

collective action on sustainable development, but to integrate the handling of Arctic issues into the wider world which so heavily affects the physical and human processes of the region.

Recommendation 3: for Canada to provide leadership in associating interested and capable non-Arctic states and the European Union with the sustainable development programme of the Arctic Council.

Just as the Minister finds it necessary to act on the political level to advance the Arctic Council's agenda, within Canada there is also a need for more active political involvement in circumpolar affairs if Canada's participation in the Arctic Council is to match its potential to make a contribution. As matters stand, the office of the Circumpolar Ambassador and the Interdepartmental Committee on Circumpolar Affairs are Canada's prime means for priority-setting on Arctic international matters. Both are in need of support, particularly but by no means solely from DFAIT where, as is the case with the U.S. State Department, the Arctic is generally viewed as "remote for many" (Russell 1996: 8). The Standing Committee's report comes as a breath of fresh air in its offering of many new and useful recommendations for increased participation and activation in Canadian policy-making for Arctic international relations. Granted the resources required to act on the Standing Committee's suggestions, it could nevertheless take considerable time to put them into effect. All the while, we may expect a continued deficit of substance and backing in Canada's participation in the Arctic Council. After all, the Minister can provide political energy and a sense of direction only so many times. A greater measure of boost and substance can however be had fairly simply and inexpensively by practising in the Interdepartmental Committee on Circumpolar Affairs what we preach for the Arctic Council.

Canada's vision for the Arctic Council has been utterly consistent in its commitment to the empowerment of northern residents, first and foremost the aboriginal peoples of the region. Stirred by the belief that collective action in an Arctic setting may be made more sustainable if those closest to and most knowledgeable of the scene are enabled to take part in the framing and resolution of Arctic issues, Canada has persisted in championing the role of permanent participants in the Council's work. Indeed, it is difficult to image a worthwhile Arctic Council without international aboriginal participation. We would be left with yet another forum for inter-governmental cooperation, but this time for cooperation among southern-based governments for whom the Arctic broadly remains a remote concern and whose activities there are all too likely to be ill-adapted in the absence of strong northern input.

If this is what we hold to be true for international policy-making on Arctic issues, it is also true for equivalent Arctic-related activity within Canada. The implications are obvious for the Interdepartmental Committee on Circumpolar Affairs, Canada's interagency mechanism for regional policy-making which is only now beginning to move beyond departmental show and tell among less than senior officials.

A political commitment should be made to widen the basis of stakeholder participation in the Interdepartmental Committee's work, renaming the committee in the process. Mirroring Canada's conception of engagement in the Arctic Council, the new institution should become a