

Joint Statement by Seven Arctic States on Limited Resumption of Arctic Council Cooperation (8 June 2022)

Following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022, seven member states of the Arctic Council¹, a forum that is currently chaired by Russia, issued a joint statement² on 3 March 2022 in which not only they condemned said invasion per se, they also noted that Russia's actions have caused grave impediments to international cooperation including in the Arctic. Highlighting on the enduring value of the Arctic Council for circumpolar cooperation, the seven states reiterated their support for the Council and its work, and their own responsibility to the people of the Arctic, including the indigenous peoples, who contribute to and benefit from the important work undertaken in the Council. They also emphasized on the core principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity based on international law that have long underpinned the work of the Arctic Council. As such, the seven states will refrain from sending their representatives to Russia for meetings of the Arctic Council due to Russia's flagrant violation of the aforementioned international law principles, temporarily pausing participation in all meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, pending consideration of the necessary modalities that can allow them to continue the Council's work in view of the current circumstances.

Subsequently, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, on 14 March 2022, announced in a discussion³ that despite the above decision of the seven states, Russia will continue discussion of the current agenda of the Arctic territories in the northern latitudes as part of the upcoming events of the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council. In addition, all events of the Russian chairmanship, except for official meetings of the Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies, are planned to be held in accordance with the approved schedule. In regards to the suspension of interaction with other member states of the Council, the Russian chairmanship will be reoriented to address national issues of developing its northern territories.

More recently, on 8 June 2022, the aforesaid seven states issued another statement⁴ concerning the resumption of the Arctic Council cooperation in a limited fashion. The statement asserts that such resumption is based on the examination of the modalities conducted by the representatives from the seven states to allow a resumption of the work in the Arctic Council. Restating the enduring value of the Arctic Council for circumpolar cooperation and particularly the important projects approved by all eight Arctic States at the Reykjavik ministerial, the seven states expressed intention to implement a limited resumption of their work in the Arctic Council, in projects that do not involve the participation of the Russian Federation. The statement consequently reads that the seven states will continue to examine additional modalities to allow them to further continue the Council's important work.

The above developments suggest that the work of Arctic Council and its projects will in fact be implemented concurrently by the seven Arctic states amongst themselves on one side, and by Russia within its territory on the other.

Dr. Zia Madani, ArCS II Research Collaborator/Kobe PCRC Senior Research Fellow

¹ These seven member states are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.

² <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-arctic-council-cooperation-following-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/>

³ <https://mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1804009/> (in Russian)

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-limited-resumption-of-arctic-council-cooperation/>