responsibility with sustained economic growth for the Arctic and its peoples," noted Mr. Clark.

At Yellowknife, the circumpolar countries advanced their detailed scientific work on such issues as organic contaminants, heavy metals, radioactivity, acidification, oil pollution, environmental monitoring and emergency response to environmental disasters.

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