

Canadian Centre
For Foreign Policy
Development



THE NEW FRONTIER

The Arctic as a new dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy

In September 1996, delegates from eight countries and three international organizations representing Indigenous peoples meeting in Ottawa launched the Arctic Council.

Since its inauguration, working groups have been focussed on co-operative approaches on a range of issues, such as protecting the marine environment, preventing and responding to environmental emergencies, and conserving arctic flora and fauna.

In preparation for the first ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council, which was held in Iqaluit, in Canada's eastern Arctic, September 17 and 18, 1998,

the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development held a series of public discussions called the National Forum on Canada's Circumpolar Relations. The discussions contributed to the development of a consultation paper entitled "Toward a Northern Foreign Policy for Canada." The paper explores several themes of crucial importance to Canada, such as northern sovereignty and security, bilateral relations with northern neighbours, environmental protection, and social and cultural renewal.

Both the National Forum discussions and the consultation paper were instrumental in devising Canada's position at the meeting of the Council, which was co-hosted by Minister Axworthy and Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Jane Stewart. Delegates agreed on action plans for the next two years, particularly in the areas of telemedicine, resource management and sustainable development, and adopted Canada's Children and Youth of the Arctic initiative. The initiative provides for internships for Inuit youth within the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. Canada was also instrumental in the endorsement of a proposal to study the creation of a University of the Arctic, a "university without walls."

"The North is really the frontier of opportunity for the 21st century, and the work of the Council is key to realizing its full potential," said Minister Stewart. "Arctic nations share an environment and many common



Mary Simon

photo: CANAPRESS

interests, and cooperative efforts between nations can make a difference in the lives of Northerners," said Minister Axworthy.

In partnership with Arctic ambassador Mary Simon, the Centre will hold meetings across Canada as a follow-up to the 1998 National Forum and the Arctic Council of Ministers' meeting. For more information about these meetings or to obtain copies of the Centre's report and the consultation paper, please visit the Centre's Web site at the following address:

<http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca>

Note

The Centre will make available in February on its Web site the results of a series of forums held in January to discuss Canada's new two-year term on the UN Security Council.



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The Arctic Council brings together eight circumpolar countries: Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. The four Permanent Participants are: the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Aleut International Association of Alaska. Accredited Observers include non-Arctic states and non-governmental organizations.



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