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On the Outcomes and Lessons of Russia's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2021–2023)

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Abstract. The article summarizes the results of Russia's chairmanship in the Arctic Council (AC, Council) in 2021–2023, analyzes the relationship with the state national and international policy, and systematizes the key results. The authors identify four main periods of Russian chairmanship. The article presents general logical, theoretical, and empirical research methods. It is noted that due to the boycott of a number of Western countries because of the events in Ukraine, the Russian Federation focused its efforts in the Arctic direction on the northern territories of the country and was able to achieve certain successes. Russia has carried out most of the planned activities related to economic and social development, climate change, ecology, human capital, indigenous peoples' activities, tourism, and prevention of emergency situations in the Arctic. The "Arctic Youth" direction well represented, and a large number of projects for youth events and career guidance were launched. The conclusion is made: during the 2-year period the government paid special attention to improving the functioning of the Northern Sea Route, socio-economic development of the Arctic regions of the Russian Federation, but due to the geopolitical situation Russia failed to fully realize its plans. The authors note that the course of the chairmanship was internally incomplete, especially during the recent periods. The remote transfer of the chairmanship of the Arctic Council to Norway raises many questions. It is hoped that the full status and composition of the AC will be restored. Russia still proceeds from the fact that the pressing problems of the Arctic region can be solved only through balanced and mutually beneficial international co-operation.

Keywords: *Russian Arctic, Arctic Council, Russian Chairmanship 2021–2023, sustainable development, sanctions, geopolitical instability, international cooperation*

Introduction

On May 20, 2021, the chairmanship of the Council passed from Reykjavik to Moscow. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, G. T. Thordarson, handed over the chairmanship of the AC for the next two-year period to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, S. V. Lavrov. Iceland's chairmanship was not easy due to COVID-19, a number of events had to be canceled or postponed, but despite the difficulties, the pandemic opened up opportunities for new ways of cooperation within the AC [1, Zhuravel V.P.].

Taking into account the above factors, the Russian chairmanship had a number of significant features:

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- it started in the year of the 25th anniversary of the AC (September 19, 2021), which imposed special responsibility for its results;
- Russia had high hopes for it in order to consolidate its leading role in the Arctic, including in further solving of the task of increasing the effectiveness of international Arctic cooperation;
- implementation of the chairmanship program should have become an important factor in reducing the conflict potential in the world, primarily in Europe.

Russia's chairmanship of the AC, in our opinion, covers four periods of varying degrees of effectiveness:

- preparatory stage (November 2020–May 2021), which was the most meaningful and systematic;
- beginning of the chairmanship (May 2021–March 2022);
- chairmanship under sanctions and boycott of the Russian chairmanship (March 2022–April 2023);
- final stage, search for the most acceptable form of ending the chairmanship (April–May 2023).

The periods are closely related to each other, but have different levels of efficiency.

Conception of the Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council and its boycott

Speaking about Russia's chairmanship in the Arctic Council, it should be noted that the Organizational Committee for the preparation and provision of the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2021–2023 was formed in advance by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 25 November 2020, its Statute was approved, and the Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation and Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Far Eastern Federal District, Yuri Trutnev, was appointed as its Chairman¹. The composition of the Organizational Committee was formed and approved a month later, topical issues of the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the AC were widely discussed in a departmental format. Simultaneously, representatives of the scientific community tried to define the content of the chairmanship in their publications [2, Krasnopolskiy B.Kh.; 3, Krivorotov A.K.; 4, Korchunov N.V.; 5, Tishkov A.A.].

In addition to the adopted program, on April 30, 2021, the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation M.V. Mishustin approved the plan for its main activities, which included

¹ Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 25.11.2020 g. № 740 «Ob Organizatsionnom komitete po podgotovke i obespecheniyu predsedatel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii v Arkticheskom sovete v 2021-2023 godakh» [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated November 25, 2020 No. 740 "On the Organizing Committee for the preparation and provision of the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation in the Arctic Council in 2021-2023"]. URL: <https://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=EXP&n=755222&dst=100001#C5iACYTGmHCfi1pZ1> (accessed 15 April 2021).

116 events grouped into 11 sections². It is positive that these decisions were supported by funding by more than 15 billion rubles from the federal budget for Arctic projects for the period 2021–2024. The chairmanship's slogan was "Responsible Governance for a Sustainable Arctic". Russia decided to develop cooperation with the countries participating in the intergovernmental forum in four priority areas:

- population of the Arctic, including indigenous peoples of the North;
- protection of the Arctic environment, including climate change;
- socio-economic development of the region;
- strengthening the role of the Arctic Council as the main platform for multilateral cooperation in high latitudes [6].

These provisions were promptly communicated to the founding countries, observer states, and representatives of indigenous peoples. By doing this, Russia demonstrated the continuity of the Arctic agenda of its chairmanship, but also intended to demonstrate the leading role of the Russian Federation in the Arctic.

All these areas are reflected in the activities of the Center for Arctic Studies of the Department of Country Studies of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which was established in 2018 [7, Zhuravel V.P.]. Employees of the Center for the Problems of the Russian Chairmanship held 2 conferences, prepared a monograph [8], published more than 20 articles on this topic, including in the Arctic and North journal, and made about 30 presentations at conferences and round tables. The Center analyzed the possible risks of chairmanship disruptions, including the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, ongoing political tensions with the West, increasing accusations of Russia's militarization of the Arctic, its violation of environmental requirements, oppression of the rights of indigenous peoples of the North, and increased sanctions pressure on Russia. All this could potentially affect the rhythm and regulation of the work.

From May 2021 to March 2022, everything planned was being fulfilled. Here we would like to mention the entry into force of the Agreement on the Prevention of Unregulated Fishing on the High Seas in the Central Arctic Ocean, signed in 2018. With the beginning of the Russian chairmanship, this document was signed by China. Despite the fact that this event was not included in the program of the Russian Federation's chairmanship, it can be noted as an achievement, which is another factor in the strengthening interaction between the Russian Federation and the PRC in the Arctic [1].

In March 2022, the seven Arctic Council countries (Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Norway, the USA, Finland and Sweden), in protest against Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, refused to take part in all meetings chaired and hosted by the Russian Federation³, despite the unified

² Plan osnovnykh meropriyatiy v svyazi predsedatel'stvom Rossii v AS 2021–2023 gg. ot 30 aprelya 2021 g., № 4161p-P2 [Plan of main events in connection with Russia's chairmanship of the AC 2021–2023 dated April 30, 2021, No. 4161p-P2].

³ U.S. Department of State. Joint Statement on Arctic Council Cooperation Following Russia's Invasion of Ukraine. U.S. Department of State. 03.03.2022. URL: <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-arctic-council-cooperation-following-russias-invasion-ofukraine/> (accessed 05 March 2022).

strategic plan of the AC, adopted a year ago in Reykjavik⁴. Later, on June 8, these states decided to resume AC activities on a limited basis, but without Russia's participation⁵. It should be noted that this information was initially published on the website of the US State Department, which indicates who was the initiator of these decisions. All this ultimately resulted in a large-scale boycott of the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the Arctic Council [9, Zhuravel V.P.].

At the same time, several large European and Asian transnational companies withdrew from Arctic projects or revised their plans to invest in them. Foreign companies left Russian projects despite significant financial and image losses. The European Commission has imposed sanctions on the Kolarctic program, which plays an important role in interregional cooperation. Members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council announced the suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation. Scientific cooperation with the International Council for Science and the International Arctic Science Committee has also been significantly limited. The activities of the Russian Federation in the Council of Ministers of the Nordic Countries were terminated [10, Zhuravel V.P., Timoshenko D.S.; 11, Timoshenko D.S.]. At the country level, Arctic cooperation was frozen, which began to acquire an unfriendly character.

Chairmanship vector — the northern territories of Russia

March–May 2022 was a difficult period during the Russian chairmanship, but, in our opinion, the right decision was made to continue it and to strengthen the development of the Arctic territories of the Russian Federation. The timely adoption of this decision was influenced, among other things, by an expert note from the Institute of Europe of the RAS to federal and regional authorities and administrations, which proposed measures to amend the program and regulations of the chairmanship plan.

A significant contribution to the analysis of current Arctic problems was made by the XXV St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, which was held in St. Petersburg from June 15 to 18, 2022 [12, Zhuravel V.P.], where a substantive analysis of the current situation in the Arctic space took place within the framework of the stand of the Ministry of Eastern Development of the Russian Federation “The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue”.

The decision taken to shift the focus of the chairmanship to the Russian problems of the northern regions made it possible to make serious progress in the Arctic direction already in 2022 — early 2023.

Thus, the volume of cargo transportation along the Northern Sea Route in 2022 amounted to 34 million 34 thousand tons, which is 2 million tons more than the target indicator of the federal project “Development of the Northern Sea Route”⁶. According to Glavsevmorput, cargo traffic

⁴ Arctic Council Strategic Plan 2021 to 2030. Arctic Council. 20.05.2021. URL: https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2601/MMIS12_2021_REYKJAVIK_Strategic-Plan_2021-2030.pdf (accessed 05 January 2022).

⁵ Joint Statement on Limited Resumption of AC Cooperation. U.S. Department of State. 08.06.2022. URL: <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-onlimited-resumption-of-arctic-council-cooperation/> (accessed 19 June 2022).

⁶ Soobshchenie Departamenta kommunikatsiy Goskorporatsii «Rosatom» [Message from the Communications Department of the State Corporation Rosatom]. 13.01.2022. URL: <https://www.rosatom.ru/journalist/news/obem->

increased primarily due to the transportation of liquefied natural gas. Its transportation exceeded the same figure for 2021 by 1.2 million tons (1.258 thousand tons), the transportation of container cargo increased by 226 thousand tons, bulk cargo — by 109 thousand tons. Novatek, Nornickel and Gazpromneft are among the leaders in terms of growing cargo traffic. Cargo traffic growth continued for the construction of infrastructure at Rosneft's Vostok Oil projects — Severnaya Zvezda, Baimskaya mining company and Arctic LNG-2. Severnaya Zvezda shipped the first three batches of coal produced at the Syrdasayskoe deposit. More than 100 thousand tons of products were shipped eastward through the Northern Sea Route⁷. At the same time, transit traffic decreased 10 times and amounted to 200 thousand tons⁸. This was the result of foreign trade activities of Western countries, which also affected Arctic oil and gas projects. Western companies have left even the already implemented projects and refused to invest further. In these conditions, a separate program is needed to establish interaction with major shipowners interested in fast cargo transportation, including the use of Russian icebreakers.

In July 2022, the Federal State Budget Institution “Main Directorate of the Northern Sea Route” was established within the structure of Rosatom State Corporation on the basis of the Marine Operations Headquarters. This solution has already proved its effectiveness in improving navigation management on the NSR route.

The government approved the NSR development plan up to 2035, which provides for the implementation of 152 measures. It is planned to allocate about 1.8 trillion rubles from various sources for their implementation⁹. The plan includes measures to build 10 icebreakers, 14 ports and terminals, 141 ice-class transport vessels, launch 12 satellites into orbit, and build 4 emergency rescue centers of the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

In 2022, the state expanded access to preferential loans for investors implementing projects in the Far East and the Arctic in industry, transport, and energy, which will significantly reduce the risks of failure of investment projects due to sanctions restrictions¹⁰.

The federal budget allocated more than 2.6 billion rubles for the development of social, communal and transport infrastructure of the Komi Republic, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk oblasts,

perevezennykh-gruzov-po-severnomu-morskomu-puti-v-2022-godu-sostavil-34-034-mln-tonn/ (accessed 06 November 2022).

⁷ Kompaniya «Nornikel'» voshla v chislo liderov po rastushchemu gruzopotoku [The Norilsk Nickel company is among the leaders in growing cargo traffic]. 16.01.2023. URL: <https://www.ttelegraf.ru/news/kompaniya-nornikel-voshla-v-chislo-liderov-po-rastushhemu-gruzopotoku/> (accessed 15 February 2023).

⁸ Inostrannyi tranzit po SMP udalos' kompensirovat' perevozkoy rossiyskikh gruzov v 2022 godu — Rosatom [Foreign transit along the NSR was compensated by the transportation of Russian goods in 2022 - Rosatom]. 16.02.2023. URL: <https://portnews.ru/news/343075> (accessed 25 February 2023).

⁹ Mikhail Mishustin utverdil plan razvitiya Severnogo morskogo puti do 2035 goda. Pravitel'stvo Rossii [Mikhail Mishustin approved the development plan for the Northern Sea Route until 2035. Russian Government]. 04.08.2022. URL: <http://government.ru/news/46171/> (accessed 15 November 2022).

¹⁰ Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva RF ot 14.07.2022 № 1261 «O vnesenii izmeneniya v prilozhenie № 19 k postanovleniyu Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 12 marta 2022 g. № 353» [Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated July 14, 2022 No. 1261 “On introducing amendments to Appendix No. 19 to Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated March 12, 2022, No. 353”]. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_422209/ (accessed 25 September 2022).

as well as the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, which will contribute to improving the socio-economic situation in the Arctic zone ¹¹.

Work on the development of the Murmansk Oblast's transport infrastructure was launched. The boundaries of the priority socio-economic development area "Capital of the Arctic" have been expanded, which will make it possible to build a transshipment complex for liquefied natural gas in the Murmansk port ¹². As part of the comprehensive development of the Murmansk transport hub, funding is provided for the construction of a 49.7 km railway to the port of Lavna, where a coal terminal with a capacity of 18 million tons per year is being built ¹³.

On November 22, 2022, the hull of the nuclear-powered icebreaker "Yakutia" was launched at the Baltic Shipyard. The second serial nuclear icebreaker of the project 22220 "Ural" successfully completed the factory sea trials program and on December 3, 2022, set off from the port of Murmansk to the Kara Sea [13].

In 2022, the fleet of the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute was supplemented with a new unique vessel — the ice-resistant self-propelled platform "North Pole". It is now drifting with polar explorers at the North Pole-41 station.

The Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG-2 projects are being successfully implemented.

Currently, over 630 investment projects are being implemented in the Arctic within the framework of the system of preferences, with the volume of investments under the agreements totaling 1.6 trillion rubles. The largest number of projects relates to such industries as service sector, construction, mining, logistics and tourism ¹⁴.

During the remaining period of its chairmanship, Russia focused its efforts on promoting cooperation to improve the well-being and quality of life of the Arctic population, preserving Arctic biodiversity and unique ecosystems, ensuring socio-economic development, finding solutions in the field of

¹¹ Rasporyazhenie Pravitel'stva RF ot 24.11.2022 № 3603-r (red. ot 23.12.2022) «O raspredelenie inykh mezhbyudzhethnykh transfertov, predostavlyayemykh iz federal'nogo byudzheta byudzheta sub"ektov Rossiyskoy Federatsii na realizatsiyu meropriyatiy planov sotsial'nogo razvitiya tsentrov ekonomicheskogo rosta sub"ektov Rossiyskoy Federatsii, vkhodyashchikh v sostav Arkticheskoy zony Rossiyskoy Federatsii» [Order of the Government of the Russian Federation dated November 24, 2022 No. 3603-r (as amended on December 23, 2022) "On the distribution of other interbudgetary transfers provided from the federal budget to the budgets of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation for the implementation of social development plans for the economic growth centers of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation included into the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation"]. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_432448/ (accessed 18 January 2023).

¹² Pravitel'stvo odobrilo rasshirenie granits territorii operezhayushchego razvitiya «Stolitsa Arktiki» v Murmanskoy oblasti. Pravitel'stvo Rossii [The government approved the expansion of the boundaries of the priority development territory "Capital of the Arctic" in the Murmansk Oblast. Russian Government]. URL: <http://government.ru/news/44552/> (accessed 16 January 2023).

¹³ Pravitel'stvo napravit investitsii v stroitel'stvo Murmanskogo transportnogo uzla. Pravitel'stvo Rossii [The government will invest in the construction of the Murmansk transport hub. Russian Government]. 16.12.2022. URL: <http://government.ru/docs/47344/> (accessed 17 February 2023).

¹⁴ V ramkakh sistemy preferentsiy v Arktike realizuetsya syshe 630 investitsionnykh proektov [More than 630 investment projects are being implemented within the framework of the system of preferences in the Arctic]. URL: http://www.energyland.info/analitic-show-239456?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fdzen.ru%2Fnews%2Fse (accessed 05 March 2023).

global energy and transport security, promoting scientific cooperation in high latitudes and strengthening Arctic cooperation¹⁵.

Activities of Russia's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council: implementation

According to the Ministry for Development of Russian Far East, 32 events were held in 2021¹⁶, and 43 events in 2022¹⁷. According to the press service of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Far Eastern Federal District, Yu.P. Trutnev, over a two-year period, the Russian Federation held about 90 different events, including forums, conferences, round tables, championships, festivals and sports competitions. Chairmanship events took place in 24 cities and towns of Russia, including in all nine regions of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. The plan for chairmanship of the Arctic Council was calculated until August 2023, so Russia will hold a number of events designed to promote socio-economic development, preserve the ecology of northern latitudes and scientific study of the Arctic. About 20 events will take place in the coming months¹⁸. The organizer of the chairmanship events was the Roscongress Foundation.

It should be noted that after the boycott of the Russian chairmanship by unfriendly countries, interest within the country in this international event weakened.

In our opinion, the most interesting and productive events were held in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov (NAFU) and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The issues of indigenous peoples of the North and the involvement of young people in Arctic affairs were considered in a meaningful and innovative manner.

In accordance with the Plan of the Russian Federation's chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2021–2023, many events were held in Arkhangelsk and the Oblast. The main organizer was NArFU.

Thus, on November 15–16, 2021 and November 10–11, 2022, two conferences were held on the problem of attracting and training personnel for the Arctic. The first conference discussed govern-

¹⁵ Perspektivy mezhdunarodnogo vzaimodeystviya v Arktike obsudili na sessiyakh proekta Think Arctic — Think Global v ramkakh VEF [The prospects for international cooperation in the Arctic were discussed at sessions of the Think Arctic - Think Global project within the framework of the WEF]. URL: <https://roscongress.org/news/perspektivy-mezhdunarodnogo-vzaimodeystviya-v-arktike-obsudili-na-sessijah-proekta-think-arctic-thin/> (accessed 05 March 2023).

¹⁶ 32 meropriyatiya sostoyalis' v 2021 godu v ramkakh predsedatel'stva Rossii v Arkticheskom sovete [32 events took place in 2021 as part of Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Council]. 28.12.2021. URL: https://arctic-council-rus-sia.ru/news/oficial/32_meropriyatiya_sostoyalis_v_2021_godu_v_ramkakh_predsedatelstva_rossii_v_arkticheskom_sovete/ (accessed 05 March 2023).

¹⁷ Rossiya vo glave Arkticheskogo soveta provela v 2022 godu svyshe 40 meropriyatij po klyuchevym napravleniyam arkticheskoy povestki [Russia, at the head of the Arctic Council, held over 40 events in key areas of the Arctic agenda in 2022]. 23.12.2022. URL: https://arctic-council-rus-sia.ru/news/oficial/rossiya_vo_glave_arkticheskogo_soveta_provela_v_2022_godu_svyshe_40_meropriyatij_po_klyuchevym_napra/ (accessed 15 February 2023).

¹⁸ Rossiya zavershila predsedatel'stvo v Arkticheskom sovete [Russia has completed its chairmanship of the Arctic Council]. 12.05.2023. URL: https://www.vedomosti.ru/press_releases/2023/05/12/rossiya-zavershila-predsedatelstvo-v-arkticheskom-sovete (accessed 05 March 2023).

ment policy on attracting personnel to work in the Arctic. The second scientific forum “The Arctic — a national megaproject: staffing and scientific support” was devoted to issues of information security in the digital economy, individualization in personnel training for the Arctic regions, labor market monitoring, as well as the transformation of urban space and robotics. The participants were interested in the report of the rector of NArFU E.V. Kudryashova, who spoke about Russia’s first large-scale study of the compliance of personnel training with the labor resources needs of employers operating in the Russian Arctic, in order to determine the prospects for the development of personnel policy in the Russian Arctic. Researchers surveyed more than 10 thousand employers of the Russian Arctic and collected detailed statistical data from all Arctic subjects, relevant ministries and departments. It was revealed that by 2035, 182.4 thousand new jobs will be created in the Russian Arctic, of which 140.4 thousand will be created as part of the implementation of 198 investment projects totaling 19 trillion rubles, and 42 thousand will be created within the framework of existing production facilities with 627 employers¹⁹.

A number of events were successfully held at NArFU as part of the implementation of the “Arctic Youth” direction: the international forum of young scientists “Russia in the Arctic Dialogue: Global and Local Contexts” (May 2022), a student summit on conservation and maintenance ecology of the Arctic region (June 2022), youth international model of the Arctic Council (November 2022), festival of youth creativity of the Arctic Council (November 2022). More than 100 people from 24 countries took part in the events, including from the countries of the Arctic Council and observer countries of the AC [14, Zarubina L.A., Popkova S.V., Kuznetsova S.Yu.].

On June 1–3, 2022, a conference on preserving human health in the Arctic was held. The conference participants — scientists and practicing doctors — discussed the prospects for the development of healthcare in the Arctic and issues of biological safety in the region, as well as problems associated with climate change. The event was organized by the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, the Government of the Arkhangelsk Oblast and was held at the site of the Northern State Medical University. The visitors included more than three hundred participants from Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. An important task for the Arctic zone is the implementation of a program for the modernization of primary healthcare. In addition, as part of the event, on June 1, the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference on the History of Medicine, dedicated to the 350th anniversary of Peter the Great, was held²⁰.

On July 20, 2022, a conference on the problems of waste and microplastics in the Arctic was held in Arkhangelsk. At sessions devoted to various aspects of environmental issues in the Arctic, the conference participants considered the problems of implementing the national project “Ecology”,

¹⁹ V Arkhangel'ske nachal rabotu forum «Arktika— natsional'nyy megaproekt: kadrovoe obespechenie i nauchnoe so-provozhdenie» [The forum “The Arctic—a national megaproject: staffing and scientific support” was started in Arkhangelsk]. URL: <https://narfu.ru/life/news/university/373000/> (accessed 05 March 2023).

²⁰ Konferentsiya po sberezhениyu zdorov'ya cheloveka v Arktike [Conference on preserving human health in the Arctic]. URL: <https://arctic-council-russia.ru/events/razvitie-chelovecheskogo-kapitala-v-arktike/konferentsiya-po-sberezhениyu-zdorovya-cheloveka-v-arktike/> / (accessed 05 March 2023).

waste management in the Arctic region, the implementation of the provisions of international conventions and environmental protocols, the elimination of ocean pollution and other issues of the spread of synthetic particles polymers. More than a hundred experts, heads of specialized organizations and departments took part in the conference²¹. The conference was held at the Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov. The event was organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation²².

On May 11–12, 2023, a conference on biological resources and fisheries in the Arctic was held in the capital of Pomorie, where effective mechanisms for the development of the fisheries complex of the Arctic region and measures to preserve the ecosystem in high latitudes were discussed. The plenary session was devoted to the topic of aquatic biological resources in the Arctic and their conservation. Within the framework of the scientific forum, eight discussions took place in the format of round tables and seminars, as well as a seminar on the development of aquaculture in Russia. Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation V.V. Abramchenko sent a greeting to the conference participants, in which she noted that “everything that the Arctic reveals to us requires a competent attitude towards its resources, a responsible approach to preserving the unique and vulnerable ecosystem of the region for future generations”.

In December 2022, the IV Northern Sustainable Development Forum was held in Yakutsk. Representatives of 10 countries took part in the forum, including Kazakhstan, India, China, Mongolia, Iceland, South Korea, the USA, Switzerland, Finland and Italy. The event was held under the motto “Arctic Energy: New Challenges — New Solutions and Technologies”. The 30-year experience of this organization is an example of how, under favorable circumstances, it is possible to quickly establish constructive cooperation between the regions of the global North and the Arctic, exchanges of best practices, accumulated experience and competencies [15, Vasiliev V.N., Krasnopol'sky B.Kh., Pilyasov A.N.].

On March 22–24, 2023, an international conference on climate change and permafrost thawing was successfully held in Yakutsk. Over 500 people from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, China, Brazil, the USA and Japan attended the event. The conference program included two plenary sessions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S.V. Lavrov made a video address to the conference organisers and participants, noting that “a complex of scientific, economic and political factors leads to a constant increase in the attention of the international community to the Arctic region”²³. Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation A.A. Kozlov stated that

²¹ Konferentsiya po otkhodam i probleme mikroplastika v Arktike [Conference on waste and the problem of microplastics in the Arctic]. 20.07.2022. URL: <https://arctic-council-russia.ru/events/izmenenie-klimata-i-ekologiya-arktiki/konferentsiya-po-otkhodam-i-probleme-mikroplastika-v-arktike/>

²² Problemu mikroplastika v Arktike obsudili uchastniki konferentsii v Arkhangel'ske [The problem of microplastics in the Arctic was discussed by participants of the conference in Arkhangelsk]. 21.07.2022. URL: https://arctic-council-russia.ru/news/izmenenie_klimata_i_ekologiya_arktiki/problemu_mikroplastika_v_arktike_obsudili_uchastniki_konferentsii_v_arhangel'ske// (accessed 05 March 2023).

²³ Video message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov to the organizers and participants of the International Conference on Climate Change and Thawing Permafrost, Moscow, March 20, 2023. 22.03.2023. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1859002/ (accessed 05 March 2023).

by 2025, it is planned to create 140 observation points in Russia as part of a background monitoring system for permafrost, which will provide more accurate forecasts of climate change in Russia. In turn, Director of the Permafrost Institute of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences M.N. Zheleznyak proposed introducing an interdepartmental system of state monitoring and management of the state of permafrost in the Arctic zone, which would include forecasting its changes and developing methods of regulation. According to him, if the current rate of change in climate conditions continues, the damage to residential and industrial structures is estimated at 5–7 trillion rubles by 2050. The Head of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) A.S. Nikolaev noted that 70–80% of construction projects in the republic have problems associated with thawing of permafrost soils²⁴.

In addition, on March 15–19, 2023, the International Championship of Traditional Reindeer Herding was held in the Yakutian city of Neryungri and the village of Iengre. Competitions included sled jumping, lariat throwing among men and women, combined relay race, reindeer catching, and reindeer sled racing. The event also included an extraordinary meeting of the board of the association “Reindeer Herders of the World”, a presentation of the construction project of the ethno-tourist complex “Unique Iengra” and the international conference “Sustainable development of reindeer husbandry in the context of global changes in the Arctic”²⁵. The international conference was attended by the Senator of the Russian Federation, President of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation G.P. Ledkov. In his speech, he noted: “Reindeer husbandry is one of the most important factors in the way of life of indigenous peoples. The urgent task today is to achieve recognition of the status of a nomad as a person leading a nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle and engaged in traditional types of economic activity. Enshrining the status of a nomad in legislation will improve the conditions for the sustainable development of the economy of traditional industries and increase the level and quality of life of nomads. With the recognition of this status, we will be able to receive additional measures of government support. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic should actively participate in educational processes in various areas and receive modern sectoral education, including in reindeer herding specialties”²⁶. The event was attended by representatives of 14 regions of the Arctic and the Far East, China, Mongolia, Iceland and Greenland, as well as the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation, legislative bodies and business, members of the Association “Reindeer Herders of the World”. In addition, during the conference, a decision was announced to create the eastern branch of the Association. In Russia, more than 52 thousand families of indigenous peoples are engaged in reindeer husbandry,

²⁴ A scientific and practical conference on climate change and permafrost thawing took place in Yakutsk. 24.03.2023. [https://arctic-council-](https://arctic-council-rus-)

[rus-](https://arctic-council-rus-)
[sia.ru/news/izmenenie_klimata_i_ekologiya_arktiki/v_yakutske_sostoyalas_nauchno_prakticheskaya_konferentsiya_po_voprosam_izmeneniya_klimata_i_tayaniya//](https://arctic-council-rus-) (accessed 05 March 2023).

²⁵ International Championship in Traditional Reindeer Herding. 15.03.2023-19.03.2023. URL: <https://arctic-council-russia.ru/events/korennye-malochislennye-narody-arktiki/mezhdunarodnyy-chempionat-po-traditsionnomu-olenevodstvu//> (accessed 05 March 2023).

²⁶ G. Ledkov discussed strategies for modernizing reindeer husbandry and the possibilities of public-private partnerships in this area. 17.03.2023. URL: <http://council.gov.ru/events/news/143418//> (accessed 05 March 2023).

many of which lead a nomadic lifestyle²⁷. The event clearly demonstrated that Russia is making special efforts to support all key areas of life and development of the peoples of the Arctic, as well as to improve the well-being, education and health of the northerners.

Results, conclusions and lessons of Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Council

The Russian Federation first chaired the AC in 2004–2006. Since then, the country has been actively engaged in developing its national Arctic strategy and policy, taking into account the steadily increasing role of the Arctic region in world politics and economy. On May 12, 2023, Russia officially ended its chairmanship of the Arctic Council in Salekhard by remotely handing it over to Norway, confirming the relevance of the organization despite all the difficulties and problems.

An assessment of the restrictions on the actions of the Russian Federation during the chairmanship of the AC (2021–2023) was given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S.V. Lavrov in a video message to the participants of the thirteenth session of the Arctic Council on May 11, 2023. He noted: “Unfortunately, the full-fledged activities of the Council were “temporarily frozen” by Western member countries under an absolutely far-fetched pretext of the situation in Ukraine, which they provoked themselves. We consider such a step by our Western colleagues to be politicized and counterproductive, leading to the erosion of collective approaches to responsible management of the Arctic”²⁸. It should be noted that, despite sanctions restrictions, representatives of more than 25 states took part in the events of the Russian chairmanship.

In our opinion, after the “freezing” of the Arctic Council in 2022, Russia needs to rely on the Northern Forum in the development of international cooperation in the Arctic.

Analyzing the activities of the AC, it should be noted that problems in its work arose during the Finnish chairmanship, when, following the results of 21 ministerial meetings in Rovaniemi, it was not possible to agree on and adopt a common joint Declaration due to the US position on climate change, which happened for the first time in the entire period existence of the Council.

The situation in the Arctic continues to develop dynamically, in some aspects it is associated with increased risk and uncertainty; transformational changes are taking place. Since 2022, an irreversible process of awareness and reassessment of previous approaches to the Arctic has begun. Strategic problems of relations with the United States and its NATO allies in the Arctic region and issues of the further functioning of the Arctic Council have become relevant.

Foreign states are increasing their military presence in the Arctic, especially in its western part [16]. Finland's accession to NATO has greatly complicated the situation in the Arctic region, which

²⁷ Representatives of 14 regions of the Arctic and Far East took part in the International Championship on Traditional Reindeer Herding in Yakutia. 21.03.2023. URL: https://arctic-council-russia.ru/news/korennyye_malochislennyye_narody_arktiki/predstaviteli_14_regionov_arktiki_i_dalnego_vostoka_prinyali_uchastie_v_mezhdunarodnom_chempionate/ (accessed 05 March 2023).

²⁸ Video message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov to the organizers and participants of the International Conference on Climate Change and Thawing Permafrost, Moscow, March 20, 2023. 22.03.2023. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1859002/ (accessed 05 March 2023).

strengthens the Arctic potential of the alliance and creates real threats to Russia in the northern direction. It is noteworthy that NATO is moving to form tools to deter Russia in the Arctic region, which was not the case before. From May 29 to June 9, 2023, the largest military exercise “Arctic Challenge 2023” was held in Finland, Norway and Sweden with the participation of 150 aircraft of the armed forces of 14 countries. At the same time, the real impact of a special military operation on the Arctic region can only be determined by its final results.

A powerful destabilizing factor for the entire system of international relations in the world has been the desire of some states to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign countries, pursue a policy of unilateral economic sanctions, and replace international law with their own far-fetched rules. In a difficult international situation, it is necessary to have reserve options for the development and financing of Arctic projects and to solve the tasks of technological independence in an accelerated manner.

It is expedient for the State Commission for Arctic Development to summarize the results of the Russian Federation’s chairmanship in the AC more broadly, to instruct the Ministry of Eastern Development of the Russian Federation to request from ministries and departments all materials on the activities carried out for their analysis, use in work and archiving.

In the current conditions of increased sanctions pressure, the participation of the EAEU countries in Arctic projects should be strengthened. Within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Commission, it is advisable to develop a separate program for cooperation between Russia and Eurasian partners in the Arctic.

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