

## **The importance and value of Russian-Canadian cooperation was noted by conference participants within the Roscongress Foundation Think Arctic project**

An online conference on "Russian-Canadian Cooperation in the Arctic region sustainable development" was held as part of the Roscongress Foundation's Think Arctic project. This event was attended by experts, government officials and business community representatives of two countries, as well as the Arctic Council sustainable development working group (SDWG). The priorities of Canada's Arctic strategy, as well as the current state and prospects of Russian-Canadian cooperation in the field of sustainable development, were discussed by conference participants.

"Canada's 2019 "North and Arctic Policy Framework" mentions the importance and value of cooperation between Russia and Canada. The document presents key priorities for joint work - indigenous issues, science, and navigation. We expect that interaction under Arctic Council Russian chairmanship will lay a foundation for strong bilateral relations between Russia and Canada," stressed Alison Leclair, Canadian Ambassador to Russia.

"Russia and Canada remain focused on maximizing of Arctic's potential as a territory of peaceful dialogue and sustainable development that seamlessly combines the realities, scientific and technological achievements of the 21st century based on cultural and historical traditions of indigenous population. We should focus on aligning our positions on international platforms, particularly within Arctic Council framework," said Vladimir Proskuryakov, Minister Counselor at the Russian Embassy in Canada.

The event report notes that it is the Arctic region that has big potential to develop as a major point for strengthening cooperation between Russia and Canada. There are ongoing ties between officials, subject matter experts, and representatives of academic community on a broad agenda, including North indigenous people's situation, continental shelf, climate, environmental protection, fisheries, and Arctic navigation.

"We need to break ice between our countries and find opportunities for cooperation in the Arctic region. This can become a foundation for revitalizing partnerships in other areas," said Whitney P. Leckenbauer, PhD, Head of the North American and Arctic Defense and Security Network.

It was noted that the main platform for cooperation on sustainable development between Russia and Canada are working groups within the Arctic Council.

As part of the Arctic Council's sustainable development working group, the Russian-led "Arctic Demographic Index" project was launched in 2020. Norway and Canada serve as co-chairs. Arctic Food Innovation Cluster project has developed a plan to create an innovative food cluster to meet current global and regional food security challenges. There are several successfully completed projects involving Canada and Russia that have been extended into a second phase and are actively pursued at this time. Among them is a project on indigenous food culture, "Arctic indigenous youth, climate change and food culture".

In addition, Russia and Canada participate in other multilateral formats of sustainable development cooperation, such as the International Circumpolar Health Alliance. Russian and Canadian companies also cooperate within the Arctic Economic Council framework.

"The Arctic region is a place where Russia and Canada can focus their common efforts. Our countries have great opportunities to work together on sustainable development," said Jennifer Spence, executive secretary of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group.

Experts highlighted as promising areas of bilateral cooperation such as health, education and science, environmental protection and climate risk management, sustainable tourism development, as well as cooperation at the Russian and Canadian groups and indigenous people level.

It was the second event in the Think Arctic, a project devoted to bilateral cooperation between Russia and Arctic and non-Arctic states in sustainable development field, organized by Roscongress Foundation, Center for Integrated European and International Studies of the Higher School of Economics, and Analytical Center under Russian Federation government.

"We expect that the content of expert discussions within the Think Arctic project will lay a foundation for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation within Arctic Council framework, as well as allow to qualitatively fill business programs of upcoming events, including International Arctic Forum "Arctic - Territory of Dialogue," said Deputy Director of the Roscongress Foundation Grigory Velikikh.

There will be ten online discussions with member countries of the Arctic Council (Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Norway, USA, Finland, Sweden) and observers (PRC, Republic of Korea, India) during the Russian presidency in Arctic Council in 2021-2023.

Progress of experts' analytical work and inter-country dialogues results will be presented at a special session of VI International Arctic Forum "Arctic - Territory of Dialogue" to be held in St. Petersburg on April 11-13, 2022.

There will be a final report on prospective strategic directions for Arctic development, a list of investment-attractive industries, as well as directions for Arctic Council member states strategies articulating to achieve the sustainable development goals.

Leading experts on the Arctic and sustainable development goals, authorities' representatives, business community, and public organizations will be the authors of this study. This project is supported under Russian chairmanship in Arctic Council.

A broadcast recording is available at the link: <https://arctic-council-russia.ru/think-arctic/rossiysko-kanadskoe-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-ustoychivogo-razvitiya-arkticheskogo-regiona/>

