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April 24, 2014

Chief Michael Stickman

International Chair

Arctic Athabaskan Council

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Dear Chief Michael Stickman,

Thank you for your participation at the Senior Arctic Officials meeting in Yellowknife and for your letter of April 10, 2014 in which you raise a number of important issues.

The Arctic Council values the important contributions made by accredited observers. However, as you know, the *Arctic Council Rules of Procedure* state that “the primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council” and that “Observers contribute through their engagement in the Arctic Council primarily at the level of working groups.” Accredited observers may, at the discretion of the Chair, provide written and verbal statements at subsidiary body meetings, and I am glad to hear that you found these contributions to be useful at the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) meeting in Yellowknife.

Unfortunately, with over 30 accredited observers and a large number of items to discuss, it is not possible to allow these same types of interventions at meetings of Senior Arctic Officials. That being said, I share your desire to use the Arctic Council to build bridges and I encourage Arctic States and Permanent Participants to collaborate with accredited observers on a bilateral basis, at subsidiary body meetings and on the margins of SAO meetings.

In terms of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC), its creation is being facilitated by the Arctic Council to complement and support its own objectives. Once nominations are received and the AEC begins its work, it will have the ability to shape and define its own activities. However, we anticipate that the AEC will remain closely aligned with the original objective of the Task Force, as outlined in the Senior Arctic Officials’ Report to Ministers in Kiruna, which was to create a circumpolar business forum that would “…focus initially on resource development, and would provide a venue for industries and indigenous businesses operating in the Arctic to advance Arctic-oriented business interests, share best practices, forge partnerships, and engage in deeper cooperation.”

As the AEC continues to take shape, I encourage all Arctic States and Permanent Participants, including the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), to remain involved so that the AEC develops into a body that will benefit both the Arctic Council and inhabitants across the Arctic region.

Finally, I do not believe that anyone is calling into question the exceptional work being done by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). As you mention in your letter, AMAP has contributed to some of the Arctic Council’s signature initiatives and remains an indispensable resource for researchers and policymakers.

The letter that was sent by Minister Leona Aglukkaq, Chair of the Arctic Council, to her ministerial counterparts this February asked the Arctic Council to evaluate the status of ongoing Arctic Council projects “…to ensure that the Arctic Council remains an efficient and results-driven forum.” It noted that some projects have been ongoing for quite some time and while this may be appropriate in some instances, in others it may signify that the project needs to be re-evaluated or brought to a conclusion.

In response, the six Arctic Council Working Groups have been asked to provide recommendations on programs and projects that are nearing completion. I understand that some Working Group Chairs have already done so. The purpose of this is not to redefine the scope or limit the activities of the Working Groups, but rather to allow us to focus on priority initiatives.

Thank you for your comments and I hope that this letter responds to some of your concerns. We value your input and hope that the AAC will continue to make these types of interventions at Working Group, Task Force and SAO meetings.

Sincerely,

Patrick Borbey

Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials