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## Science Ministers from 25 Nations Hold Arctic Summit



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On September 28, the White House hosted the science ministers of 25 nations to discuss Arctic research priorities and sign a statement on international scientific collaboration in the far north.

The first-ever Arctic Science Ministerial included representation from Canada, China, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Greenland, Iceland, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, in addition to ministers from the EU and members of Arctic indigenous groups.

These nations' science ministries joined together to highlight the rapid rate of climate change in the far north and the importance of monitoring and research, both for informing policy and for helping local communities adapt.

The group noted that warming is happening much faster in the far north than it is elsewhere on the planet, making it an especially important part of the puzzle. "The temperature is increasing between 2 and 5 times as fast, depending on where in the Arctic you are," said physicist John Holdren, meeting chairman and the head of the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy, speaking to the Washington Post.

Further, "sea-ice extent, thickness, and volume are decreasing, resulting in larger ocean surface waves and greater coastal erosion, compounding the challenges of Indigenous communities that hunt ice-dependent marine mammals," the group said. Sea ice is at persistent, historic lows, and "there is also growing evidence that the diminishing sea ice is contributing to changing atmospheric circulation patterns" and possibly to certain kinds of extreme weather.

With sea level rise from melting ice sheets and changing weather patterns in lower latitudes, non-Arctic nations have an interest in Arctic research too, they said.

The group called for new investment in observation systems to monitor the changing Arctic, and used the ministerial as an occasion for several major announcements:

- A five-year program for an Integrated Arctic Observing System, budgeted at \$17 million, intended for development of sensor systems to float on ice floes. Norway will lead the EU initiative, and the U.S. Office of Naval Research will also contribute.
- Two new EU projects for weather and climate modelling / prediction, with a combined budget of \$17 million.
- A UK research effort on the marine ecosystem and the biogeochemical functioning of the Arctic Ocean.
- A community-based science initiative called EyesNorth, which will recruit local indigenous knowledge for understanding of the changing Arctic.

Indigenous groups were active participants in the meeting, and gave a separate presentation on their views the day before the main ceremonies.