

CANADA, KINGDOM OF DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY, RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, SWEDEN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT TO UNFCCC COP XVIII

Arctic sea ice is rapidly diminishing. September 2012 saw the lowest sea ice extent observed in modern times. Summer sea ice extent in 2012 was only half of the (1980-2000) average summer sea-ice extent.

Temperature measurements in 2012 are consistent with the unprecedented trends and recent record high air temperatures observed in the Arctic since measurements began around 1880.

Arctic inhabitants have observed rapid reductions in snow and ice cover and duration over the past decades. The dramatically accelerated ice loss and changes in snow and ice-conditions are confirmed by satellite observations and scientific studies.

Record high temperatures and surface ice melt were recorded over the Greenland Ice Sheet in the summer of 2012.

We are now witnessing feedbacks from changes in Arctic snow and ice conditions to the global climate system and there is justified concern that Arctic warming will spur further melting and global warming.

Arctic climate change causes fundamental changes in water, snow, ice and permafrost conditions in the Arctic, with cascading effects to biodiversity, ecosystems and human living conditions in the Arctic and around the World. Arctic climate change is therefore of major global concern.

Prior to the end of the 20th century, the mass loss from the Greenland Ice sheet and other land ice in the Arctic was of negligible importance to global sea level rise. Scientific work indicates that these components now contribute significantly to global sea level rise.

Effects of Arctic climate change have major and irreversible impacts on the livelihood and well-being of Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities.

The Arctic Council will continue its work to observe climate change and improve our understanding of the regional and global effects of Arctic climate change on human development, adaptation and resilience in the Arctic, biodiversity and other relevant issues, and work collaboratively to find solutions.

Whilst reducing CO₂ emissions remains the backbone of any meaningful climate change mitigation effort, we also call on the international community to implement additional measures to address short lived climate forcers, including through cuts in emissions, which can help to slow Arctic near-term warming. Arctic States will continue to spearhead these efforts.

These urgent actions could significantly enhance the overall effort to substantially cut global GHG emissions and to limit the rise of global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius, thereby avoiding potentially irreversible changes to the Arctic and global climate.

