

Forum for 21st century on the Arctic issues

Propositions to 2st 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, as the most sensitive region to the global climate change, has been attracting more and more attention in the last decades due to global warming, which influence is perceptible not merely in this region. Natural changes in the Arctic are reflected in global climate and especially that in the northern hemisphere. Since the Arctic issues such as climate change and its affects are becoming trans-regional, China emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and expresses its conviction that this occurring multilateral approach will help reach a possible solution to challenges standing in front of the global world. Therefore China is pleased by an opportunity to participate on such an important event as this conference in reality is.

China as a Near-Arctic state, with its location at 50 degrees latitude north, is severely affected by on-going climate change due to its influence on China's ecological environment, agriculture, social and economical development. As a result of this, China, which has been already recognized by Arctic states granting it the permanent observer status in Arctic Council, attaches great importance to the Arctic issues. Hereby China reaffirms its view of Arctic Council as the most important intergovernmental forum for discussing environmental issues and sustainable development in the region, promoting environmental protection and enhancing cooperation on trans-regional issues. China has all along supported the purpose and objective of the Arctic Council and has always been of the opinion that the Arctic and non-Arctic states should widely cooperate on the Arctic issues, based on mutual respect for each other's rights, mutual trust and mutual benefits with the aim of peaceful, stable and sustainable development in the Arctic. Besides its sympathy to the work of the Council, China expresses its respects to the UN Convention on the Law of Seas, Svalbard Treaty and the relevant regulations of international law which grant rights to non-Arctic states in the region.

There are three major incentives, which led China to actively participate in the issues of the Arctic. Predominant problem that deserves world's attention is the abovementioned 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 also China's concern to take part in research of global warming in this region in order to explore causes of the melting. Starting its Arctic scientific research in the 1990s, China joined the Arctic International Scientific Committee in 1996, has conducted five expeditions on the Arctic Ocean so far, established its own research station, the Yellow River Station, formed a high-quality team of experts and created institutions involved in Arctic research. Therefore, China is sure that it will be great benefit for the states active in this field not only thanks to its experience, knowledge and number of its experts, but also because it is ready to provide a huge amount of funds for Arctic development. China gives its full support to the Forum's propose to reinforce the current research capacities, by establishment of the long-term

research group and offers its experts and research workers who would systematically work on the exploration of the Arctic and would provide obtained information to all the governments of the world.

China also emphasizes its 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. China has acceded to major international conventions on environment and is fulfilling obligations of relevant treaties. By signing the Kyoto protocol and by its commitment arising from its national plans, China has already expressed its interest in low carbon society. Accordingly to the global character of the issue relating to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, to on-going discrepancy in the positions of different states as well as to the concern about the possible delay in negotiation on this issue, China suggests to discuss this propose on another global forum organized exclusively for this purpose.

China respects the values, interests, culture and traditions of the Arctic aborigines and other inhabitants in the region. Due to the changing conditions in the region, the Arctic states have to lay more stress on the adaptability of the indigenous people, who are primarily affected by the climate changes. It would be the main mission of each government to protect the wellbeing of their nationals, for that reason China recommends to the Arctic states, the sovereign right holders in the region, to ground the Fund for their own indigenous people. Further, being aware of the importance of education for sustainable development, China welcomes the Forum’s propose to support the knowledge of the indigenous population of the Arctic and to broaden their educational opportunities, by setting up educational institutions and sending qualified teachers and professors. China hopes that by providing educational services relative to its position as a near-Arctic state will contribute to the social development of the population concerned.

In the modern society, all states take note of growing importance of the long-term sustainable development, which guarantees desirable future state for human societies, in which living conditions and resource-use meet human needs without undermining the sustainability of natural systems and the environment. China agrees with the Forum’s remark on the need of international environmentally-friendly and sustainable standards for mineral resources exploitation, but regarding to the sovereign rights and jurisdiction of Arctic countries over the region, China leaves the decision-making related to exploration principles up to the Arctic states. Regarding the on-going disputes and claims on continental shelf, it is evident that the states involved have not unanimous perception about the territorial division, which can in turn create obstacles in harmonious development of the region. With absolute respect to sovereign rights of the Arctic states over the region and with deep belief that these states will respect the natural rights of non-Arctic states deriving from international law such as freedom of research, freedom of shipping and freedom of navigation, China call upon the Arctic states to find the mutually beneficial solution concerning to territorial division of the Arctic land both for the Arctic and non-Arctic states.

Since the Arctic ice melting and the rising possibility of arctic navigation through three Arctic sea routes, the issues relating to freedom of navigation has a global significance. Majority of the Arctic states proclaim their efforts to make use of the Arctic passages, while ensuring the safety of navigation. Opening of the Arctic sea routes would be a great contribution to global development bringing benefits to all parties involved as a result of fuel-savings and cost-efficiency. Of course, all the countries must comply with related guidelines and regulations for Arctic navigation. China declares the Arctic Ocean as international waters and common heritage of humankind accordingly to international law. Therefore, China strongly supports the Forum's proposition on agreement of the freedom of navigation and over flight for all the countries as well as the creation of legally binding polar code for the Arctic Ocean and the relating special body to oversee the Arctic transportation.

China agrees with the Forum on the matter of tourism strategy and its beneficial effects on the development in the region. In the respect of peaceful development of the Arctic region and on the basis of mutual respects, benefits and enhanced understanding, China promotes the Arctic tourism strategy in extent of its rights and expresses its hope to cooperate with both the Arctic and non-Arctic countries in the agenda of tourism.

In conclusion, China wants, with joined hands, to increase its capacity to address abovementioned trans-regional issues and make its contribution to peaceful, stabile and sustainable development in the Arctic in order to make the region part of the harmonious world. This conference gives a great opportunity to discuss these questions, which have worldwide significance. Hereby, China would like to expresses its belief that all the participants are willing to find mutually beneficial solutions to proposed problems and thereby to enhance not only the development in the region but also the cooperative partnership within the world village.