

Statement

Nunavut and the Arctic Council

May 15, 2013 Iqaluit, NU

Premier Eva Aariak released the following statement today:

"On behalf of the Government of Nunavut and all Nunavummiut, we are pleased to see Canada assume the Chair of the Arctic Council for a two-year term. This is the opportunity for Canadians to lead in the Arctic at a time when climate change and economic development are attracting global attention to our region. I look forward to a strong northern perspective in Canada's efforts at the Arctic Council, led by a Nunavummiuq, the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq.

The Government of Nunavut notes that a decision is still pending in regards to the European Union's application for observer status. We look forward to more details on how the European Union will address concerns that Canada raised in Kiruna, Sweden, about the EU's ban on seal products and the impact on Inuit.

Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council offers us an opportunity to act on issues important to Nunavummiut, including economic development and building the infrastructure necessary to support it; improving and developing mental wellness promotion strategies; new efforts on climate change; and new international rules to protect our environment from the increasing traffic of ships through our waters.

Nunavut welcomes the signing in Kiruna of a new legally-binding Arctic agreement aimed at improving the response to oil spills.

With oil exploration already a reality in waters adjacent to Nunavut, our government has been participating in the talks that have led to this new agreement. The waters we share provide food and livelihoods to Nunavummiut, so rapid and effective response to any oil spills that occur is essential.

As traffic and industrial activity increases, so too does the need to monitor activity, enforce Canadian laws and prepare for emergencies. Canada needs a stronger search and rescue presence in the Arctic, backed up with more robust air and marine infrastructure on the ground. This will better enable Canada to implement its commitments at the Arctic Council, including the 2011 treaty on search and rescue.

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The Arctic Council chairmanship is an opportunity for Canada to stand up as an Arctic nation, to showcase our people and our communities, and to take meaningful action to tackle our challenges."

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Media contact:

Emily Woods Press Secretary Office of the Premier 867-975-5059 <u>ewoods@gov.nu.ca</u> www.premier.gov.nu.ca