

Forum for 21st century

on the Arctic issues

Propositions to 1st Draft

People's Republic of China would like to thank to the Forum for the 21st Century for its intention to organize the conference on the Arctic issues. The Arctic has been attracting more and more attention in the last decades due to global warming, which influence can be seen markedly right in this region. Therefore we appreciate that also this part of the world has become concern of a wide range of states and hopes that this occurring multilateral approach helps reach a possible solution to challenges standing in front us in the global world. We are pleased by an opportunity to participate on such an important event as this conference really is.

Although the Arctic resembles the Antarctic, its international administration is different. The Arctic, unlike the Antarctic, was divided among five states located in the north of the northern hemisphere on the ground of bilateral agreements and matters regarding their territories were left to their discretion. In 1996 the Arctic Council was established as an intergovernmental institution to deal with the Arctic issues. People's Republic of China sincerely supports this kind of problem-solving and believes that it is a better way how to reach mutually satisfying results.

People's republic of China applied to the Arctic Council for a membership as early as in 2006. Notwithstanding we were granted an ad hoc observer status in 2007, it took another seven years until we could start to participate in the Council sessions as a permanent observer member in May 2013. We demonstrated our great interest in the Arctic affairs and we are thankful that the Council expressed its belief in us by letting us join the Council. As a result of no voting right, our rights in the Council are limited, but this fact does not obstruct our intention to fully participate in the work of the Council. As we had mentioned before, it has all along supported the purpose and objective of the Arctic Council. In addition, we have recognized the sovereignty of the Arctic countries over this region as well as their leading role in the Arctic Council.

People's republic of China's northeast regions stretch to almost 50 degree latitude, what makes us a near-Arctic state. For this reason we applied for the Arctic Council membership because we believed that it should also have a certain degree of rights in presenting our ideas and opinions concerning the Arctic just like Germany, the United Kingdom or France as permanent observers. Although there were some unfavourable states within the Arctic Council that did not welcome our entry, we are sure that many members have realized its potential benefit for this territory.

There are three major incentives, which led us to participate in issues of the Arctic. Predominant problem that deserves world's attention is the on-going climate change. As all we know, melting of the polar ice cap does not affect exclusively the countries that are located

in the north. However, it has great impact on all coastline areas. So it is our concern to take part in research of global warming in this region in order to explore causes of the melting. We are sure that we will be great benefit for the states active in this field not only thanks to the number of our experts, but also because we are ready to provide a lot of funds for that. We even incorporated expenses for environmental protection and research into our latest Five-year plan.

Furthermore, People's republic of China is convinced that already accessible maritime routes plus newly emerging ones should be open up for non-arctic countries as well. Of course under the condition of not using them for military purposes. However, opening up these routes for trade would bring many advantages for all nations. Basically, these shipping routes shorten the journey to Europe or to the east coast of the United States considerably. It does not mean unilateral benefit for one country only. All nations could increase volumes of tradable goods and their well-being because it would cut shipping time and transportation costs. Another positive side of these routes is then lower energy consumption resulting in lower level of environment pollution. For that reason we suggest the freedom of navigation in these waters.

Last but not least is the question of mineral resources exploitation. Some researches allege that there are huge oil, natural gas and mineral reserves. People's republic of China is willing to give hand in any project concerning exploitation too. Even nowadays we are taking part in exploitation implicitly or explicitly in Russia, Greenland or Iceland and it works perfectly well. We can provide funds, technology or know-how when necessary or required.

People's republic of China fully agrees with the proposed questions by the Forum to be negotiated. If it had to order the questions according to its hierarchical preference, it would put the question of the climate change and shipping routes in the first place. We emphasize our conviction that the major world "players" should take responsibility for the climate change and to do their best to find the most appropriate ways to slow this process down. However, we cannot forget about the economic potential of this area, which could help not only us but also the others and would not harm any of the so-called Arctic countries. We remind that access to the sea routes, exclusively for trade, will not harm these states and moreover, it will help the environment as we mentioned above. It also acknowledges the need to consult these measures with the aborigine peoples, but it is more or less the task of the Arctic states to do so. What concerns mineral resources, People's republic of China does intend to negotiate its exploitation and it sincerely believes that we can come to an agreement because of its importance for humankind. Nevertheless we consider it irrelevant to deal with a new division of this territory at this time as it has recognized the Arctic states' sovereignty over this region. It might be interested in it sometime in the future.

This conference gives all of us a great opportunity to discuss these questions, which we assume have worldwide significance. We think that present progress in this area is not sufficient because it used to be based on bilateral agreements and still at this time too few states can opine in the questions regarding the Arctic. All participants must realize that the world is globalized and that multilateral negotiations should substitute bilateral ones

especially in the fields of such importance as the Arctic is. The Arctic states should deliberate ideas and suggestions of other states, particularly of those which have been allowed to join the Council as observers in order to come to mutually acceptable agreements and to show willingness to compromise, which can be reflected in friendly approach and accordance of the other states, including us, in different issues on grounds of the United Nations, World Trade Organisation, etc.

In conclusion, although the significance of the Arctic is great and will be probably increasing, People's republic of China wants to highlight that our intentions are pure. Despite the fact that we recognize sovereignty of the Arctic states in this part of the world and we want them to share it somehow with others, we will always have in our minds soft power negotiations and the positive effect of compromise on relationships within the world village.