

PRESS STATEMENT

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Ms. Hill-Marta SOLBERG, Chair of the Standing Committee of
Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region
Prof. Steve JONES, Chair of the Rectors' Forum Planning Committee,
Chancellor of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, USA

Politicians meet Higher Education leaders and scientists to discuss the Arctic

Leaders from 40 Northern Universities and parliamentarians representing 7 Arctic countries, the European Parliament and indigenous peoples, meet to discuss how the future borders of the Arctic Ocean will look like. They will also address how the people living in the Arctic are adapting to the changing climate. The joint seminar takes place at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland on the 28 of February 2008, and is organized by the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and the University of the Arctic Rectors' Forum.

Tourists who visited Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland – the home of Santa Claus – this Christmas were welcomed in rain. Not only experts, but also those who make a living in the Northern region, being tourist operators, foresters, reindeer herders, Inuit hunters, fishermen or seamen all see that the climate *is* changing dramatically. The Arctic is becoming both an environment *of* risk and an environment *at* risk. A risk that soon affects people at more southern latitudes, dependant on goods and services from the north.

“We who are elected by the Arctic peoples must listen to the scientists and the people living in the Arctic. We need to create robust policies that help the people living in the Arctic adapt to the changing climate”, says Ms. Hill-Marta Solberg, Chair of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.

“The International Polar Year gives us intensified research on Polar Regions. The *University of the Arctic* network includes all northern university-level institutions. As leaders in research and education sector we take a collective responsibility to deliver reliable data related to how northern communities and nature can live with the changes we face. We must continue to provide the resources the rest of the world is so dependent on, as well as securing a healthy northern environment for future generations”, says Chancellor of University of Alaska Fairbanks, Prof. Steve Jones, Chair of the University of the Arctic Rectors' Forum.

The Rovaniemi Process started in 1991 as a unique partnership between Arctic governments and indigenous leaders to safeguard the Arctic Environment. The process led to the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996. Today it is more imperative than ever that indigenous and national political leaders, in cooperation with the local communities, academic institutions as well as private sector cooperate to build a resilient and strong north.

The Arctic Council has demonstrated that peaceful cooperation in and about the north is possible. The academic community has demonstrated international cooperation when it comes to collection of data that will be used for delineation of the Arctic Ocean sea bed. The Arctic

Parliamentarians have taken initiatives towards International Conventions to investigate how they better could secure peaceful and efficient tools for joint management and regulation of the Arctic Environment.

“The cooperation between governments, politicians, indigenous and local leaders as well as University leaders of the Arctic makes the Arctic Council an example of international cooperation for the sustainable development. We will work to ensure that the Arctic cooperation will be strengthened in the future” state Steve Jones and Ms. Hill-Marta Solberg in agreement.

As the Arctic Ocean sea ice melts, the ongoing work to define national borders according to the UN Law of the Sea has become a hot topic in the global news. It is reassuring to observe that governments acts in accordance with agreed UN conventions and that experts engaged in this work cooperate well.

“It is essential that scientists and politicians have a dialogue to ensure that politicians have the best available information to base their decisions on. Future management of the Arctic Ocean must ensure strong environmental protection and will, independent on future continental shelf borders, require international cooperation in the Arctic.” say Prof. Steve Jones, Chair of the UArctic Rectors’ Forum, and Ms. Hill-Marta Solberg.

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The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, and other organizations committed to higher education and research in the Circumpolar North. Our members share resources, facilities, and expertise to build post-secondary education programs that are relevant and accessible to northern students.

For more information on UArctic please contact the UArctic International Secretariat: Outi Snellman, Director of Administration and University Relations at Outi.Snellman@uarctic.org, +358 40 5010209; www.uarctic.org

The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, SCPAR, consists of parliamentarians from the eight Arctic countries and the European Parliament, and Arctic indigenous peoples as Permanent Participants. At the upcoming Arctic Parliamentary Conference in Fairbanks 12-14 August 2008 the three main issues will be: human health, adaptation to climate change, marine policy and renewable energy resources in rural areas.

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