

## СОХРАНЕНИЕ КУЛЬТУРНОЙ И ПРИРОДНОЙ СРЕДЫ АРКТИКИ PROTECTING CULTURAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE ARCTIC

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### International environmental cooperation in the Arctic



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**Abstract.** Key challenges and threats to the Arctic environment are associated with progressive pollution and degradation of environmental components in the face of increasing anthropogenic load, the accumulation of waste, climate change and others. International cooperation in the field of environmental safety, unprecedented speed and energy cooperation in the Arctic can serve as a positive example and a lesson for humanity. An important role in environmental cooperation play an international environmental organization, the Arctic Council, states. On the contrary cooperation affects contradictory trends determining the current state of international relations. It is concluded that joint efforts need to create a system of global interaction, which, taking into account the interests of all parties, would be enabled to make rational use of natural resources in the Arctic.

**Keywords:** *Arctic, environment, international cooperation*

The load of civilization on the environment has been growing over the past century and it has now reached the maximum values. Many countries plan the development and use natural re-

sources for the growth of production. Many industrial developed countries have largely exhausted their resource potential. In this situation, the Arctic is seen as a strategical reserve for the future development by many countries taking active steps to expand the research, economic and even military presence in the region. The Arctic is, to a greater extent than other regions, a subject to the human impact. It is one of the most fragile ecosystems on the planet. Environmental problems in the Arctic are likely to grow out of the regional to the global because of its natural and geographical features.

### ***Key challenges and threats to the Arctic environment***

Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, related to the Arctic region, are: climate warming, the possibility of development of hydrocarbon reserves under the ice and bio-resources of the northern seas. Violation of sustainable climate leads to the abnormal growth of meteorological phenomena, instability and global climate change, disturbance of the solar spectrum, desertification, displacement of the geographical zones and the spread of dangerous diseases. The natural mechanism of the stable environment is disturbed. As it is noted in the subprogram "Development and use of the Arctic" of the federal target program "World Ocean", climate change will have serious economic, social and environmental consequences. Particularly serious economic consequences may cause a violation of the stability of transport (gas and oil pipelines, roads) and social infrastructure (housing and other social facilities)<sup>1</sup>.

One of the manifestations of climate change in the Arctic is the reduction of the ice cover in the Arctic Ocean. The flow of warm air from lower latitudes led to an increase of the surface air temperature. At the same time, there is a decrease in ice area and its thickness in the Arctic. On the other hand, a decrease in the ice cover of the Arctic Ocean may facilitate access to the resources of the continental shelf and to make the use of the Northern Sea route for transcontinental traffic real. Norwegian researchers observed the Arctic climate and noticed that the melting of glaciers continues even in times of very low temperature. Earlier the Arctic ocean area has always covered with ice, regardless of the season. Now the ice, that previously covered the ocean all the year round, begins to melt in the summer.

The complexity of climate change issues is determined by the uncertainty in the assessment of ongoing and projected climate changes. The Climate doctrine of the Russian Federation stated that in spite of the extensive and convincing scientific data about current and projected climate change, there was a considerable uncertainty in the estimates of how climate change

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<sup>1</sup> Podprogramma «Osvoenie i ispolzovanie Arktiki» federalnoj celevoj programmy «Mirovoj Okean» / Prinyata postanovleniem Pravitelstva RF ot 10.08.1998. URL: [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_99342](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_99342) (дата обращения: 14.01.2016)

would occur and how it would impact the environmental systems, economic and political activity, as well as social processes in different states and regions. The Russian Federation proceeds from the need for action in terms of non-certainty estimates of the future climate changes and their consequences, and is ready to meaningful participation in relevant international initiatives<sup>2</sup>. The Arctic is characterized by high vulnerability of the environment to human impact and slow speed of recovery of damaged natural objects (natural ecosystems, landscapes). This leads to the accumulation of industrial waste and reduced tundra pastures, so important for the traditional resource use of the indigenous peoples.

Western partners largely lay responsibility on Russian companies for the pollution in the Arctic, because our territory has serious sources of pollution: mining and metallurgy, pulp and paper mills, oil and gas industry, nuclear industry, Northern fleet and fishing vessels, as well as wastewater discharge. At the same time, a significant contribution to pollution in AZRF is made by the sources outside Russia. Among them: nuclear fuel recycling enterprises in Europe, industry in North America, Western and Central Europe, Central and Southeast Asia. Due to the circulation of air masses in the Arctic pollutants, gas and aerosol impurities accumulate in the atmosphere.

State interests of the Russian Federation in the field of nuclear and radiation safety are determined by the need to preserve public health, the prevention of pollution of the environment, particularly the political and economic significance of the use of atomic energy. An important element of effective work in this area is international cooperation, which is actively developing on the basis of bilateral and multilateral agreements. Together with the United States, Norway and the United Kingdom has implemented a number of projects on environmental issues in the Arctic (AMEC), aimed at radio ecological safety while handling radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel generated at the nuclear submarine dismantlement. The European Union had TACIS technical assistance program aimed at improving the safety of nuclear power plants and other civilian nuclear facilities. Effective arrangements for international cooperation activities were carried out within the framework of the IAEA. The initiative of the US-Russia-IAEA led to the International Conference on Security of Radioactive Sources, approved by the Code on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Klimaticheskaya doktrina Rossijskoj Federacii. Utverzhdena postanovleniem Pravitelstva RF ot 17.12.2009 URL: <http://meteoinfo.ru/climatedoctrine> (Accessed: 14 January 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Doklad «O razvitanii mezhdunarodnogo sotrudnichestva v oblasti yadernoj i radiacionnoj bezopasnosti». Zasedanie prezidiuma Gosudarstvennogo soveta Rossijskoj Federacii. 16 dekabrya 2004 goda. URL: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears2/2004/12/16/97005.shtml> (Accessed: 14 January 2016).

As for the level of pollution of the Arctic seas, it is lower compared to the other seas. However, the accumulation of certain pollutants in the particular locations and populations of living organisms lead to their inclusion into the food of the locals, and their concentration is often higher than in food products outside the Arctic.

Russia plays a crucial role in the political processes related to the Arctic region, as it has the largest territory and long coastline. Any serious technological disaster there will cause the most adverse consequences, specifically for Russia. The main ecological challenges and threats in the AZRF:

- a) progressive pollution and degradation of environment in case of increasing anthropogenic load, the accumulation of waste and transboundary pollution;
- b) the high risks and costs in the development of natural resources, including the transport operations in extreme climatic conditions;
- c) a high degree of fixed assets' run out;
- d) global climate change and its impact on the spread of the permafrost, the development of dangerous hydro-meteorological, ice and other natural processes, increased risk of damage because of these processes or technogenic accidents.

The complexity of the Arctic resource exploration, led to understanding that to solve the existing challenges in the region and to implement the national interests in the Arctic is easier together. The reality is the fact that none of the Arctic countries alone will not be able to carry out a large project. At the same time the problems of the environment and ecological safety are the priority for any project in the region.

#### ***International cooperation in the field of environmental safety***

Against the background of local conflicts and confrontation in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, the unprecedented speed and energy of co-operation in the Arctic these years could be a positive example and a lesson for humanity. Arctic regions today have become a lab of international cooperation. Even in case of temporary tension in international relations, cooperation is continued on many levels [1, p. 8]. The system of international cooperation in the field of ecological safety of the Arctic started in the early 1970s. At the same time, according to some experts, it has not yet fully formed.

Questions of international cooperation and legal regulation of environmental security in the Arctic is governed by a number of agreements, mainly by the general environmental requirements. Here are some of them: International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (1969), the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution (1972), the UN Declaration

of the Stockholm Conference on the Human environment (1972), the Convention on Transboundary Air Pollution (1979), the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (1973), International Convention for the Oil Pollution Response and Cooperation (1990), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) and etc. [2].

An important role in the international environmental cooperation in the Arctic is played by international environmental organizations, intergovernmental, non-governmental and financial institutions: the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), the International Independent Ecological and Political university (MNEPU), Arctic Monitoring Program and evaluation of environment for the protection of the Arctic flora and fauna, World Meteorological organization, the Working group on the protection of the Arctic marine environment, Greenpeace, Bellona, the World Wildlife Fund and others.

In order to solve the environmental problems of the region in 1991 the eight Arctic countries: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States adopted the Strategy for environmental protection of the Arctic (AEPS). In 1996 the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of these countries have signed the Ottawa Declaration and formed the Arctic Council, which aims at providing the sustainable development of the region. The Arctic Council is a key of international environmental cooperation in the Arctic.

The main goals and objectives of the Arctic Council: the environmental monitoring; obtaining accurate and sufficient information on the state of the Arctic environment; working out proposals and recommendations for the prevention and control of pollution for the Arctic states and observer countries. Arctic Council's work is carried out within the framework of the six working groups on various environmental aspects:

- a) Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)
- b) Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)
- c) Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)
- d) Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)
- e) Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)
- f) Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)

An important contribution to the development of international environmental cooperation, and specific projects is made by the Barents Council. The Council works with a number of environmental projects; prospective climate strategy of the region, aimed at softening the climate change and

adapting to it. Proclaimed aim of the Council is the strengthening of stability, trust and sustainable development of the region, bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of economy, trade, science and technology, environment, infrastructure, education and cultural exchanges, tourism, as well as projects aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples of the North. Most of the projects are focused on the Russian part of the Barents Region.

BEAR Working Group on Environment focuses on common problems: global climate change and its impact on the Barents region and specific measures for the modernization of water supply, wastewater treatment. The Council worked out the climate strategy of the Barents Region (discussed at the 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session of the Council), aimed at softening the climate change, adapting to it and the formation of the system of monitoring and modeling.

A special role in preserving the Arctic environment remains with the Arctic states. They come from a real opportunity to ensure the cooperation and constructive engagement of countries to overcome their differences. Arctic coastal states have declared their common responsibility for the situation in the waters and on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

In the adopted on 28 May 2008 in Greenland (Ilulissat) Declaration of the five Arctic coastal states it was discussed the fact that climate change and the melting of ice might have an impact on fragile ecosystems, way of life of local communities and indigenous peoples and the development of natural resources. By virtue of its sovereignty, rights and jurisdiction over large areas of the Arctic Ocean (AO), coastal states are in a unique position to respond to these opportunities and challenges. All five Arctic coastal states whose territories are close to the Arctic Ocean, outlined not only those marine areas under their sovereignty, but also the 200-mile exclusive economic zone, where they are enjoying their jurisdiction and sovereign natural resource rights, according to contemporary international law.

In his speech at the conference of the five Arctic coastal states (Ilulissat, Greenland, May 28, 2008) Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov pointed out that the countries with the access to the Arctic Ocean have a special responsibility to protect its waters and coasts from pollution and to ensure sustainable development in the region.

In 2015, in the Arctic agenda some results were achieved:

- a) the International Maritime Organization agreed on the basic provisions of international security code for ships navigating in polar waters ( "Polar Code");
- b) the text of amendments to the SOLAS Convention was agreed (SOLAS);
- c) amendments to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from ships (MARPOL) were adopted, a number of research projects is being implemented.

In 2015 the experts from Russia, the USA, Germany, South Korea, Great Britain, New Zealand and Poland were involved in expedition to study the changes in the atmosphere, the ice and the waters of the Arctic Ocean.

The statements made at the highest political level bring hope for further positive development of international environmental cooperation in the Arctic. On 30—31 of August 2015 in Anchorage at the International conference on the Arctic, the US President Barack Obama expressed the desire to continue cooperation with all Arctic countries through the Arctic Council, especially on the climate issues. He just said that the problems arising in the Arctic could not be solved alone, so we could solve them only together [3, p. 11—12].

US Secretary of State John Kerry, who became a chairman of the Arctic Council, identified environmental issues in the region, safety and economy for protection of the Arctic marine environment as Washington's priority. The US offer adoption of a program “Regional Seas” in the Arctic Ocean similar to the program in other countries around the world, as well as to increase the scope of research problems of the ocean acidification. In an effort to overcome the consequences of the climate change, Americans intend to intensify the Arctic Council actions against damping and soot and methane emissions in the Arctic and to maintain a regular dialogue between the key players, decision-makers on this issue [4].

US presidency program in the AC focuses on three areas:

- a) The first — the protection, security and strategic management in the Arctic.
- b) The second — the improvement of the economic sphere and living conditions.
- c) The third — adaptation to climate change impacts.

Considering the problems of international cooperation in the Arctic, it is impossible not to note the fact that they affect the content of the contradictory tendencies that determine the current state of the global situation. This is proved by the sanction against Russia, related to the events in Ukraine, a sharp drop in demand and a precipitous drop in oil prices, the war a terrorist organization ISIS in Syria.

The US State Department Special Representative for the Arctic, Admiral Robert Papp, recently said in an interview (January 2016), that a significant drop in energy prices “would reduce the intensity of emotions” in the Arctic. Even 10 years ago the United States were looking for oil resources, so companies such as Shell, Conoco Philips, British Petroleum, were presented in the Arctic. “We felt the need for additional energy resources. But now the US are the energy resource exporters and the Arctic resources were no longer needed. Companies no longer consider the work in the

Arctic as a good investment. Perhaps someday the situation would change, but in the next decade – hardly”<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, Washington does not experience any anxiety about Russia's actions in the Arctic, its a military exercises and new military bases and the US sees no destabilization in the Arctic that Russia starts there “the most massive military growth since the Cold war”. In the same interview Papp said that he examined the question, and Russia was responsible because it had a long coastline and northern sea routes through the Arctic. Now Russia is improving its bases and communications in the Arctic and it is attracting resources. This is a legitimate activity, because you need to have the supporting infrastructure in your own territorial waters. At the same time a retired American admiral fully justifies the military building up of NATO and its presence in the Arctic and points out that the United States and Russia have always kept open channels of communication. He believes that the Arctic Council is obliged to preserve the Arctic Region without conflict.

The preservation of the principled position of Russia on the international partnership in the Arctic was explained by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin at the Session of State Committee on the development of the Arctic in Sochi on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2015. He said that the range of interaction is wide: starting from common research and ending up with the specific projects. According to him: “In difficult international relations the Arctic is one of the few themes where a constructive dialogue with our foreign partners did not stop but continues to develop, including the dialog with the United States on the majority of areas of cooperation” [5].

Even in a deep crisis in relations between Russia and the West, the agenda and discussed issues in the Arctic format were constructive. So, in a few years of approvals and financial issues the financing tools of the Arctic Council projects started to work and the benefits from this activity gets Russia. Special groups were made to prepare the plan on prevention of oil spills and pollution, as well as for the implementation of the agreements on reduction of soot and methane emissions in the Arctic. Cooperation in the framework of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which involves the joint work of the security forces and law enforcement agencies on common problems in the Arctic.

### ***Conclusion***

Thus, the Arctic is a special, complex ecosystem and at the same time unique or, in terms of international relations, transnational environment. It includes many actors of the modern world: states, international organizations and international corporations. Russia should take part in all the positive initiatives aimed at sustainable development and international environmental cooperation

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<sup>4</sup> “SShA sami stali energoekspertyorom i resursy v Arktike teper ne nuzhny”. Specpredstavitel Gosdepartamenta po Arktike rasskazal o planax Vashingtona v Zapolyare. URL: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2890393> (Accessed: 15 January 2016).

in the Arctic and work in all institutions operating in the region. "Adherence to the balance between the ecosystem approach and commitment to the industrial development of the Arctic is possible and necessary. International cooperation offers the prospect not only for the organization of environmental research, but also for the development of green economy, economic and social development while respecting environmental requirements"[1, p. 61].

In the future, we need to work together to create a system of global interaction, taking into account the interests of all parties, enabled to make rational use of natural resources in the Arctic. The successful solution of the natural resource issues in the region, based on the principles of sustainable development, green economy will allow to preserve the fragile ecosystem of the Arctic, which is to become a guarantor of international security for many years.

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