The Arctic Circle Assembly has been the largest international forum for discussion on Arctic affairs since its inauguration in 2013. Attendees of the conference regularly include heads of state, business leaders, university students and officials, Indigenous leadership, and environmental organizations. Over 200 sessions took place at the 2022 annual Assembly this October to address the wide range of Arctic issues.

Eight countries have territory in the Arctic Circle: Canada, Russia, the U.S., Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden. These eight countries alongside six Indigenous organizations make up the Arctic Council, the formal governing body of the Arctic region. Founded in 1996, the Arctic Council focuses on advancing unity among member states and all inhabitants of the Arctic.

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Arctic member states have largely shifted their focus to maintaining regional cooperation, peace, and security. Other issues that continue to be at the forefront of Arctic affairs include food insecurity among Indigenous communities, effects of global warming like melting permafrost and coastal erosion, infrastructure development in cold climates, and environmental conservation.

Deliberation within the Arctic Council is currently going forward without Russia. Russia has been Chairman of the Council since 2021 and will continue in this role until it is passed on to Norway in May 2023. Current work is focused on socioeconomic development, environmental protection, and sustainable development. Member states are also closely monitoring worsening impacts on permafrost and coastlines within their borders.

"While the future of the circumpolar region remains bright, it also continues to face many challenges, some old and some new. And it will take all of us to ensure we remain on the right path for the benefit of northern Indigenous peoples and everyone who calls the Arctic home."

– Mary Simon, 2022 Arctic Circle Assembly

SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

H.E. Múte B. Egede
Prime Minister of Greenland
Voiced the importance of Indigenous voices in Arctic policymaking and addressed Greenland’s plans for sustainable infrastructure development to meet tourism projections.

H.R.H. Haakon
Crown Prince of Norway
Communicated the need to continue regional cooperation in the Arctic despite current geopolitical tensions so that scientific progress can further evolve.

H.E. Katrín Jakobsdóttir
Prime Minister of Iceland
Expressed urgency for addressing escalating climate change ramifications including extreme storms, receding glaciers, and record heat levels.

H.E. Alar Karis
President of the Republic of Estonia
Highlighted Estonian scientists’ work on climate change and emphasized the need for the Arctic to shift toward sustainable and renewable methods of energy.

H.E. Rt Hon. Mary Simon
Governor General of Canada

QUICK FACTS

When was it?
October 13-16, 2022

Where was it?
Reykjavík, Iceland

How many people attended?
More than 2,000 attendees from over 60 countries