

**European Conference on Arctic, Ottawa**  
**The Arctic region: between modernisation and tradition, economic  
development and protection of the environment**  
**Opening remarks - EU Ambassador Mrs Coninsx - 19 October 2016, 8.30**

Distinguished Minister, distinguished Parliamentary Secretary,

Senators and Members of Parliament

Excellences, colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome you at this Conference.
- Let me thank in particular Minister Bennett and Parliamentary Secretary Goldsmith-Jones for being here with us today.

*Conference as part of the 40<sup>th</sup> year Celebration EU-Canada*

Mesdames et Messieurs

- Cette Conférence sur l'Arctique, est la 4<sup>ème</sup> Conférence majeure que nous organisons pour célébrer cette année-ci, le 40<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de l'Union européenne en Canada.
- Le choix des thèmes des Conférences, est directement lié aux domaines qui sont clés dans notre relation avec le Canada.
- Aujourd'hui nous concluons ce cycle de conférences avec l'Arctique - qui représente une importance stratégique pas seulement pour le Canada mais aussi pour l'Union Européenne.

*A timely Conference*

- Today's conference is very timely.
- Today's conference precedes the European Union - Canada Summit, which will take place next week in Brussels, with the participation of Prime Minister Trudeau, and our EU Leaders - President Juncker and President Tusk.

At that occasion, our vibrant, deep and long-standing partnership, will set a new milestone, with the signature of 2 new landmark agreements: the Strategic Partnership; and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA.

Both agreements are a testimony of the strong alliance between the European Union and Canada, the partner that is very close to us, with whom we share the same common values, basic principles and a deep friendship.

The Summit will also be an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our cooperation with regard to the Arctic.

- The conference is also timely, because this year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arctic Council. Canada has been/is celebrating this indeed important miles-stone.
  - ✓ I participated recently at a conference at Carlton University, entitled "*the Arctic Council at 20 years: More necessary than ever*".
  - ✓ It demonstrated clearly how committed Canada is to the Arctic and its people, but also how important cooperation is - in the region (with the neighboring Arctic countries) and internationally, all having a collective responsibility to protect the North.

Ladies and gentlemen,

*The importance of the Arctic for the European Union*

- We choose the "Arctic" as topic of this conference, for 3 main reasons:
  - ✓ Because the European Union - itself is an Arctic entity.
    - Three of our EU member States are Arctic countries and Member of the Arctic Council. This implies that all EU legislation applies in these countries. And many areas of legislation, our policies, are related directly or indirectly to the Arctic. In other words, what we do has an impact on the Arctic.
    - We have developed a specific, dedicated policy for our engagement in the Arctic. Cooperation with international bodies, other Arctic States and the Arctic people, are at the heart of our strategy.
  - ✓ Because the European Union itself is also directly affected by developments in the Arctic.

Our region is heavily exposed to rising sea levels due to the melting of the ice cap in the North. Action against climate change is not "optional" for the European Union; it is a strategic and inevitable choice.

- ✓ And finally, because the European Union is already an important player in the Arctic.

The European Union is a leading contributor to scientific research in the Arctic. We actively contribute to research in the European Arctic (over 200 million Euro) - including traditional knowledge; we contribute to regional development in the Arctic (with over €1 billion spent over the last seven years), and we have since 2014, a special research programme with Canada and the US, focused on maritime and Arctic research.

- For all these reasons and the fact that we have a responsibility towards the Arctic, the Arctic is a policy priority for the European Union.

*The focus of the Conference – Its title*

Ladies and gentlemen,

- The title of this Conference is: ***The Arctic region: between modernisation and tradition, economic development and protection of the environment.***
- The choice of different topics of the panels has been inspired by my various visits to the North, especially my participation at the "Northern Tour", organised by the Canadian Government. Each visit was an eye-opening experience to the many challenges the North is facing, but also seeing the many opportunities for the Region, including for cooperation between Canada and the European Union.

During my visits, I have been most impressed by the people in the North, who are very proud of their territory, all calling it "my beautiful land".

- Therefore I am particularly pleased having with us today the Honorable Minister Carolyn Bennet, a very dedicated Minister responsible for Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Mesdames et messieurs,

- Aujourd'hui nous allons discuter autour de trois panels de l'impact de la modernisation sur les cultures autochtones, des opportunités de développement durable et du nexus énergie / environnement.
- Les trois sujets suivent le même fil conducteur: les défis - mais aussi les opportunités - que la technologie apporte au Nord, en tant qu'entité géographique et culturelle. Mais au cœur, sont les gens du Nord, qui sont la fierté de cette région unique.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before turning to our key-note speaker, Minister Bennet, I would also like to thank:

- Global Affairs Canada, for their excellent cooperation in preparing this event.
- I would also like to warmly thank the moderators and the speakers.
- My staff and colleagues who assisted in the organisation, and
- You, all participants!

I wish all of you productive discussions and a constructive debate.

Thank you!