

Arctic Spirit Conference: Korundi

Tue 12 Nov 2019, 10:00 – 10:30 Opening session

Krista Mikkonen, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change of Finland

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Youth Participants,

We are here in Rovaniemi to discuss issues of crucial importance for the Arctic, for its people and for the future. I'm very happy to see that there are so many young people here today.

We are also here to celebrate the thirty-year anniversary of the Arctic Centre. I would like to congratulate the Arctic Centre for its remarkable achievements in increasing our knowledge about the Arctic and strengthening cooperation on Arctic issues.

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I think you all know that it was here in Rovaniemi in 1991 that the Arctic Ministers gathered for the first time.

But did you know that climate change was already recognised as one of the most significant threats to the Arctic back then – 30 years ago? You can find this fact and more in the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy, which was adopted by the Ministers in Rovaniemi.

Five years later, the Arctic Council was established in Ottawa. Since then, science, indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge have been at the core of Arctic cooperation. The science-based message from the Arctic Council has called for global climate actions, and it has been supported by indigenous knowledge and the observations of local people.

Arctic nature is particularly vulnerable to climate change and human impact. The connection between climate change and biodiversity loss has long been understood here in the Arctic. The rapid pace of climate change in the Arctic is also an early indication of the impacts of climate change.

Arctic knowledge has been integrated into the recent IPCC reports on global climate change. Today we know more about the global impacts of the melting Arctic. Microplastics found in the Arctic sea ice are a new symbol for the global environmental problems that reach the Arctic region.

It is globally recognised that extreme events and changes in nature are occurring sooner than we had previously expected. Indigenous peoples are more vulnerable to

the negative consequences of global warming. We have an urgent and large-scale need to address the common drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss.

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Climate change are the first two words in Finland's Government Programme. Why it this so? It is because the climate crisis is the most significant challenge we face at the global and national level. The climate crisis is also a sustainability crisis, as it has major economical, environmental and social consequences. Climate change is the focus of the Government Programme, because it is up to politicians to take the lead.

President Niinistö has called on global leaders to reduce the emissions of black carbon in order to mitigate climate change and save the Arctic. Climate change was the overarching priority of the Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, and it is also a major issue for the Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU. We now have important weeks ahead to prepare the EU leadership for the global climate negotiations in December in Madrid.

Dear Arctic Friends,

When we think about the environment and the changes we are witnessing today, the stories told by our grandparents often come to mind. These stories explain what life was like earlier and how the cycle of nature is connected to our lives. These stories are our personal heritage, the lenses through which we look at the world of today.

This year, we are celebrating the United Nations' International Year of Indigenous Languages. There are many young Sámi people who have revitalised the indigenous languages of their parents and ancestors. You know, more concretely than many others, that we can preserve what we very nearly lost.

It is the first time in history that we have so many people who support strong climate policies. We need to continue keeping our message clear and making sure we are heard.

It is a great pleasure for me to open the Arctic Spirit Conference. I believe that the future is right here in this room. I am certain we will hear fruitful and forward-looking discussions during the Conference.

Thank you!

Giitu!

[kiihtu]

pohjoissaame

Takkâ!

[takka]

inarinsaame

Spä'sseb!

[spä'ssep]

koltansaame