

We wish to see peaceful cooperation among Arctic Rim countries developed further. We were therefore encouraged when General Secretary Gorbachev stated at Murmansk on October 1 that the Soviet Union wished to increase its bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation in the Arctic. We have noted his suggestion of cooperation on energy, science and the environment among other areas.

We are pleased that he indicated the Soviet Union's interest in the creation of an Arctic Sciences Council, towards which Canada, Norway and other countries have been working. I understand you have been discussing this proposal and the concept of an Arctic Basin Council.

We have noted his interest in the development of cultural links among Arctic peoples. In circumpolar relations few things are as important as contacts between the Inuit, the Arctic native peoples of Canada, Greenland, the United States and the Soviet Union. It is our hope that the Soviet Union will agree for the first time, to attend the next Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1989 and the Inuit Youth Camp in 1988, which Canada will host.

So we welcome Mr. Gorbachev's interest in the North. But we need - and have asked for - clarification on what it means in practice. And we will continue to pursue our own goals and interests in the Arctic.

The Murmansk speech also brings us to the issue of peace and security. The world watched last night the scene in Washington as General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan signed an agreement for the first-ever reductions in nuclear weapons. This historic disarmament agreement is solid proof of an improvement in East-West relations.

Peace and security are vital issues as well in the world's North. It is just since the 1950's that the Arctic has become a focus of military activity, and thus of more strategic concern for all of us.

Canada and Norway share membership in NATO. We both know that collective defence is necessary to deter aggression and to protect our way of life.

NATO has given us an unprecedented generation of peace. The Alliance is indispensable for defence and for encouraging arms control and disarmament. While the dynamics of East-West relations may change, while relationships may change even within the West, Canada's commitment to NATO has increased.