



Visit to Svalbard 3 - 6 June 2013

Overview

The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region met on Svalbard, Norway, on 3-6 June. The agenda included economic development and capacity building in the North, report from the ministerial meeting in Kiruna on 15 May, and preparations for the next biennial conference, which will take place in Whitehorse, Canada, in September 2014. A total of 14 Members of Parliament from Norway, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Russia, Sweden, the Sami Parliamentary Council, the European Parliament and the West Nordic Council were present on Svalbard.

The meetings

The Chair, Mr Morten Høglund, briefed the committee on the outcome of the Kiruna meeting. Committee members expressed hope that outstanding issues between the EU and Canada would be solved so that the Union could be granted observer status. The Committee took note of the fact that Greenland had chosen to not participate in Kiruna and adopted a statement highlighting that the inclusive character of the Arctic Council should be continued. The Committee was hopeful that the negotiations between the



Ms Sara Olsvig, future Chair of SCPAR

Kingdom of Denmark and the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council will be successful for all parties. The committee members had an exchange of views on the Canadian Parliament's suggested topics for the conference in Whitehorse. It was felt that they address important issues and concerns in the Arctic. The Committee also discussed the first draft report on "Economic development and capacity building in the North", which is intended to be the Committee's input to the said conference. It was commented that it was a good point of departure, but that it should put more emphasis on building economic sustainability, the high cost of living, gender perspectives, the involvement of local populations in decision making for economic

development, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

New Chair of SCPAR

Ms Sara Olsvig (Denmark/Greenland) was elected new Chair and takes office after the next committee meeting, which will take place on 18-20 September in Murmansk, Russia. Ms Olsvig represents the party Inuit Ataqatigiit and is member of the Danish Parliament since September 2011. Ms Olsvig will function as Vice-Chair until the meeting in Murmansk, where a new Vice-Chair will be elected.

About Svalbard

In Longyearbyen the Deputy Governor informed the Committee about the Norwegian Government's administration of Svalbard. In Ny-Ålesund, the Committee was briefed on ongoing research on climatic and environmental issues. The Archipelago of Svalbard (total landmass of ca. 61.000 km²) is situated between 74 and 81 degrees north. The population is about 2600, where the vast majority lives in Longyearbyen. Ny-Ålesund on the western side of the island of Spitsbergen, is the world's northernmost permanent settlement. More than half of Svalbard is environmentally protected area.

About CPAR

The Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR) is a biennial conference for parliamentarians representing the eight Arctic countries and the European Parliament. The Arctic indigenous peoples are permanent participants. CPAR is an observer to the Arctic Council. The Standing Committee (SCPAR) is responsible for the work between the conferences.

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