

Canada's proposal for an Arctic Council is intended to complement these efforts by enabling national governments to discuss Arctic issues of common concern, to pursue cooperative measures of common interest, and to support the work of other circumpolar organizations and networks. To this end, officials of the eight Arctic Country Governments met in Ottawa in May to discuss Canada's proposal.

The May meeting was successful in that it was able to produce a broad consensus on a number of topics sufficient to permit the Department of External Affairs to draft an MOU on the operations of an Arctic Council. While seven of the eight Arctic Governments were present and participated fully at the May meeting, the USA government had concerns about the process and the creation of the Arctic Council sufficient to cause it to attend only in an observer role. It has since indicated more formally that it has substantive problems with the concept of an Arctic Council and that it will not attend further meetings on the subject, even as an observer.

Notwithstanding American objections, the draft was, nevertheless, circulated to participating Capitals in October and no suggestions for changes of substance were received. However, consensus was not strong enough among governments to proceed with a final meeting of experts in 1992.

Consultations among interested Canadian parties (including with representatives of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), the Dene Nation/Indigenous Survival International (ISI) and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) are continuing on how best to deal with the reluctance of some governments to proceed towards creation of the Council.

Given the strong political interest and the leadership role of Canada, it now remains to test the resolve of all other governments as to how to proceed.