

# RUSSIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP PRIORITIES

FOR THE ARCTIC COUNCIL 2021-2023



2021-2023

RESPONSIBLE  
GOVERNANCE  
FOR A SUSTAINABLE  
**ARCTIC**



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# RUSSIAN CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL 2021-2023

Russia builds its chairmanship of the Arctic Council on the principle of responsible governance for the sustainable development of the polar region. As a country that accounts for almost a third of the Arctic with a population of over 2.5 million people, Russia implements an integrated comprehensive development programme in the high latitudes and therefore prioritizes the balanced promotion of the region's sustainable development in the social, economic and environmental dimensions during its 2021-2023 Arctic Council Chairmanship.

Over the 25 years of its existence, the Arctic Council has become an influential forum for intergovernmental dialogue among the Arctic States and «the permanent participants» representing the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The Council member countries have a special responsibility for the fate of the region and its population, and have made sustained efforts to preserve it for future generations as an area of peace, stability and constructive cooperation.

Russia intends to prioritize work aimed at improving the well-being, health and quality of life of Arctic inhabitants, including Indigenous peoples, and at ensuring progressive social growth, based, above all, on sustainable economic development in the region. The increasing positive potential of the Arctic must be used to ensure prosperity and progress for all polar residents and to promote scientific, educational and cultural exchanges, tourism, and people-to-people contacts.

It is important to talk not only about the Arctic's vulnerability to climate change, but also about the region's prospective contribution – through its natural, energy and transport resources – to the energy transition to a climate-neutral economy and thus to meeting the goals and targets of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

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# THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF THE RUSSIAN CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

envisages the promotion of multilateral cooperation in four priority areas:



1. Arctic people, including Indigenous peoples of the North;



2. Environmental protection, including climate change;



3. Socio-economic development in the region;



4. Strengthening the Arctic Council.

Global climate change is noticeable in the Arctic region, which is warming two to three times faster than the global average. In this context, the challenges of coping with climate change, adaptation and resilience, maintaining healthy Arctic ecosystems, conserving biodiversity in the Arctic and sound management of natural resources are of paramount importance. Particular attention in this regard should be paid to environmental risk management in the context of the future development of the polar region.

The Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council will be under the motto Responsible Governance for a Sustainable Arctic. Our intention is to promote collective action in sustainable development issues of the Arctic region, to enhance synergies with other regional platforms, as well as to implement the Council's strategic vision.

More than 100 international Arctic events, divided into 11 thematic clusters, are planned within the framework, and under the auspices, of the Russian Chairmanship in a hybrid face-to-face and online format.

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# 1. ARCTIC PEOPLE, INCLUDING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE NORTH

## THEMATIC CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN THE ARCTIC

The sustainable development of the entire Arctic region is largely determined by conditions for improving the well-being and quality of life of the Arctic inhabitants, including Indigenous peoples.

In this context, we consider it necessary to promote a modern urban environment in Arctic cities, increasing the availability of quality education, improving the healthcare system, including through the widespread use of mobile and satellite telecommunications, and improving the medical infrastructure.

These measures, together with disease prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, should significantly improve the health of the Arctic population. In this regard, Russia has introduced the Biosecurity in the Arctic project in the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group.

There is a need to introduce advanced technologies that are critical to the development of the Arctic, including in the fields of economic activities, transport and healthcare. Investing in human capital formation in the Arctic takes on particular importance in the context of the pandemic of a new coronavirus infection.

The Russian Chairmanship has planned conferences and seminars on health preservation in the Arctic, access to education, attracting human resources and ensuring a comfortable urban environment, as well as the annual scientific and practical conference the Northern Sustainable Development Forum.

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## THEMATIC CLUSTER INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE ARCTIC

We will pay close attention to the problems of the Indigenous peoples of the North maintaining their traditional way of life in modern conditions of market economy, and of preserving their ethnic identity and cultural and historical heritage. For our State, which is home to 47 Indigenous peoples, providing support to them has always been one of the main tasks in the Arctic.

Russia intends to promote projects and initiatives in the field of digitalization of remote Arctic settlements and reindeer herding groups by improving the reliability and efficiency of satellite navigation systems in the Arctic.

It is necessary to expand research on the features of and threats to public health and quality of life. With regard to preservation of cultural heritage, we intend to promote, with the support of the Arctic Council, the implementation of the project to digitize the cultural and linguistic heritage of northerners, aimed also at supporting efforts to preserve Indigenous languages in accordance with the goals and objectives of the 2022-2032 UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

We intend to contribute to strengthening ties between the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic through relevant international fora and conferences.

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## THEMATIC CLUSTER ARCTIC YOUTH

We will promote the potential of Arctic youth, their access to education, and the expansion and strengthening of international youth exchanges across borders in a wide range of areas, including volunteering, entrepreneurship, the development of creative industries, environmental and urban upgrading.

Access to education in remote areas is a key to ensuring sustainable development and improving the quality and standards of living of the Arctic inhabitants. The training of professionals with the use of the potential of the University of the Arctic needs to be strengthened. Mother-tongue teaching should have an important place in education, as well as digitalization to allow for the development of distance learning, and the implementation of Learning through Research (Floating University) programmes.

Russia supports the Arctic Council's education projects for Indigenous children «Children of the Arctic», «Nomadic School», «International Arctic School» and others, advocating international cooperation and exchange of experience in this field.

In order to provide the Arctic region with young professionals, it is important to identify the life strategies of today's youth in the Arctic and create suitable conditions for their professional and social fulfilment. The Chairmanship supports the creation and implementation of special programmes, professional championships and trainings focusing on the northern regions of our country.

Russia plans to host the International Youth Model of the Arctic Council in 2022.

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# 2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE

## THEMATIC CLUSTER CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGY OF THE ARCTIC

Russia will pay particular attention to the implementation of coordinated measures to protect, preserve and restore the Arctic environment, study the climate, strengthen environmental security, including the prevention of environmental emergencies, and sound management of natural resources of the Arctic region for the environmental and socio-economic well-being of present and future generations of people living in the region. Russia is planning to hold a ministerial meeting on environmental protection.

We consider it advisable to intensify the efforts of the Arctic Council member countries carried out within the Council's working groups on the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme and the Arctic Contaminants Action Programme, aimed at preventing and reducing anthropogenic pollution in the Arctic, including identification and the elimination of environmental hot spots in the Arctic region. In this regard, cooperation between the relevant working structures of the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council should be enhanced.

It is important to deepen cooperation in the field of hydrometeorology to ensure safety of navigation and aviation in the Arctic region, to improve forecasting of natural phenomena, to develop more accurate climate change scenarios and to manage risks associated with natural phenomena and climate change. We intend to hold the Arctic Meteorological Summit during our Chairmanship.

Our focus will be on preserving and restoring the diversity of Arctic flora and fauna, and protecting biodiversity and habitats. We will welcome increased cooperation on the conservation of migratory animals within their range, intensification of efforts to implement the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative within the framework of the AC Working Group on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna. Russia is planning to hold the Third Biodiversity Congress.







The Chairmanship will pay due attention to the protection of the Arctic marine environment and the continuation of efforts to eliminate sites of accumulated environmental damage in the region. Russia considers it important to study the state of the environment and ecosystems of the Arctic Ocean and Arctic seas. Issues of bioremediation of the Arctic coast, assessment of the possibility of using non-mechanical methods, including biotechnologies, for oil spill response become especially relevant in connection with the increase in oil and gas production, as well as the density of shipping traffic along the Northern Sea Route. We plan to hold a special event on climate change and permafrost melt, as well as the Conference on Bioremediation of the Arctic Coast.

Through the implementation of environmental projects, we intend to contribute to preserving the traditional way of life of Arctic Indigenous people, including by more active use of the potential of large businesses operating in the regions.

The Chairmanship will contribute to efforts aimed at ensuring regional support for collective actions to implement the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We look forward to working closely with our partners in the Council within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship of the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane.

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## THEMATIC CLUSTER PREVENTION OF EMERGENCIES

An important task for the Arctic region is to develop cooperation in the field of emergency prevention and response in the Arctic. We intend to strengthen it in identifying and analyzing the risks of natural and man-made emergencies, developing ways to prevent them, and improving measures to protect the population and territories from emergencies and fires.

We consider the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic to be an important instrument of international cooperation.

Expanding economic activity and further development of maritime and aviation transport in the Arctic require strengthening search and rescue capacities and effective implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic. We consider the work of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which is an important platform for dialogue, consultations, communication and cooperation between its member countries, to be useful.

Over the next two years, a whole range of events will take place on preventing emergencies in the region, including exercises involving the relevant services of the Arctic Council Member States.

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The focus lies on energy security in the region, developing innovation and a smart economy, and improving the conditions for increased investment, entrepreneurship and business financing. In this regard, Russia has submitted to the Arctic Council a project on sustainable financing in the Arctic.

# 3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

## THEMATIC CLUSTER ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Russia stresses the importance of responsible economic cooperation, as well as striking a balance between economic growth in the polar region and minimizing the negative impact on the environment. We plan to promote the introduction of advanced environmentally friendly technologies in the Arctic region's transport sector, industry, housing, energy, including the increased use of renewable energy sources to improve the living standards of the Arctic population. This will be the goal of Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group.

The focus lies on energy security in the region, developing innovation and a smart economy, and improving the conditions for increased investment, entrepreneurship and business financing. In this regard, Russia has submitted to the Arctic Council a project on sustainable financing in the Arctic.

We support strengthening further interaction between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council, contacts between representatives of the business community and links among the chambers of commerce and industry of the Arctic regions. We intend to promote the development of geospatial information exchanges for sustainable socio-economic development, including in the framework of Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure project.

At present, the socio-economic dimension of Arctic cooperation in the Arctic Council is evidently inferior to the environmental dimension. We intend to take steps to form a more balanced contribution of the Council to addressing the challenges of sustainable development in the Arctic.

Within the framework of the Chairmanship, we will hold a number of conferences and seminars on sustainable economic development in the Arctic, including in close cooperation with the Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Economic Council.

# THEMATIC CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABLE SHIPPING

Among the priorities of the Russian Chairmanship is the development of safe shipping in the Arctic, including the Northern Sea Route. It is important to make shipping routes in the high latitudes safe as well as environmentally and economically efficient. To this end, Russia has submitted to the Arctic Council a project on sustainable Arctic shipping.

We support cooperation in training highly qualified maritime personnel to work in the Arctic and developing unified educational standards in this field, as well as ensuring the preparedness of emergency and rescue services and units, and developing communication and navigation facilities.

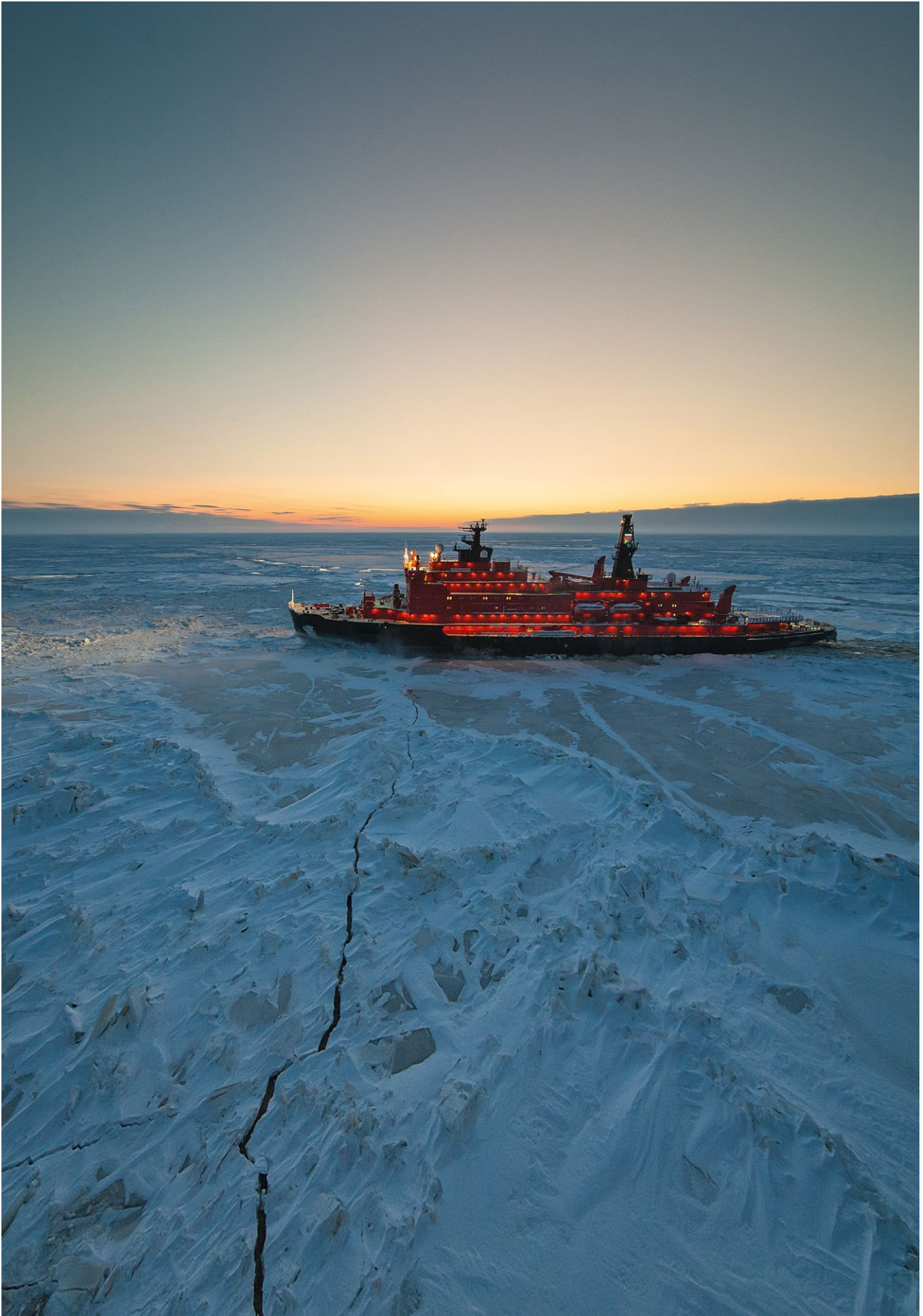
A significant impetus to the economic development of the Arctic region can come from expanding the maritime economy, strengthening it and making efforts to build high-quality and efficient port infrastructure in order to plan land and maritime development and the scientific development of water resources.

We attach great importance to digitalization in the Arctic environment, which not only raises the living standards of people living in difficult climatic conditions far from the cultural and economic centres of their States, but also significantly increases their security.

Conferences will be held on the development of telecommunications and digitalization in the Arctic, green energy, transport infrastructure and sustainable navigation, as well as the development of small aviation. We look forward to working closely with our partners in the framework of the Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum.

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## THEMATIC CLUSTER ARCTIC TOURISM

Within the framework of its Chairmanship, Russia intends to pay particular attention to the development of sustainable tourism in the Arctic. Based on sustainable principles, tourism helps to preserve and enhance cultural and natural heritage, contributes to socio-economic development of the regions, addresses employment issues and supports the development of small businesses.

The exchange of experiences and best practices among the countries and their regions in the development of sustainable tourism as an important field of economic activity in the Arctic should be supported. Clearly, the development of this industry will contribute to maintaining the vitality of the economy and making the Arctic more attractive.

We make preparations to host the Accessible Arctic Forum, the Sustainable Cruise Tourism Conference, the Arctic Crafts Exhibition and the Bering Strait Festival.

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## THEMATIC CLUSTER CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Large-scale socio-cultural events can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life of Indigenous peoples, help to preserve and promote their traditional way of life, traditional economic activities, culture and Indigenous languages. Supporting actions are needed to encourage children living in remote communities to visit cultural institutions and to organize tours of creative teams and travelling exhibitions.

The development of sports and physical culture in the Arctic region, particularly reindeer sledding races, rowing, the Spartakiad of the Peoples of the North and other major sporting events, deserves increased attention. Within the framework of our Chairmanship, we intend to promote the necessary conditions to increase the proportion of the Arctic inhabitants involved in physical culture and sports, and to increase the provision of sporting facilities.

A rich cultural and sporting programme has been prepared. We intend to support the Arctic Council's project activities aimed at developing the cultural and sporting dimension in the high latitudes.

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# 4. STRENGTHENING THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

## THEMATIC CLUSTER INTERNATIONAL ARCTIC COOPERATION

The Russian Chairmanship will seek to secure continuity of the policies pursued by the previous Arctic Council Chairmanships in the spirit of maintaining peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic, and to ensure responsible governance for the sustainable development of the Arctic region.

An efficient Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which implies ensuring its coherent work and asserting collective principles in the sustainable development of the region, will contribute to strengthening the Council, increasing its effectiveness and consolidating it as a key format of international Arctic cooperation.

The Russian Chairmanship will pay particular attention to promoting the strategic dimension of the Arctic Council's activities.

Russia also intends to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the working and expert groups, as well as the Secretariat of the Arctic Council, developing mechanisms for financing the Council's activities, including its projects and programmes, and implementing its decisions and recommendations.

The Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council intends to promote greater synergies with other regional platforms, such as the Arctic Economic Council, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, the University of the Arctic, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Northern Dimension, and cross-border and transboundary cooperation programmes.

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## THEMATIC CLUSTER INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

We aim to improve the efficiency of scientific activities and practical applicability of their results in the Arctic. We will strive to streamline the use of scientific infrastructure and promote the use of new technologies and best practices in the implementation of joint projects.

We attach particular importance to the implementation of the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation. We plan to hold a meeting of science ministers of the Arctic Council member countries.

We support comprehensive Arctic research programmes, establishment of a support mechanism for multilateral research initiatives (the ArcticNet project) to strengthen scientific and technological cooperation in various fields.

It is important to increase participation in the process of formation and analysis of global and national environmental databases of large data arrays, and the use of remote data collection methods to decipher local processes in the Arctic and the global FLUXNET network of observations of the fluxes of biosphere-atmosphere exchange.

With a view to developing collective approaches and principles for long-term coordinated programmes of fundamental and applied research in the Arctic, we intend to hold a number of relevant scientific and practical conferences. In addition, we aim to promote the project introduced by Russia to build the year round "Snowflake" International Arctic Station powered by hydrogen energy to refine, test and popularize solutions related to nature saving life-supporting technologies.

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DURING ITS CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL, RUSSIA AIMS AT CLOSER COOPERATION ON IMPLEMENTING SHARED GOALS WITH ALL ARCTIC COUNCIL MEMBER-STATES, PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS, OBSERVERS, AS WELL AS OTHER INTERESTED PARTNERS.



Detailed information about events, venues and contact details of the organizers can be found on the website of the chairmanship <https://arctic-council-russia.ru/>



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