Bijlage 1: Nederlandse inbreng voor EU-consultatie (‘feedback’) hernieuwde EU Arctische Strategie.

Compared to the previous EU Arctic Strategy, the situation in the Arctic and beyond has changed significantly. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, its military capabilities in the High North, as well as the growing interest in the Arctic and its resources from a number of countries including China, underline the urgency of increasing NATO’s deterrence and defence in the Arctic. The effects of climate change may further intensify geostrategic competition. While the Arctic states are on the frontline of these developments and remain in the driver’s seat, the consequences also affect the security and interests of the EU and its Member States.

Security

The renewed strategy should recognise that Arctic security is both a European and a Transatlantic effort where the EU, UK, Norway, Iceland and Canada and the US have shared interests. EU action should be supportive and complementary to the efforts taken by NATO Allies, including initiatives such as Arctic Sentry. There are three areas the EU should focus on particularly: 1) Protecting critical infrastructure from hybrid attacks (including subsea infrastructure), 2) Cyber resilience and secure communication, and 3) Reliable space capabilities for ensuring security in the Arctic and beyond.

Maritime transport

The opening up of Arctic sea routes could be an opportunity for the European maritime sector (including ports), but as interest in the region grows, it may also enhance geopolitical tension and security threats. The Arctic routes come with environmental, safety, and logistic challenges. The EU should continue efforts to lower the footprint of maritime transport, while also assessing future potential of the Arctic routes for European maritime and trade interests.

Critical Raw Materials

The EU should support initiatives to increase cooperation and CRM-partnerships with allied Arctic states, and explore ways to make investing in sustainable resource extraction in the Arctic more attractive. The EU should continue to promote sustainable solutions and focus on its cooperation with Arctic allies that are dedicated to limiting environmental impacts of exploitation and processing and setting high standards in this regard. In line with the CRMA, CRM projects should also ensure comprehensive and equitable consultation of indigenous peoples that may be affected.

Energy

The EU should continue its focus on developing the Arctic’s renewable energy potential to contribute to climate goals. Increased cooperation with likeminded Arctic allies for the EU’s energy supply is crucial.

Climate, Biodiversity, Environment

The EU should continue efforts towards making the Arctic more resilient to effects of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The EU should work within international legal frameworks and bodies to take measures to protect and preserve the environment, such as the designation of marine protected areas (MPAs) and support the conservation and sustainable use of Arctic marine living resources, including fish stocks. Further reduction of human pressures responsible for pollution - such as underwater noise, oil spills, contaminants, and marine litter - is also needed. More knowledge on climate tipping points, including the interactions between climatic change in the Arctic and slowdown of the AMOC, is crucial, since uncertainty about this hampers prevention or response.

Research

EU can add a European dimension to international collaborative science by using the next Horizon Europe 2028-2034 as a facilitator to bring together national polar programmes in consortia to conduct scientific activities, share logistics and infrastructures, and strengthen the European (and national) knowledge position with the latest data, including earth and ocean observation. There are existing organisational structures that could be built upon and strengthened, like EPCO.