



# Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR)

20–22 MARCH 2024, KIRUNA, SWEDEN

SVERIGES RIKSDAG 

## Conference Report



Conference of Parliamentarians of the  
Arctic Region (CPAR)  
20–22 March 2024, Kiruna, Sweden  
Conference Report

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# Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

The Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region is a parliamentary body comprising delegations appointed by the national parliaments of the Arctic states and the European Parliament. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic are Permanent Participants in the cooperation.

The Conference was established as a forum to advance Arctic cooperation and to address common challenges and opportunities arising from the unique environmental, economic and social conditions of the region. Representatives of the parliaments, Permanent Participants and observers take part in the biannual conference, which was last held in Kiruna,

Sweden on 20–22 March 2024. The Conference adopts a Conference Statement with recommendations for the governments of the Arctic states on how to further the Arctic agenda.

Between conferences, Arctic parliamentary cooperation is carried on by a Standing Committee, which started its activities in 1994. The Standing Committee meets 3–4 times a year and is responsible for following up the implementation of the Conference Statement.

*The Conference Statement may be found in the annexes to this document.*

# Introduction

The Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians was held in Kiruna on 20–22 March, 2024. Situated in northern Sweden in traditional Sami territory, Kiruna is home to the largest iron ore mine in Europe and unique natural conditions. The Conference, organised by the Swedish Parliament (the Riksdag) and the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR), gathered more than 100 parliamentarians, guest speakers, Permanent Participants, researchers, representatives from non-governmental organisations and journalists.

During the days of the Conference, four sessions and a pre-event for youth participants were held. Visits to different

locations were held in conjunction with the themes of the sessions, including to Kiruna City Hall, the LKAB iron ore mine, the Esrange Space Center and the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi. The themes of the sessions were *Climate and waste management in the Arctic; Business, employment and sustainable mining; Civil security and preparedness; and Education and research*. Discussions were held on the same themes during the youth event, which took place the day before the opening of the Conference. The conclusions from these discussions were presented at a panel discussion, giving all participants the possibility to interact with youth representatives from the Arctic member states and Permanent Participants.



Conference participants during a visit to the underground iron ore mine in Kiruna.

Thursday 21 March 2024

## Opening of the Conference

The participants in the Conference were welcomed by the **Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Dr Andreas Norlén**. The Speaker expressed his gratitude that Sweden had been given the opportunity to host the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and recalled that the first conference in Sweden took place in Kiruna 2006. The city has since undergone enormous development and the region produces iron ore for the whole of Europe, with increasingly climate-smart practices.

**The Speaker** highlighted the effects of climate change in the Arctic region. The temperature in the Arctic is rising more rapidly than anywhere else in the world. This affects the indigenous people in particular, who face challenges to their livelihoods and patterns of life. In this regard, the Speaker highlighted the Sámi people's long and extensive experience of the nature of the Arctic as a valuable source of knowledge for the future, and expressed gratitude to representatives of the Sámi Parliament for participating in the Conference.



The speakers of the opening session: Mr Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka, Speaker of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden, Ms Lotta Finstorp, County Governor of Norrbotten, Ms Alexandra Anstrell, Head of the Swedish delegation, Ms Aaja Chemnitz, Chair of the CPAR Standing Committee, Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament and Mr Morten Høglund, Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials.

Climate change in the Arctic is closely linked to matters of peace and security, the Speaker stressed. The strategic importance of the region is rapidly increasing due to global warming and its effects on the climate, which has led several great powers to advance their positions. Increasing tensions and the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is being felt by many Arctic states. The Speaker also highlighted Sweden's accession to NATO in close connection with the Conference and stressed the importance of cooperation with close allies. Together, the Arctic states can learn from each other to overcome common challenges. This requires a long-term perspective and cooperation between friends, the Speaker concluded.

In her opening remarks, **Ms Alexandra Anstrell**, Head of the Swedish delegation, highlighted the transformation that the Arctic region is undergoing, especially in relation to the effects of climate change and the green transition. On behalf of the Swedish delegation, she expressed gratitude to all participants who had travelled to Kiruna. The conference programme addressed the possibilities and challenges that the Arctic states share, including the effects of climate change and the opportunities that come with a green transition. Ms Anstrell stressed the importance of responsible waste management throughout the Arctic as a means to ensure environmental sustainability and safeguard the wellbeing of future generations.

The County Governor of Norrbotten, **Ms Lotta Finstorp**, welcomed the participants to the county of Norrbotten. She highlighted that Norrbotten is the largest county in Sweden by land area, distinguished by rich natural resources and its long tradition of iron ore production. In her remarks, Ms Finstorp underlined

the visible effects of climate change in Norrbotten County, with higher average temperatures and changing ecosystems having direct consequences on reindeer herders and the Sámi people. The Arctic is a great region with a lot of possibilities, but there are challenges that require our attention, the County Governor concluded.

**Mr Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka**, Speaker of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden, raised the green transition and its implications for the Arctic region in his speech. The Conference has an important role through its involvement of indigenous people, Mr Lyngdorf Vinka noted, and stressed that ensuring sustainable development requires the involvement of indigenous people. The Sámi Parliament works actively to increase levels of self-determination, and demands that the Swedish state grant the Sámi people land rights in Sápmi, Mr Lyngdorf Vinka stressed.

**Ms Aaja Chemnitz**, Chair of the CPAR Standing Committee (SCPAR) welcomed the participants on behalf of the Standing Committee. In her opening remarks, she stressed that the Conference serves to promote collaboration and dialogue about the changing conditions of the Arctic region. While promoting sustainable development, it is imperative to preserve and protect the rights of indigenous people in the Arctic. Ms Chemnitz also expressed her gratitude to the youth participants taking part in the Conference and the pre-event on Youth Perspectives. Young people can challenge conceptions and contribute to change, Ms Chemnitz concluded.

Before the first session of the Conference, **Mr Morten Høglund**, Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials and representative of Norway's Chairship of the Arctic Council, took the floor.



The Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Dr Andreas Norlén, addressing the Conference.

Through people-to-people connection throughout the region, Arctic cooperation can contribute to ensuring sustainable development despite geopolitical challenges. The participation of indigenous people is an integral aspect of the Arctic Council, and among its achievements are legally binding agreements on scientific cooperation, maritime search and rescue and marine oil pollution. Including cooperation on emergency preparedness will also strengthen the common capacity of the region.

To conclude, **Mr Høglund** noted that all official meetings of the Arctic Council had been postponed as a result of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion

of Ukraine and that no meetings have been held on the political level. One of the achievements of the Chairship has been the resumption of the activities of the six working groups. Their work is crucial for the Council's mission to deliver on the most pressing issues of the Arctic region, Mr Høglund emphasised.

During the days of the Conference, the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Dr Andreas Norlén, held meetings with the Sami Parliament and conducted visits to Kiruna City Hall, the Esrange Space Center and the Ice Hotel. A meeting was held with the Speaker of the Sami Parliament, Mr Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka, on Thursday 21 March.

# Pre-Event on Youth Perspectives

Youth representatives from all delegations were invited to take part in the Conference. On the day before the opening session, representatives from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, the USA and Sámi organisations met with students of Kiruna Upper Secondary School to discuss the themes *living conditions in the Arctic region, circular economy and sustainability, preparedness and (civil) protection of Arctic inhabitants and sustainable mining*. The topics for discussion were chosen in relation to the thematic sessions of the Conference and based on suggestions from the students. The discussions were held in smaller groups of students and youth representatives, bringing together several perspectives: prospects for young people living in the Arctic, the situation for indigenous peoples and the local perspective from Kiruna.

A representative was chosen from each group to present their conclusions during a panel discussion on the first day of the Conference, moderated by County Governor Lotta Finstorp. In her presentations, **Ms Viola Ukkola**, reindeer herder and representative from Finland, stressed that there are insufficient possibilities for young people to live and study in the Arctic region. Profits from the mines and industries in the Arctic region are not invested in the North, which has a negative impact on the lives of indigenous people. **Ms Arven Lind**, a student from Kiruna Upper Secondary School, raised the importance of ensuring sustainability in the mining process and called upon the Arctic governments to increase their ef-



Youth representatives: Ms Viola Ukkola (Finland), Ms Iluuna Inga-Louise Sørensen (Denmark), Ms Maria Strand Munkhaug (Norway) and Ms Arven Lind (Sweden). The panel discussion was moderated by Ms Lotta Finstorp, County Governor of Norrbotten.

orts to reduce their climate footprints. **Ms Iluuna Inga-Louise Sørensen**, Denmark, highlighted the interconnection between social and climate sustainability as well as its consequences for indigenous people living the Arctic. Increasing accessibility, and ensuring job opportunities and affordable housing must be prioritised. **Ms Maria Strand Munkhaug** from Norway raised the importance of ensuring circular economy solutions across the borders in the Arctic and investing in a sustainable future, including public transport to the North.

A message from the panel was that it is imperative to involve youth in the processes and take into consideration the fact that the future lies in their hands, not least concerning issues related to climate change, the green transition and its impact on the indigenous peoples of the Arctic.



# Session I: Climate and waste management

The first session of the Conference was dedicated to a discussion on climate and waste management practices in the Arctic. As a starting point for discussion, the speakers were asked to deliver statements on how the Arctic region can be developed in a sustainable way, considering its unique ecological, geographical and social conditions. Importantly, climate change has had a great impact on the Arctic region and its communities, although the causes of climate change often emanate from non-Arctic states. A big part of the plastics that end up in the Arctic have been moved by wind and ocean currents from other regions, underlining the need for global action. The discussion was moderated by **Mr Lars Haltbrekken**, Member of Parliament from Norway.

The first speaker was **Minik Rosing**, Professor at the University of Copenhagen. Professor Rosing stressed that carbon emissions are by far the greatest threat

to the livelihoods of people in the Arctic and to the Arctic climate, while also illustrating the region's potential to reduce emission levels globally. In his research, Professor Rosing has studied rock flour, a fine-grained material developed under ice sheets, and its ability to collect greenhouse gas emissions. The rock flour holds great potential, given that it effectively collects CO<sub>2</sub> when reacting with higher temperatures and is held in great deposits in the ice sheets of Greenland, dating back 8,000 years. The material could potentially take up all CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Professor Minik emphasised that an increasing number of actors are looking into the Arctic in view of its unique climate, and stressed that this will have effects on a regional and global scale.

**Mr Johan Kuylenstierna**, Director-General of Formas, a government research council in Sweden, spoke about the importance of research in helping us com-



Speakers of the first session: Jessica Veldstra, Aleut International Association, Ms Alexandra Anstrell, Head of the Swedish Delegation, Mr Johan Kuylenstierna, Director-General of Formas and Mr Lars Haltbrekken (Norway). Professor Minik Rosing addressed the conference via video link.

prehend the effects of climate change. The consequences of higher temperatures and changes to Arctic ecosystems are already apparent, changes that will have great impact on other dimensions too – including regional economies. To ensure peace, security and development in the region, strategic and long-term commitments to research are needed. Only by connecting research, innovation and capability development can resilience be achieved. As an example, Mr Kuylenstierna highlighted a research project by NordForsk for Sustainable Development of the Arctic. The project is jointly funded by the Nordic countries, Canada and USA, and addresses security, natural resources, societal challenges, sustainability and indigenous perspectives.

**Ms Alexandra Anstrell**, Head of the Swedish Delegation and Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee, highlighted the role of waste management and the potential of circular economy in ensuring sustainable development. Focusing on plastic pollution in the Arctic, Ms Anstrell emphasised that a large proportion of the plastic litter originates from non-Arctic states. Global solutions are needed to tackle the problem, and Arctic parliamentarians need to use every opportunity to get the message across to other states and involved actors. If we want to reverse the effects of climate change, we need to find solutions in our own region – for our own region, Ms Anstrell concluded.

**Jessica Veldstra**, Executive Director of Aleut International Association, raised the issue of solid waste management in Arctic communities in her presentation. Remote societies face different difficulties when it comes to waste management, with negative environmental effects as a potential consequence, Ms Veldstra noted. In an ongoing study in remote Arctic



Mats Taaveniku, Municipal Commissioner, showing the transformation of the city of Kiruna.

communities in Alaska, Canada and Finland, good practices are identified and shared through surveys and workshops. Recognising that there are varying levels of knowledge about the issue, as well as different obstacles and circumstances facing the Arctic communities, the objective of the study is to build local capacity and improve solid waste management practices adapted to the specific conditions of the Arctic.

The conference participants paid a visit to Kiruna City Hall where they were welcomed by **Mr Mats Taaveniku**, Municipal Commissioner in Kiruna and **Ms Nina Eliasson**, Head of Planning. Mr Taaveniku and Ms Eliasson gave a presentation about the transformation of the city of Kiruna. Around 3,000 homes and the city centre are being relocated due to the ongoing expansion of the underground iron ore mine, an effort which is being pursued in close collaboration with the state-owned Swedish mining company LKAB. The relocation of infrastructure and community services present a number of challenges, they noted, including moving Kiruna Church – which has involved a complex transportation plan and the building of new roads to the new location of the church.

## Session II: Business, employment and sustainable mining

The second session of the Conference focused on business, employment and sustainable mining. Topics that were discussed included how to harness the potential of the Arctic region, while also taking into account the local labour market. An example that was brought up numerous times was the situation in Kiruna. Despite the high number of job opportunities in industry and local businesses, it has been difficult to attract people to stay and work in Kiruna due to the housing situation. During the session, the conditions for pursuing mining in a sustainable manner for the people and environment were also discussed. **Mr Eric Palmqvist**, Member of Parliament in Sweden, moderated the session.

**Ms Maria Sunér**, CEO of the Swedish Association for Mines, Mineral and Metal Producers (Swemin) opened the session with a presentation on the potential and

role of mining. Ms Sunér pointed out that the EU countries together use 25-30% worldwide of all metals but only produce 3%, thereby creating an import dependency and often causing raw materials to be transported long distances. Using Sweden as an example, Sunér emphasised that mining in the Arctic context could ensure access to critical raw materials with less carbon dioxide pollution in the production process. Already today, production of metals in Sweden is 60–90% less carbon intensive than internationally. Structured efforts to implement sustainable business standards, meaningful dialogue with indigenous peoples and local communities, and continued research and innovation are imperative to ensure sustainable mining processes, Ms Sunér concluded.

**Mr Glenn Berggård**, Deputy Chair of Norrbotten Regional Executive Board in Sweden, highlighted the challenges and



Second session:  
Mr Glenn Berggård,  
Deputy Chair of  
Norrbotten Regional  
Executive Board,  
Ms Pirita Näkkäljärvi,  
President of the  
Saami Council,  
Ms Líneik Anna  
Sævarsdóttir  
(Iceland), Ms Maria  
Sunér, CEO of  
Swemin and Eric  
Palmqvist (Sweden).

possibilities facing the region in his remarks. Green steel production, battery production and green forestry in the Norrbotten region have attracted industry investments in the order of 110 billion euros. Throughout the region, one of the most noticeable challenges is attracting and retaining labour, with the lack of affordable housing as the primary reason. Mr Berggård also highlighted growing socio-economic and land-use conflicts as a challenge for the growth of the region. An increasing number of industries, mines and green energy projects are interested in sites traditionally used for reindeer herding and inhabited by the Sami people. Continued investment in the people and in society as a whole are needed to overcome challenges for the future, Mr Berggård stated in his concluding statement.

In her remarks, **Ms Líneik Anna Sævarsdóttir**, Member of Parliament from Iceland, elaborated on how industry can be developed sustainably, balancing environmental considerations and human well-being. Ms Sævarsdóttir provided an example of when the largest hydropower states in Iceland were built in 2007, concurrently with a large aluminium smelter. Building a sustainable energy alternative for this energy-intensive industry, it was possible to create job opportunities for both sexes while also relying on local labour. Continued efforts have since been made to promote a balance between family and working life, including by adopting more family-friendly working hours and inviting employees to take part in the development of a good workplace culture. Ms Sævarsdóttir concluded by noting that large companies that operate in rural areas benefit from working towards equality, in collaboration with local communities.

The last speaker of the session was **Ms Pirita Näkkäljärvi**, President of the Saa-

mi Council. Ms Näkkäljärvi described how reindeer herding may contribute to the broader society, while also expressing concern over the establishment of the wind energy industry, battery plants and mines for iron ore, minerals and rare earth metals in Sápmi, the territory traditionally inhabited by the Sámi people. The growing demand for mining of minerals and rare earth metals could have severe consequences on reindeer herding, it was noted. It is imperative to recognise that the activities are taking part in indigenous territory, Ms Näkkäljärvi concluded.

In conjunction with the session, the delegation visited the LKAB iron ore mine in Kiruna. The delegation was welcomed by **Anders Lindberg**, Press Manager, **Hanna Eriksson**, Financial Manager and **Caroline Wiss**, CEO of LKAB Malmtrafik in the Visitor Centre which is located 540 metres underground. The representatives recognised that LKAB's mines produce around 85 % of all iron ore in the EU, with increasingly climate-smart techniques. Since 1960, carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced by 84%, and continuous efforts are being made to reduce climate impact. With reference to the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRM Act), the representatives stressed that LKAB's vision is to contribute to increased self-sufficiency regarding critical raw materials in the EU. The representatives also highlighted the challenges regarding transportation of iron ore. The railroad track from Kiruna to the port in Narvik, Norway is heavily trafficked and vulnerable to interruptions, they noted. Following derailments in December 2023 and February 2024, traffic was stopped for 76 days, which resulted in substantial revenue loss when LKAB was forced to reduce production.

Friday 22 March

## Session III: Civil security and preparedness

During the third session, the discussions revolved around security policy in broad terms, including emergency preparedness, rescue services, food security and how to build resilience in Arctic societies. The High North has long been considered a region of low-tension, but an increasing number of actors are gaining interest in the region's military and economic potential. Speakers elaborated on the ways in which Arctic cooperation can contribute to ensuring that the region remains an

area of low tension, including how to build resilience and promote the inclusion of all parts of the societies in security-building efforts. **Ms Alexandra Anstrell**, Head of the Swedish Delegation and Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee, moderated the session.

**Ms Patti Bruns**, Secretary-General of the Arctic Mayors' Forum, gave a presentation in which she described the significance of collaboration to make the voices of people



Speakers of the third session: Mr Bård Ludvig Thorheim (Norway), Alexandra Anstrell (Sweden), Mr Heikki Autto (Finland), Ms Lori Idlout (Navanut, Canada), Ms Patti Bruns, Arctic Mayors' Forum, Ms Aaja Chemnitz, Chair of the Standing Committee.

in the Arctic heard. Consisting of 19 mayors and leaders of local governments from Canada, Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the USA, the Arctic Mayors' Forum is a platform for local governments to cooperate and influence decisions concerning the development of the Arctic. Ms Bruns stressed that a central task is to increase the resilience of the area, an assignment which demands cooperation among the Arctic states. Proposing a way forward, Ms Bruns noted that further collaboration between the Arctic Mayors' Forum and the Standing Committee would be of great value to leverage expertise and share experiences.

In her remarks **Ms Aaja Chemnitz**, Chair of the Standing Committee and Member of Parliament from Denmark, drew attention to the policy and priorities of Greenland. Ms Chemnitz stressed the importance of equal membership for Greenland in Arctic cooperation, as well as in the Nordic Council and other international fora. This is imperative in efforts to strengthen the civil security of the region, given that solutions must be adapted to the particular conditions governing Greenland. As an example, it was recognised that sabotage to undersea cables could leave Greenland in a vulnerable position – effectively shutting down critical infrastructure and large parts of the society. Measures to increase emergency preparedness must be taken in accordance with the will of the people of Greenland, Ms Chemnitz concluded.

**Mr Bård Ludvig Thorheim**, Member of Parliament from Norway, highlighted the importance of Nordic cooperation in his remarks. Increased cooperation between communities above in the Arctic circle in Sweden, Norway and Finland would benefit the Arctic region as a whole, he stressed. By strengthening civil infra-

structure, production of critical materials and investing in transport systems, this area could be a hub for development and improved communications throughout the Arctic. Finally, Mr Thorheim emphasised that NATO membership among all Nordic states has made the region more stable.

**Ms Lori Idlout**, Member of Parliament for Navanuk in Canada, raised the importance of including indigenous people's perspectives in the efforts to strengthen Arctic security. Idlout recalled historical injustices toward the indigenous people of Canada, including the removal of children from their families and communities to attend so-called *residential schools*. Critical steps have since been taken to achieve conciliation, Ms Idlout noted, also pertaining to the issue of security. As an example, Canada has adopted an Arctic strategy which seeks to enhance engagement among indigenous people and advance their interests and priorities. This is a critical step to reduce tensions, Idlout remarked, as well as the acknowledgement that the safety of the indigenous people is instrumental to the security of the Arctic.

The last speaker of the session was **Mr Heikki Autto**, Member of Parliament from Finland. In his remarks, Mr Autto elaborated on the multifaceted challenges arising from hybrid threats. The conditions and geographical distances of the Arctic underline the need to ensure that all critical sectors of society prepare emergency plans, which NATO and EU should also contribute to on a larger scale. Challenges may arise on multiple fronts, including from cyber threats and measures targeting food supply and other core functions of our societies. The nature of the threats underlines the need for coherent plans and joint capabilities within NATO, Mr Autto noted.

# Conference speech: civil defence

In connection with the third session, a keynote speech was held by **Mr Johan Berggren**, State Secretary to the Minister for Civil Defence of Sweden, Mr Carl-Oskar Bohlin. Focusing on the theme of civil defence, Mr Berggren began his presentation by noting that the Russian Federation's war of aggression in Ukraine has wide-ranging consequences for the region. The Arctic is rapidly reforming, an example of which is that military capacity and cooperation between Arctic states are increasing.

Sweden has a strong tradition of civil-military cooperation, which has developed under the concept of *civil defence*, Mr Berggren noted. In the build-up of civil defence, the whole society contributes to its strengthened resilience and preparedness. *Securing the supply of critical goods* is one of the important components, including the infrastructure for storage and transportation of foods and medicine in times of crisis. In the Arctic context, this includes additional challenges related to the vast geographical distances, it was noted, as well as the fact that it requires stable and systematic cooperation between private and public actors. Continuing, Mr Berggren noted that the *protection of civilians* is another critical aspect of civil defence. Infrastructure for warning systems and rescue services is essential for a well-functioning society, and its significance increases instrumentally in times of crisis.

In Sweden's efforts to strengthen its civil defence, a key issue has also been the



Mr Johan Berggren, State Secretary to the Minister for Civil Defence of Sweden addresses the conference.

*supply of critical human resources* in the civil as well as the military sector. Sweden re-activated a conscription system in 2017 and is currently increasing the number of personnel in the military services. In addition, all Swedish citizens have a total defence duty, which applies to civilian service within the healthcare system, rescue services and other critical functions. Mr Berggren further noted that *ensuring cyber security* is instrumental to civil defence. With an increasing number of cyber threats towards public as well as private actors, this is a perspective that needs to be taken into account in all aspects of the work. Concluding his speech, Mr Berggren stressed that Sweden is acting resolutely to develop a robust civil defence set to respond to any crises and emergencies in the future. We will continue to do so in close collaboration with our Nordic colleagues, for the security of the wider Arctic region, Mr Berggren emphasised.

# Session IV:

## Education and research

The fourth session of the Conference was dedicated to a discussion on education and research. The speakers elaborated on the distinguishing features of Arctic research, as well as its importance for the future of the region. Long distances and low population density in certain areas pose a challenge for higher education, while there is a growing demand for engineers and other professional groups as a result of the green transition industry. In their respective presentations, the speakers discussed how to utilise this potential. **Ms Bryndis Haraldsdóttir**, Member of Parliament from Iceland, moderated the session.

**Mr Lars Kullerud**, President of the University of the Arctic (UArctic) shed further light on the global risks stemming from climate change in his presentation. Several climate tipping points are embedded in the Arctic context and the risks stemming from thawing of the ice sheets have consequences on a global scale, as well as for indigenous peoples and inhabitants of the High North. UArctic promotes research into these issues and serves as a network of universities, research institutes and organisations occupied with education and research about Arctic conditions, Kullerud noted, which encourages the region to address its common issues.

The session then turned its attention to a presentation by **Mr Evon Peters**, board member of Gwich'in Council International, which represents 9,000 members in Alaska, the USA, and in Yukon and the Northwest territories, Canada. Mr Peters

especially highlighted the rich culture of the Gwich'in communities and other indigenous people. More than 20 languages are still spoken in communities in Alaska, which is a testament to the history of indigenous inhabitancy in the region which dates back 14,000 years. Education has been used as a tool for colonisation in North America, Mr Peters stressed, which underlines the need for indigenous leadership in research. Our education and self-determination are instrumental for the future of our communities, he concluded.

**Ms Mari-Leena Talvitie**, Member of Parliament from Finland, shared perspectives from northern Finland. Representing the constituency of Oulu, she elaborated on the challenges related to the level of education required by business and industry in the High North. Although one of Finland's largest universities is located in Oulu, one of the challenges is to retain people with skills and higher education in the region. This issue was also discussed by **Ms Maria Strand Munkhaug**, Youth Representative from Bodø, Norway. She stressed that the conditions for working life in the Arctic must be strengthened to attract young people. There remain considerable differences between genders, as well as for people with differing economic and cultural backgrounds, which calls for increased attention to the education system in our respective countries. The Arctic region has a lot to offer, but measures have to be taken to harvest this potential, Ms Munkhaug concluded.





Ms Maria Strand Munkhaug, Youth Representative (Norway), Mr Evon Peters, Gwich'in Council International, Ms Mari-Leena Talvitie (Finland), Mr Lars Kullerud, University of the Arctic and Ms Bryndis Haraldsdóttir (Iceland) at the speakers' podium during the fourth session.

After the closing of the session, the delegation visited the **Esrangle Space Center**, located outside Kiruna. The station provides a particularly advantageous position for pursuing research and scientific missions, including for accessing polar-orbiting satellites. During the visit, participants were invited to visit the facilities where rockets and balloons are prepared and launched. The Space Center belongs to SSC (Swedish Space Corporation), a company owned by the Swedish Government, the delegation

was informed. The participants also made a visit to the **Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi**. By harnessing unique natural resources, the Ice Hotel has turned into a landmark in the region which has been rebuilt every winter for more than three decades. Representatives of the Ice Hotel told the participants about the sculpting process, which includes harvesting ice blocks in the Torne River and building a unique design with the help of local and international artists.

# Closing session

At the closing session, **Ms Aaja Chemnitz**, Chair of the Standing Committee, expressed her gratitude to all participants for their active engagement in the Conference. Ms Chemnitz highlighted some of the conclusions from the meeting of the Standing Committee, including the election as Secretary-General of Ms Arna Bang, Senior Advisor in the Parliament of Iceland. The conference participants thanked Mr Peder Pedersen for his dedicated services as Secretary-General during

the period 2020–2024. **Ms Alexandra Anstrell**, Head of the Swedish Delegation and Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee, expressed appreciation for her appointment by the Standing Committee as *Climate Rapporteur*, together with Yvonne Jones, Member of Parliament from Canada, appointed as *Public Engagement Coordinator*.

The Conference Statement was adopted unanimously.



The Swedish Delegation to the Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians: Mr Eric Palmqvist, Ms Alexandra Anstrell, Ms. Åsa Karlsson and Ms. Kajsa Fredholm.

# Appendices:

1. Conference Statement
2. Programme
3. Participants



## ARCTIC PARLIAMENTARIANS

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20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024, Kiruna, Sweden

### CONFERENCE STATEMENT

As the dynamics in the Arctic are shifting in light of climate change and the current security situation, Arctic Parliamentarians convene to address the multifaceted challenges in the Arctic region. Our considerations center on topics of both current and future relevance to the Arctic and its people: climate, research, and employment, with continued commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, security, and the well-being of Arctic residents, including Indigenous Peoples.

The Arctic Parliamentarians strongly support the work of the Norwegian chairship of the Arctic Council to secure Arctic Council as the main arena for Arctic cooperation.

As elected representatives from Canada, Denmark/Greenland/Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and in collaboration with the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, we highlight the following:

#### **Climate and Waste Management**

Acknowledging the existential threat posed by climate change, we advocate for joint efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, preserve biodiversity, and combat pollution in the Arctic region.

We call on the Arctic governments to prioritize reduction of black carbon and methane emissions as it will have strong short-term effects on climate change in the Arctic, such as melting sea ice and permafrost.

We urge Arctic governments to embrace renewable energy solutions, develop zero emission off grid communities in the Arctic and implement stringent waste management policies such as transportation of waste from Arctic communities and tourism facilities, and to promote circular economies and sustainable practices that minimize ecological footprint.

We further urge the Arctic governments to strengthen joint efforts to minimize marine plastic pollution and call upon non-Arctic states to intensify their effort to minimize marine littering which by wind and ocean currents ends up having severe negative impacts on the ecosystems and wildlife of the Arctic region.

Indigenous voices must be included in decision-making processes, empowering local communities to lead initiatives for environmental conservation.



## **Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples**

We acknowledge that within the Arctic there are differences in how the rights of Indigenous Peoples are upheld.

We see the effects of wrongdoings against Arctic Indigenous Peoples in the past, such as boarding schools, forced displacement, involuntary contraception and other historical injustices in various countries. These practices have contributed to intergenerational trauma and ongoing mental health and addiction crises in many Arctic communities. We emphasize the need for opportunities for today's population to collaborate and plan together for the future.

In those parts of the Arctic where Indigenous Peoples have unequal access to society's institutions, and lack forms of self-determination, we call on all levels of government to work together to create equal opportunities for all inhabitants of the Arctic. Joint solutions should be found between the state and the indigenous population.

## **Business and employment**

Recognizing the economic imperatives of Arctic development, we emphasize the importance of fostering a competent business environment that balances economic growth with social responsibility and environmental consideration.

We appreciate the close cooperation with Arctic Economic Council to promote sustainable business development in the Arctic.

We call on Arctic governments to increase the promotion of inclusive economic policies and workforce development strategies that prioritize business development, local employment, housing, empower Indigenous and local enterprises, and ensure equitable distribution of benefits derived from Arctic resources and industries.

## **Research and Education**

Emphasizing the role of research and education in fostering resilience and innovation, we underscore the imperative of investing in science, technological advancement, and knowledge exchange within the Arctic. We treasure the close cooperation with the University of the Arctic and highlight the importance of continued collaboration with Arctic research institutions.

We urge Arctic governments to work for the establishment of interdisciplinary research platforms and academic partnerships across the nations of the Arctic to equip Arctic residents, including Indigenous youth, with the skills and expertise necessary to address emerging challenges. We recognize the importance of traditional Indigenous knowledge and the contributions made by hunters, trappers, and fishers. Traditional knowledge should be on-par with scientific research in guiding decision-making.



### **Civil security and preparedness**

Recognizing the imperative of safeguarding Arctic territories in this time of increasing geopolitical attention, we underscore the necessity for cohesive security frameworks that prioritize collaboration and information exchange among the Arctic nations to maintain the region as an area of low tension. Ensuring food security is an important factor for health among the Arctic residents, including Indigenous Peoples.

We call on Arctic governments to strengthen the reinforcement of search and rescue capabilities, infrastructure development, and disaster response mechanisms tailored to the Arctic's unique environment. Emphasis should be placed on fostering partnerships with local communities like the Indigenous communities to integrate traditional knowledge into emergency preparedness plans.

**In conclusion**, we, the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, urge Arctic governments to take our recommendations into account and translate collective aspirations into concrete actions that safeguard the Arctic's environment, uphold the rights and interests of Arctic residents, including reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and foster sustainable development for generations to come.

Arctic Parliamentarians welcomes the friendly offer of the United States to host the Arctic Parliamentary Conference in 2026.

## WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH 2024

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- 12.00 Lunch for participants in the pre-event Youth perspectives, together with Members of the Standing Committee  
*Venue: Aurora Culture & Congress, Stadshustorget 10, Kiruna*
- 14.00–16.00: **Pre-event: Youth perspectives – conclusions to be presented at the conference**  
1–2 youth participants are invited from each delegation.  
The participants will discuss topics relating to:  
– *Living conditions in the Arctic region*  
– *Circular economy*  
– *Preparedness and protection of the inhabitants of the region*  
The results of the discussions will be presented at Thursday’s panel discussion.  
*Venue: Lapplands gymnasium, Midnattssolsvägen 25, Kiruna*
- 14.30–16.00 **Standing Committee meeting**  
*Venue: Meeting room Hiker & Trekker*
- 17.00–18.00 **The transformation of Kiruna city centre**  
Mr Mats Taaveniku, Mayor of Kiruna Municipality and Ms Nina Eliasson, Head of Planning  
*Venue: Kiruna City Hall, Stadshustorget 1, Kiruna*
- 19.00 **Reception/dinner hosted by Kiruna Municipality**  
*Venue: Aurora Culture & Congress, Stadshustorget 10, Kiruna*

## THURSDAY 21 MARCH 2024

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- 08.00      *Possible Drafting Committee*
- 09.00      **Opening of the conference**  
*Venue: Meeting room North & South*
- Chair: Ms Alexandra Anstrell, Deputy Chair: Ms Aaja Chemnitz
- Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament
  - Ms Lotta Finstorp, County Governor, Norrbotten, Sweden
  - Mr Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka, Speaker of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden
  - Ms Aaja Chemnitz, Chair of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR)
- 09.30      **Norway's Chairship of the Arctic Council 2023–2025**  
Mr Morten Høglund, Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials
- 10.00      *Coffee break*
- 10.15–11.15      **1<sup>st</sup> Session: Climate and waste management in the Arctic**  
*Climate change has a great impact on lives and livelihoods in the Arctic, although the causes of climate change often emanate from non-Arctic states. How do we improve waste management and circular economy in the Arctic, considering the vast geographical distances? How can we get the message through to non-Arctic states that their waste is highly likely to end up in the Arctic?*
- Moderator: Mr Lars Haltbrekken, MP, Norway
- Professor Minik Rosing, Copenhagen University (digital participation)
  - Mr Johan Kuylenstierna, Director General, Formas
  - Ms Alexandra Anstrell, MP, Sweden
  - Ms Jessica Veldsta, Executive Director, Aleut International Association
- Discussion
- 11.30      **Departure by bus from Scandic Hotel Kiruna**
- 11.50–14.45      **Excursion to the LKAB mine including a light lunch**  
LKAB is an international group that sells sustainable iron ore, minerals and special products. Kiruna is home to the world's largest underground mine for iron ore.  
*Link: <https://lkab.com/en/lkab-in-kiruna/>*
- 15.15–16.15      **Panel discussion: Youth perspectives**  
Moderator: Ms Lotta Finstorp, County Governor, Norrbotten, Sweden
- Coffee break*



16.30–17.45 **2<sup>nd</sup> Session: Business and employment, sustainable mining**

*How do we harness the potential of businesses – both big and small – as well as matching in the local labour market? Kiruna is currently experiencing a boom – there is a great need for labour, but at the same time, a lack of housing. Could the housing situation hamper Kiruna's development? What are prerequisites for sustainable mining with regard to both people and the environment?*

Moderator: Mr Eric Palmqvist, MP, Sweden

- Ms Maria Sunér, CEO SveMin
- Dr Glenn Berggård, Vice Chair of the Regional Executive Board, Region Norrbotten, Sweden
- Ms Líneik Anna Sævarsdóttir, MP, Iceland
- Ms Pirita Näkkäljärvi, President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council

Discussion

19.00 **Conference dinner hosted by the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament**

*Venue: Aurora Culture & Congress, Stadshuset 10, Kiruna*

## FRIDAY 22 MARCH 2024

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- 08.30            **Continuation of the conference**  
*Venue: Meeting room North & South*  
Chair: Ms Åsa Karlsson, Deputy chair: Ms Olga Oinas-Panuma
- 08.45–09.15    **Key note speaker: Mr Johan Berggren, State Secretary to Minister for Civil Defence**
- 09.15–10.15    **3<sup>rd</sup> Session: Civil security and preparedness**  
*What impact does the security policy situation have on the Arctic and how do we ensure that the Arctic remains an area of low tension? What consequences are there for the region's preparedness – emergency preparedness, rescue services, security of supply, food security?*  
Moderator: Ms Alexandra Anstrell
- Ms Patti Bruns, Secretarys General, Arctic Mayors' Forum
  - Ms Aaja Chemnitz, MP, Kingdom of Denmark
  - Mr Bård Ludvig Thorheim, MP, Norway
  - Ms Lori Idlout, MP for Nunavut, Canada
  - Ms Sara Seppänen, MP, Finland
- Discussion
- Coffee break*
- 10.30–11.30    **4<sup>th</sup> Session: Education and research**  
*What are the challenges and opportunities for basic and higher education in sparsely populated regions? Is digitalisation the tool for overcoming long distances? How can the Arctic benefit from space research?*  
Moderator: Mr Eyjólfur Ármannsson, MP, Iceland
- Mr Lars Kullerud, President of the University of the Arctic
  - Ms Mari-Leena Talvitie, MP, Finland
  - Mr Evon Peter, Gwich'in Council International
  - Ms Maria Strand Munkhaug, Youth representative, Norway
- Discussion
- 11.30            **Conclusions/Adoption of conference statement**
- 12.00            **Excursion to the Esrange Space Center including a light lunch**  
Esrange is a rocket range and research centre located approximately 40 km east of Kiruna.  
*Link: <https://sscspace.com/esrange/>*

17.00 **Visit to the Ice Hotel, Jukkasjärvi**

19.30 **Reception hosted by the Swedish delegation to the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR)**

*Venue: Scandic Hotel Kiruna*

*End of conference*

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## **Speakers**

Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament  
Dr Glenn Berggård, Vice Chair of the Regional Executive Board, Region Norrbotten  
Ms Patti Bruns, Secretary General, Arctic Mayors' Forum  
Ms Lotta Finstorp, County Governor of Norrbotten  
Mr Morten Høglund, Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials  
Mr Johan Berggren, State Secretary to Minister for Civil Defence Carl-Oskar Bohlin  
Mr Lars Kullerud, President of the University of the Arctic  
Mr Johan Kuylenstierna, Director General, Formas  
Mr Daniel Lyngdorf Vinka, Speaker of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden  
Mr Mats Taaveniku, Mayor of Kiruna Municipality  
Ms Nina Eliasson, Head of Planning, Kiruna Municipality  
Ms Maria Sunér, SveMin

## **Parliamentary Delegations**

### ***Canada***

Senator Gwen Boniface, MP  
Senator Percy Downe, MP  
Ms Marilène Gill, MP  
Ms Lori Idlout, MP

Ms Jessica Kulka, Analyst  
Ms Sara Fryer, Delegation staff

### ***Kingdom of Denmark***

Ms Aaja Chemnitz, MP, Chair of the SCPAR  
Ms Anna Falkenberg, MP  
Ms Barbara Gaardlykke Apol, MP

Mr Peder Pedersen, Secretary General  
Ms Iluuna Marie Heilmann, Assistant  
Mr Dennis Barndorph Sichlau, Coordinator

### ***Finland***

Mr Heikki Autto, MP  
Ms Niina Malm, MP  
Ms Olga Oinas-Panuma, MP  
Ms Mari-Leena Talvitie, MP

Ms Sari Wessman, Adviser for International Affairs  
Ms Tarja Riuttamäki, Interpreter

### ***Iceland***

Ms Líneik Anna Sævarsdóttir, MP Chair of the Delegation, Deputy Speaker

Ms Arna Bang, Senior Advisor

### ***Norway***

Mr Lars Haltbrekken, MP  
Mr Øystein Mathisen, MP

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Mr Bengt Rune Strifeldt, MP  
Mr Bård Ludvig Thorheim, MP

Mr Bjørn Willy Robstad, Senior Adviser

### ***Sweden***

Ms Alexandra Anstrell, MP Chair of the Delegation  
Ms Kajsa Fredholm, MP  
Ms Åsa Karlsson, MP  
Mr Eric Palmqvist, MP

Ms Eva Hjelm, Secretary of the Swedish Delegation  
Ms Helena Lundstedt, International Adviser

### ***Guest***

Ms Emma Berginger, MP Committee on Defence  
Ms Helena Bouveng, MP Committee on Defence  
Mr Erik Ezelius, MP Committee on Defence  
Mr Rasmus Giertz, MP Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Mr Mats Green, MP Committee on Industry and Trade  
Ms Camilla Hansén, MP Committee on Education  
Mr Birger Lahti, MP Committee on Industry and Trade  
Mr Fredrik Malm, MP Committee on Education  
Ms Azra Muranovic, MP Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Ms Sofia Skönnbrink, MP Committee on Environment and Agriculture  
Ms Elisabeth Thand Ringqvist, MP Committee on Industry and Trade  
Ms Katarina Tolgfors, MP Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Mr Anders Ådahl, MP Committee on Education

### **Permanent Participants**

Ms Piriita Näkkäljärvi, President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council  
Mr Evon Peter, GCI Gwich'in Council International  
Ms Jessica Veldstra, Executive Director, AIA Aleut International Association  
Ms Niina Siivikko, Advisor to the President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council

### **Observers**

Ms Bryndís Haraldsdóttir, President, Nordic Council  
Ms Doris J Jensen, Vice chair, West Nordic Council  
Ms Oddný G. Hardardóttir, Vice President, Nordic Council  
Ms Kristina Háfoss, Secretary General, Nordic Council  
Mr Sigurdur Olafsson, Senior Adviser, Nordic Council  
Mr Helgi Thorsteinsson, International Affairs Adviser, Iceland  
Mr Lárus Valgarðsson, Secretary General, West Nordic Council

### **Invited guests**

Mr Torsten Fors, Visiting coordinator for the county governor of Norrbotten  
Ms Jenny Mozgovoy, Strategist, Region Norrbotten  
Mr Thomas Schmidt, Economic Unit Chief, Embassy of the United States of America  
Ms Josephine Ylipää, Development strategist, Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund -  
Tornionlaaksolaiset

2024-03-25

### **Youth representative**

Mr Klajdi Dedej, Sweden  
Mr Nils-Gustu Kuhmunen, Sweden  
Ms Sara-Elvira Kuhmunen, Sweden  
Mr Brandon Mcintire, USA  
Ms Maria Strand Munkhaug, Norway  
Mr Ole Martin Melbøe Nygård, Norway  
Ms Iluuna Inga-Louise Sørensen, Kingdom of Denmark  
Ms Viola Ukkola, Finland  
Mr Jens Kristian Øvstebø, Norway

### ***Lapplands Gymnasium, Kiruna, Sweden***

Ms Mona Rosenfors, Teacher  
Ms Selma Andersson-Junkka Savela  
Ms Maya Björnfot Esberg  
Ms Idun Bohlin  
Mr Måns Fagervall  
Ms Elena Grigorieva,  
Mr Isak Gunillasson-Sevä  
Ms Laila Jannok Björnström  
Ms Arven Lind  
Ms Eva Lindmark, Teacher  
Mr Stefan Manuel Edeso Tanate  
Mr Mikael Törnblom

### **Conference secretariat**

Ms Anna-Karin Hedström, Head of International Department, Swedish Parliament  
Ms Marit Baker, International assistant, The Swedish Parliament  
Ms Simona de Ciutiis, International Adviser, The Swedish Parliament  
Mr Jonathan Demner, International Adviser, The Swedish Parliament  
Mr Mikael Engström, The Swedish Parliament  
Mr Lukas Erlandsson, Intern, The Swedish Parliament



