

THE ARCTIC REGION: BETWEEN MODERNISATION AND TRADITION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

(19 October 2016, Ottawa)

Opening remarks

- **H.E. Marie-Anne Coninx**, EU Ambassador to Canada

Keynote speech

- **The Hon. Carolyn Bennett**, PC MP, Minister for Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Panel 1—The challenges of modernization for Arctic youth and culture (cultural changes, traditional knowledge and science)

- **Mr Richard Tibbels**, Head of the US and Canada Division, European External Action Service (moderator)
- **Ms Maatalii Okalik**, President, National Inuit Youth Council
- **Mr Tuomas Aslak Juuso**, Vice-President, “Samediggi”
- **Ms Bobbie Jo Greenland-Morgan**, President, Gwich’in Tribal Council

Panel 2—Sustainable Arctic development: how can Canada and the EU best contribute?

- **H.E. Per Sjögren**, Swedish Ambassador to Canada (moderator)
- **Ms Alison LeClaire**, Senior Arctic Official, Global Affairs Canada
- **Mr Inuuteq Holm Olsen**, Greenland’s Representative to the U.S. and Canada
- **Mr Ole Damsgaard**, Head of Secretariat, Northern Periphery Programme

Panel 3—Energy and the environment: innovation and opportunities

- **Mr Christopher Duschenes**, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, the Conference Board of Canada (moderator)
- **Mr Stephen Mooney**, Director, Cold Climate Innovation, Yukon Research Centre
- **Mr Christopher Henderson**, President, Lumos Energy; Lead Mentor of the "20/20 Catalysts" Programme; and author of Aboriginal Power
- **Ms J. Okalik Eegeesiak**, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council
- **H.E. Vesa Lehtonen**, the Finnish Ambassador to Canada

Closing remarks

- **The Hon. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones**, PC MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

OPENING REMARKS

In her introductory remarks, **H.E. Marie-Anne Coninx** explained that the topic of the conference had been chosen for three reasons: 1) the EU, three of whose member states are Arctic countries, is itself an ‘Arctic entity’ and, as such, has adopted its own Arctic Strategy; 2) the Union is directly affected by the effects of climate change in the Arctic (rising sea levels, etc.); 3) the EU is a leading contributor to scientific research and regional development initiatives in the region. H.E. Coninx then underlined the central nature of the role played by the indigenous peoples in the Arctic and the importance of achieving a correct balance between opportunities and challenges in the region.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

The Hon. Carolyn Bennett started by reminding the importance, when formulating Arctic policies, of remembering that ‘this isn’t only about the land: it is about the water and the ice and a way of life that is at risk’. She stated that the future of Canada’s North had to “be based upon self-determination and self-reliance for Northerners”. This approach was underpinned by land claims, self-government and devolution. Turning to the new relationship between the Trudeau government and the Arctic peoples, she noted that it was based upon ‘the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership”. In her words, “the opportunities in the North must be shaped by [the] Northerners—in particular the indigenous people who have always lived there’. At the same time, she recognized the fact that most decisions continued to be made ‘by the South’ and the need to ‘actually [organize and formalize] the voices of the North to be able to make decisions with respect to the North’— including in Arctic research.

Turning to the question of EU-Canada co-operation in the Arctic, Minister Bennett considered that the EU shared her ‘vision [of a] North led by Northerners’ and ‘a long history of multilateralism’. She then defined EU’s integrated Arctic policy as ‘an eloquent expression of our collective conviction that the Arctic is about the people who live there’, arguing that these ‘must be allowed to thrive there with their distinct cultural identities intact’. Secure personal cultural identity, Mrs Bennett argued, was

necessary to good health, education and economic independence. The Canadian government and its ministers, she underlined, were committed to being 'a leading advocate for international co-operation, advancing the sustainable development of the Arctic region in partnership with Arctic states and with Northerners'.

The 40th anniversary of the relationship between the EU and Canada, Minister Bennett continued, called for closer co-operation 'and a renewed focus on the people of the North'. She underlined the challenges of restoring traditional reliance on the sea as the source of food and of preparing the Arctic to reap the benefits of tourism in the North-West Passage while maintaining environmental priorities. She noted the resilience of local communities despite their difficult circumstances (housing shortages, poor nutrition, climate change, illness, suicide), noting that Canada 'can and must do better' to tackle these problems.

The increasing focus on self-determination and self-reliance in Canada's North, she underlined, rested upon 'modern treaty arrangements that recognize indigenous governments and the integral role of indigenous people in the North'. Canada, she felt, urgently needed to learn how to 'manage and resolve [the] competing interests... of economic opportunities [while] protecting the land and the water and the ice'. Efforts to protect indigenous rights, further local development and strengthen international bonds were contributing to the goal of safeguarding indigenous ways of life, she noted, adding that the EU "seal exemption" accorded to the Inuit was 'hugely important'.

In conclusion, Minister Bennett argued that, despite the numerous examples of successful EU- Canadian co-operation in the Arctic (e.g. the Northern Contaminates Programme, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, etc.), both the EU and Canada had to 'redouble [their] efforts to listen to Northerners'. In this regard she underlined the crucial importance of listening to young indigenous people: 'As the Prime Minister says, the youth aren't our future; they're our present.'

PANEL 1—The challenges of modernization for Arctic youth and culture (cultural changes, traditional knowledge and science).

Ms Maatalii Okalik noted that a new relationship between the government and the Inuit must 'be based on good faith and ensure [they] are equal partners in a meaningful way'. Although she deplored the fact that, to date, the Inuit have been treated as observers rather than equal partners, she recognized that Canada's numerous indigenous communities have many mechanisms at their disposal for participation in government at regional, national and international levels.

Inuit youth consider the following as priorities. 1) Language: She noted with pride the very high rate of language retention among Canada's Inuit 'despite the [strategic] assimilation policies to essentially achieve cultural genocide'. 2) Traditions: the assimilatory policies of the past 2-3 generations should be reversed, giving Inuit youth the opportunity to maintain traditions which were central to their identity and success in an inhospitable region. 3) Suicide prevention: beyond the question of mental health, the high rate of suicide among the Inuit was also caused by an identity crisis, which required the removal of 'all social and economic inequities'. 4) Education and empowerment: Inuit knowledge should be included in curricula, particularly considering traditional mechanisms for environmental protection. 5) Reconciliation: the government should invest in community-based measures to involve Inuit youth in a genuine process of reconciliation.

Mr Tuomas Aslak Juuso was enthusiastic about the current state of relations between the Canadian government and its indigenous peoples, but expressed the hope that the new government would transform its words into actions. He focused on the 'great challenge' of how to maintain and make use of traditional knowledge to ensure sustainability of indigenous societies. Modernization and tradition are not incompatible, and traditional knowledge offers a framework for achieving sustainability. Mr Juuso recommended a focus on policies that did not restrict opportunities for the pursuit of traditional activities (e.g. hunting, fishing), that reflected the specific circumstances and needs of individual communities (villages) when introducing change (e.g. mineral extraction, infrastructure developments), that ensured sustainability of traditional societies (e.g. food security, water resources).

Mr Juuso's 'called for governments - when formulating policies - to not only recognize but also take into account the fact that indigenous societies followed their own methods, their own specific ways of living upon and using their lands. He saw great opportunities in the Arctic for indigenous peoples to maintain strong and sustainable societies, but argued that their efforts require official support and recognition based upon equal rights.

Ms Bobbie Jo Greenland-Morgan spoke of the changes that her people experienced as a result of 'colonialism, assimilation, oppression', yet felt confident that relationships could be rebuilt and true reconciliation achieved. She noted that young people were 'emerging and taking ownership of the future' through their involvement in negotiations for self-government. Despite a changing world, Ms Greenland-Morgan felt sure that her culture would continue to grow in strength, and argued that young people should be central to policy regardless of focus (e.g. language, culture, self-government).

Q&A

1) The Ambassador of Sweden to Canada: How do the panellists co-operate within the circumpolar context? Are there any forums in which they are active?

2) A member of the audience: (a) How can the relationship between young people and community elders be strengthened? (b) How can the legal and ethical aspects of traditional knowledge (e.g. no copyright protection for traditional knowledge under Canadian law) be improved?

In response to the first question, **Mr Juuso** pointed to the vital need for more state funding, 'clear guidance' and support for the idea of an indigenous youth movement equal to larger, national youth forums and organizations and enjoying the same advantages in terms of size and influence. Switching to the second question, he agreed that the legal framework of traditional knowledge needs to be improved, that the state should take steps to support the transmission of this knowledge from elders to young people, and that traditional knowledge should be taken into account when formulating policy. In order for the latter to be achieved, Mr Juuso spoke of the need

for a process that involves indigenous communities in decision-making and which they helped to design.

Ms Okalik indicated that although Inuit delegates were present during international discussions, their role was restricted to that of observers. She also denounced the lack of funding to enable these delegates to ‘meaningfully prepare [their] positions’ and their effective exclusion from circumpolar discussions over questions of sovereignty, and called for more effective mechanisms to take their priorities into account. In terms of strengthening relations between elders and young people, she pointed to declining rates of fluency in Inuktitut among the young as a barrier to this important goal, arguing for the need to create opportunities for language preservation and promotion. She added that national debates around language in Canada tend to exclusively focus on English and French, to the detriment of Inuktitut, and that more should be done to make the voices of young Inuit heard both at home and abroad.

Ms Greenland-Morgan argued that more should be done to create opportunities for youth-elders interaction in those communities where it is lacking (e.g. programmes to involve elders in schools). Regarding the question of copyright for traditional knowledge, she pointed to her organization’s publication of works dealing with such knowledge and ownership of copyright to these books. ‘We are willing to share the indigenous knowledge,’ she continued, but deplored the fact that such knowledge was often not given the recognition or respect which ‘Western science’ enjoys. She finally expressed the wish to see more youth involvement in national policy development.

PANEL 2—Sustainable Arctic development: how can Canada and the EU best contribute?

After listing the three main policy objectives of the EU’s recently adopted integrated Arctic policy (protecting and preserving the Arctic in co-operation with the people who live there; promoting the sustainable use of resources; international co-operation), **Mr Richard Tibbels** noted that the Arctic was also mentioned in the EU High Representative’s recent ‘global strategy on the external action of the EU’.

The EU had ‘a strategic interest in seeing the Arctic remain a low-tension area [and is] keen to undertake action in all policy areas from climate change to sustainable development to search and rescue, etc.’. Mr Tibbels shared four points concerning ‘how the EU sees sustainable development in the Arctic’. 1) ‘There can be no sustainable development without tackling climate change.’ Following the ratification of the Paris Accords, the EU and Canada will now ‘step up their dialogue on climate issues’ and will focus on the joint development of clean energies. 2) ‘Sustainable development has to be based upon the best possible knowledge’, and the EU continues to work hard to ensure it has ‘the right science [and] the right research to be able to develop some innovative solutions to development in the Arctic’. 3) ‘Sustainable development requires bringing all the stakeholders together’, and the EU is trying to work and network more closely with communities across the Arctic. 4) ‘There can be no sustainable development without [the overall] economic development’ of Canada and the EU, and in this regard it is hoped that CETA will support economic growth in Canada’s North.

Ms Alison LeClaire focused on three issues: What is Canada’s perspective of sustainable development? What is Canada, often working in association with the EU, doing to make progress? What areas offer great potential for joint efforts? Canada’s definition of sustainable development was the ‘integrated, responsible economic development [alongside] environmental stewardship and protection as the most effective means to a healthy, vibrant and prosperous future for the Arctic and its communities’. In terms of Canada’s efforts with indigenous communities and the EU, Ms LeClaire referred to the work of the Arctic Council—notably on clean energy development and on the interaction between traditional or local and market economies. She also spoke of the Arctic Economic Council as ‘a source of advice and guidance to Canada and the EU in terms of sharing best practices, technological solutions [and] standards and other information’.

Ms LeClaire argued that there was a need to focus on efforts which ‘leverage the strength of our Arctic regions and people while taking action to address the climate challenge’ in the fields of tourism, resources (particularly renewable ones) and infrastructure development, and scientific collaboration. She praised the ‘quality’ of EU investment, which derives from its focus upon social and environmental

responsibility and its principle-based approach to investment ‘that supports cultural, social and economic values for Northern indigenous peoples’. Ms LeClaire then said Canada saw ‘very strong potential’ in the food and tourism markets, describing various initiatives to promote food security and bring traditional crafts to market, and noted the local social and economic benefits of investment in important international scientific research in the Arctic.

Mr Inuuteq Holm Olsen, having outlined Greenland’s longstanding economic links to the EU (notably in the fishing industry), saw a need for more East-to-West ‘subnational co-operation’ (North-South relations being already ‘well established’) on issues of concern to the Arctic such as healthcare, education, economic development and housing. He cited the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme as a good example of co-operation at a subnational, regional level, but noted that ‘good intentions are not enough’ and can lead to ‘grave errors’ when decisions are made without consulting local communities. Mr Olsen argued that existing East-to-West networks of relations between indigenous peoples, notably within the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the UN, were ‘something that could be extended to other issues that are affecting the Arctic’.

After explaining the geographic coverage of the EU’s Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, **Mr Ole Damsgaard** argued that the best way to counteract existing or future challenges was to support community-based development in this area. The programme’s four priorities were innovation, entrepreneurship, energy efficiency and sustainable environmental management. ‘Tapping into’ local and regional communities, the Programme focuses on capacity building, creating new networks (e.g. among local SMEs), and improving the provision of public services through innovation. He added that some of the Programme’s ca. 25 projects also extended to Canada—advising young entrepreneurs, helping local food producers, recycling plastic waste from the sea into new products, recruiting and retaining healthcare staff in remote regions, etc. Mr Damsgaard noted that the Programme’s funding amounted to EUR 56 million, making it quite considerable in size and scope.

Q&A

1) Mr Juuso: Could the panellists give some examples of ways in which indigenous communities are included and involved at EU (as opposed to national) levels within sustainable development programmes in the Arctic?

2) Mr Richard Labelle, senior advisor on clean technology, Allam Advisory Group: a) To the EU panellist: When seeking to enhance development in the Arctic communities, how can and to what extent is the digital market effort being focused on helping these communities? b) To Ms LeClaire: To what extent are we enhancing access to the internet and relevant technologies as a way of building innovation and entrepreneurship and growing the economies of these remote locations?

Mr Tibbels explained that the EU must of course work through its member states, but pointed to efforts to set up an Arctic stakeholders forum and to the European Commission's annual 'indigenous meeting' as opportunities for direct discussions between the EU and Arctic communities. He spoke of a 'significant amount' of EU 'digital market' initiatives, but explained that most of these focused upon changing national legislation 'to provide [a] more conducive environment for companies and individuals to work with digital resources in the area'.

Mr Damsgaard pointed out that 'co-operation programmes are not investment programmes' and obviously cannot pay for large investments in infrastructure, but noted that some EU programmes did involve improving connectivity, developing IT skills, creating online platforms, etc., and that these initiatives did sometimes focus upon specific groups in the Arctic region. He also explained that some projects currently involved different representatives of the Sami people, and that discussions were ongoing with some Arctic Council member peoples on improving the ability of small communities to access EU micro-projects and micro-funding.

Ms LeClaire explained that the harsh climate of the Canadian North sometimes hampered efforts to improve connectivity, but noted that work was being done to find ways of adapting technology to the cold and that Canada could benefit greatly from European best practice in this field. **Mr Holm Olsen** felt sure that there was a need to improve internet and mobile telecommunications connectivity in the Arctic,

and argued that the challenges of distance, sparse population and climate should be overcome.

PANEL 3—Energy and the environment: innovation and opportunities

Mr Stephen Mooney spoke of the Yukon College's 'Yukon Research Centre'—'an applied research facility' which works on climate change, food security, alternative energy, housing, etc. in Canada's North. In terms of innovation, he cited ongoing efforts to introduce solar power technology in the Arctic (e.g. solar-powered telecommunications infrastructure), to reduce the Yukon's current reliance on diesel fuel for heating and transportation by replacing it with biomass, measuring and predicting the impact of climate change on permafrost and glaciers, consulting elders to identify the best areas in which to harness wind power, sharing ('with our Chinese and Russian counterparts') the Yukon's expertise of building roads in the Arctic, and working on 'environmental remediation' with mining companies. Mr Mooney explained that the Centre also works with schools and universities, involving students at all levels, and was no doubt justifiably proud of the mantra which underpins all these efforts: 'By the North, in the North, and for the North'.

Mr Christopher Henderson began by explaining that Canada has around 140 indigenous communities reliant upon diesel fuel, and that the goal should be to replace half of current consumption with clean, alternative energy systems within the next 10 years. The four barriers to be overcome (as in other regions of the Arctic) were 1) calculating the true costs and benefits of introducing clean energies; 2) the need for a 'collectively designed, common power-purchasing agreement template'; 3) the need to increase local capacities through initiatives like Lumos Energy's '20/20 Catalysts Programme'; and 4) ensuring the durability of renewable sources of energy as an alternative to diesel while addressing the problem of 'capital gap'. In this last regard, he saw a need for a government fund which would invest in durable infrastructure for long-term renewable energy generation.

Ms J. Okalik Egeesiak began by noting that, given the low price of oil and therefore low levels of interest in the Arctic's oil and gas resources, the present offers a good opportunity 'to reflect upon the viability of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies' in the region; 'the Inuit,' she added, 'want to be part of the climate change solution.' She spoke of the great social and economic benefits to Arctic communities of efforts to increase energy efficiency and reliance upon renewable sources of energy: dividends invested in community healthcare and education, local job creation, economic diversification, improved quality of life and more sustainable communities—all in a cleaner environment. After pointing out that many settlements in the Arctic have no choice but to continue to rely upon diesel generators for electricity and heating, she noted that Arctic communities were at different stages of identifying opportunities to reap these benefits. The Arctic Council has made renewable energy a priority, and the Inuit and the Canadian government are 'exploring renewable energy sources and increasing energy efficiency in staged and economically sensible ways'. The WWF is running and creating projects to introduce renewable energy to the Canadian Arctic.

She then argued that there was a need for training programmes, the redefinition of education and development programmes, and '[the integration of] creative renewable and energy efficiency business models that design build and maintain installations across the North. These energy-centred social enterprises should include' socially vulnerable unemployed young people. Ms Egeesiak then called upon Arctic communities to rise to the challenge, to work together on a unified renewable energy policy, and to learn from each other. She also called for more government efforts to address long-standing indigenous priorities. 'You'd think things would change faster [given all the international agreements, and] we look forward to the day when we are a truly equitable partner [and we receive] equitable funding.'

H.E. Vesa Lehtonen noted that Finland was due to chair the Arctic Council (2017-2019), and prioritised 'the Paris climate agreement and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development' in the Arctic. The 4th Arctic summit, to be held in Finland, 'will address energy development in the [region]'

He then shared some Finnish experiences in Arctic conditions: nationwide coverage of locally implemented renewable energy production (especially heating in remote areas); finding local solutions to replace oil ‘for the whole value chain’ (feedstock e.g. biomass or municipal waste, energy conversion, distribution, maintenance); Finland currently has ‘300 small energy businesses [running] over 600 small heating and CHP units’ (e.g. burning woodchips) for thousands of remote villages and households; Finland is a ‘world leader in [the small-scale recycling of] solid municipal waste’; legislation for the sustainable use of forests which favours the owner; the procurement and supply of biomass is managed by local entrepreneurs; infrastructure (e.g. boilers) is energy efficient and environmentally sustainable; energy production plants are owned and run and maintained by local municipalities or individual families; the heat is distributed locally, and the electricity is fed into the grid. H.E. Lehtonen believed that this model could be tailored to Arctic communities elsewhere, and called for efforts to further encourage research and development co-operation and create local partnerships. ‘The key idea is that the small businesses are always based on local activity and networking.’ By replacing oil, small communities will redirect money to themselves—a ‘major driving force behind the successful outcome of renewable energy utilization’.

Q&A

The moderator, Mr Duschenes: What should be the one main priority of future Canada-EU co-operation in this field?

Mr Henderson answered ‘recognizing the true value of alternatives to diesel’ (‘energy efficiency, district heating, combined power or renewable energy’) in terms of the great savings they promise—of the order of 50% ‘let alone the value of reduced bills, [of] cleaner air, [of] improved health conditions’ in an example he gave of a community in the Yukon. He argued that there is a real need to ‘value the true value of renewables and energy efficiency, [therefore allowing] solutions to come to the table ... and create a level playing field for change’. **Mr Mooney** thought that ‘partnerships with the First Nations [were] key, moving forward’—self-government status which grants these Nations control over their own affairs: ‘they have the rights

to the land, they have the sustainable harvest [for] biomass, for the micro-hydroelectric power [infrastructure]’.

Ms Egeesiak argued that newly-elected governments should try harder to ‘build on what works from the previous government’ (e.g. successful policies, sound research, relevant recommendations) instead of starting everything afresh, and was of the opinion that the current government should ‘[invest] in culturally appropriate education’ in order to increase graduation levels in indigenous communities and thereby increase employability.

H.E. Lohtanen, in turn, saw local ownership, ‘including traditional livelihoods’, as key: ‘If the value chain and knowledge are in local hands, the economic, social [and] environmental benefits [make] the project work.’

*In response to a statement from the floor concerning a particular facet of scientific research (microbiology) in the Arctic and the lack of baseline research, **Mr Henderson** underlined the importance of including ‘the North’ in research efforts, and **Ms Egeesiak** argued in favour of investing in local communities by training people in the Arctic to play an active role in climate change monitoring and reporting.*

Mr Richard Labelle, senior advisor on clean technology, Allam Advisory Group: a) (to H.E. Lehtonen): Finland’s approach relies on forests for biomass, ‘but what happens when there’s no forest in the Arctic’? How would that technology not be appropriate for Canada? b) (to Mr Henderson): What are the challenges of distributed energy and the use of ‘really small micro-grids’?

H.E. Lehtonen pointed to the conclusions of various studies which ‘show that there are really good prospects’ for the Finnish model to be applied to ‘large areas of Canada’, and felt sure that other forms of biomass besides wood (e.g. municipal waste) could be identified. **Mr Henderson** agreed that some Arctic communities had access to other sources of biomass, but thought that the main challenge was ‘the nature of community design relative to [distributed] heat and power systems’ in widely scattered communities. He also mentioned the challenges of transporting

biomass to remote communities and storing it. ‘The technology we’re moving towards is largely solar storage, more efficient diesel systems and in some cases small hydro.’ **Mr Mooney** spoke of the growing availability of some resources in particular communities (e.g. fast-growing willow trees in Old Crow) as a result of climate change.

Ms Okalik: How are indigenous communities involved in decisions at various levels, and what are the opportunities and risks that arise from this involvement?

Mr Henderson saw the involvement of indigenous communities as crucial, but added that businesses also ‘need to have the right policy and fiscal framework’ for them to be able to play a full and meaningful part.

CLOSING REMARKS

In her closing remarks, **the Hon. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones** began by listing a number of important events concerning Canada’s North: the 20th anniversary of the Arctic Council, the release of Mr Higginbotham’s *North of 60* report (‘Towards a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda’), a trip to Reykjavik to the Arctic Circle Assembly, and, in the Arctic context, the 40th anniversary of relations between Canada and the EU. ‘Prime Minister Trudeau,’ she continued, ‘is making the Arctic a priority for our government,’ noting that, ‘fundamentally, as Arctic nations, our shared future rests upon the people who have made the North their home’ and upon the government’s ability to ‘respect that’ and work together with them. Ms Goldsmith-Jones spoke of the ‘warm and welcoming ethic’ of the Arctic Council and the Arctic Circle Assembly, citing them as examples of non-partisan collective effort and as a source of inspiration for the Canadian government, which is keen to strengthen its ‘commitment to co-operation’ with them.

Ms Goldsmith-Jones noted that Canada and the EU were working ‘very, very hard on a new, exciting, progressive and strong chapter for our shared prosperity in signing CETA very soon’ as well as on the imminent Canada-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement. The latter agreement, she explained, notably calls for

‘enhanced co-operation on circumpolar issues, climate change, international ocean and maritime policy and fisheries—all of which relate to the Arctic. Canada, the EU and its member states and the Arctic can only benefit from closer co-operation.’ She then welcomed the recently released "Integrated EU Policy for the Arctic" and the Canada-US Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership, adding that ‘we look forward to working with the US and the EU and its member states to advance [our] common objectives’ in the Arctic (responding to climate change, promoting sustainable development, conserving Arctic biodiversity ‘through science-based decision-making, incorporating indigenous science and traditional knowledge, building a sustainable Arctic economy, and supporting strong Arctic communities’).

Speaking of the priorities of ‘those who live in the Canadian North’, the Hon. Goldsmith-Jones recognized that these priorities were often a matter of survival. ‘Changes to the climate [caused by the South] are exacting a terrible toll on the mental and physical health of Northerners, people for whom the Arctic is much, much more than [just] a place to live’, with devastating consequences for the region’s communities. ‘Basic human decency dictates that we must work together and directly with the communities that are affected... In the Arctic, the repercussions are a stark reminder that we are in this together, and that we must continually remind ourselves that we are all one.’ The Canadian government, she continued, welcomed the EU’s ‘commitment to engaging with Arctic indigenous communities in Europe and outside of Europe—whether through the EU’s indigenous peoples’ dialogue or through other occasions for discussion’. She then urged everyone to ‘please make the most of these opportunities, [to] please walk in the shoes of our Arctic brothers and sisters as we go forward together’.

The Hon. Goldsmith-Jones saw sustainable economic growth as ‘the way forward, provided it is undertaken by and for the local populations’, referring to the UN’s Sustainable Development as ‘an avenue towards this kind of improvement’. Of the 17 Goals, she considered that ‘most could leave a remarkable imprint on the North’—addressing issues such as ‘poverty, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, climate action, and the potential to figure out how to undertake sustainable consumption and production, good jobs and economic growth’.

She foresaw many economic benefits for the North thanks to CETA—citing access to the EU market for seal products (e.g. sealskin coats) from indigenous communities in Canada as ‘a very good example’. Ms Goldsmith-Jones also underlined the importance of the Arctic Economic Council in September 2014, as ‘an independent Arctic-to-Arctic forum promoting business opportunities, trade and investment’ and which she encouraged European businesses to involve themselves in.

In terms of the overriding goal of improving the well-being of Arctic residents through the ‘centrality’ of traditional, cultural and local knowledge within decision-making processes, she noted that ‘we have much to learn’ and that Canada ‘highly values engaging and consulting with Northerners as international Arctic policies are carried out’.

Ms Goldsmith-Jones then spoke of the recent recognition of the need to include traditional science and knowledge in Arctic research: ‘science that includes local and traditional knowledge is better science’—and explained that scientific co-operation is at the heart of joint efforts between Canada, the EU and the US. In this regard, she welcomed efforts to ‘advance the implementation’ of the Transatlantic Ocean Research Alliance as well as the forthcoming opening (2017) of Canada’s future High Arctic Research Station. Canada, according to Ms Goldsmith-Jones, agreed with the EU’s opinion that science, research and innovation are key areas, and saw them as offering the greatest potential for closer co-operation. She also added that Canada was committed to continuing to work closely with all its Arctic Council partners in order to ‘shape a better future for the Arctic through sound science-based decision-making’—notably on the questions of migratory birds, black carbon and methane.

In conclusion, the Hon. Goldsmith-Jones was pleased and proud of the fact that Canada and the EU are already working together ‘in so many areas’, noting that Canada ‘is eager to increase those collaborations’. The Canadian government, she continued, is ‘deeply committed to the Arctic Council’ and continues to strongly support the EU’s application for observer status. ‘We appreciate the European Union and its member states so much, and we’re very grateful for your contribution and leadership toward the North and its well-being.’