

ROVANIEMI ARCTIC SPIRIT CONFERENCE

Rovaniemi, Finland, 14-16 November, 2017

The [Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit Conference](#) focused in combining [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG's) and the Arctic. The main objective of the conference was to bring the Sustainable Development Goals closer to Arctic science, policy and economic development.

The Conference was organized by [the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland](#) together with [the City of Rovaniemi](#).



Conference was planned in close cooperation with the current Finnish Arctic Council chair taking into account the [Finnish Chairmanship program](#) for the Arctic Council:

“The goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, are global in scope and apply also in the Arctic. Sustainable development is at the core of the Arctic Council mandate. Accordingly, Finland proposes to explore how the Agenda 2030 framework can be used in Arctic cooperation for the benefit of humans and nature.”

The Arctic Spirit Conference dwelled deeper into themes not too often discussed in Arctic events. The Conference used a method of moderated panel discussions. This way it was possible to focus on UN SDG's and the Arctic from many very different perspectives.

The event took place only a few weeks before Finland celebrated its 100 years of independence and it was part of the Finland 100 centenary programme. The Conference gathered about 350 participants, Finnish and international. All Arctic countries, a number of other countries and Arctic Indigenous Peoples were represented in the Conference. Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), represented the United Nations.

A complete list of [speakers](#) and [program](#) are available in the conference website as well as [video and audio recordings](#) of all sessions.

SDG'S AND THE ARCTIC – HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

The Conference started by connecting the **SDG's and the Arctic** by high-level speeches and panels on the role of economic development and the role of Arctic science.

"Today, sustainable development is not just wishful thinking. It is a survival strategy for us all"

Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

"I hope that with the sustainable development goals we will achieve equality and recognition for indigenous peoples. When in the Arctic, do nothing to us without us"

Tiina Sanila-Aikio, The president of the Sámi Parliament in Finland

"Nobody is able to achieve any of the sustainable development goals alone"

Liisa Rohweder, General Secretary of WWF Finland

"It is crucial to ensure that science serves communities. In the context of the Arctic, the Western science and traditional knowledge are equally valuable, different ways of knowing."

Panelists in the session Contributions and needs of Arctic science

A panel of active young Arctic people wrapped this up.

"Each of us make decisions about the future of the Arctic and the Earth every day.-- If you want to change the world, go and do it!"

Sunna Kokkonen, Former Chair of Barents Regional Youth Council

"If you want young people to stay in the Arctic, you have to provide them with the conditions that will make them want to stay"

Lars-Otto Reiersen, former Executive Secretary of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

The summaries and complete videos of panel discussions:

- [Opening, Ambassador panel: Striving for a sustainable Arctic videos](#)
- [Economy, Science, Youth: Sustainable Development Goals in the Arctic region videos](#)

PEOPLE IN THE ARCTIC – HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

The second day focused on **People in the Arctic** by themes such as Arctic identity, indigenous peoples and the media, the role of Arctic cities, well-being among young people, different modes of land use, bio-economy and education. The need of innovative approaches in combining the economic, environmental and social aspects of life and development in the Arctic came up repeatedly during the talks.

“Arctic cities are among the key players in achieving sustainable development goals. We are the ones that make practical decisions every day how the cities develop, how the energy is shaped and how the infrastructure is built”

Esko Lotvonen, Mayor of the City of Rovaniemi

“Urbanisation affects the indigenous youth. It is difficult to connect to the language and culture if you have to live far away from your land.”

Kyla Kakfwi Scott, Senior Advisor at Government of the Northwest Territories

“There are many advantages to living in the Arctic. We often present a very gloomy picture, but in fact life satisfaction is higher in the North. That is a strong fact that we should remember.”

Lydia Heikkilä, Researcher at the University of Lapland

“Bioeconomy in the Arctic relies on the cooperation on both national and international level between various stakeholders, including governments, private sector and academia.”

Ivonne Higuero, Director at the Forests, Land and Housing Division of UNECE

“Local and regional media serve an important purpose for the people in the Arctic. In order to get good stories where facts are right, journalists should know the people and the life.”

Panelists of the Arctic media session

The summaries of panel discussions:

- [Well-being of the future generations **Audio**](#)
- [Sustainable modes of land use from the user's perspective **Video**](#)
- [How to ensure a responsible use of natural resources in the Arctic? **Video**](#)
- [Local knowledge the strength of Arctic media **Audio**](#)
- [Regional cooperation and Arctic cities **Video**](#)
- [Quality education can foster diversity **Audio**](#)

THE HISTORY AND THE FUTURE

The Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit Conference was the third event in biannual series of Arctic conferences in Rovaniemi, previously under the name “In the Spirit of the Rovaniemi Process”. The so-called *Rovaniemi process* with the first Arctic ministerial meeting in 1991 formed much of the structures of the current Arctic Council. The Rovaniemi Conference series builds on that tradition. The concept of the conferences has developed from a mainly scientific event into a discussion forum for a limited number of participants focusing on a selected theme.

The aim of Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit conference series is to develop into main regular international Arctic event in Finland. **The next Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit Conference will take place on fall 2019.** The main theme is still open but it may continue focusing on sustainable development of the Arctic. By that time Finland will hold the Presidency of the European Union which may also affect the conference contents.



FURTHER INFORMATION

www.rovaniemiarticspirit.fi

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For updates about Finland as an Arctic country please check www.arcticfinland.fi/EN