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RESOLUTION 446

on

SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN THE HIGH NORTH*

The Assembly,

1. **Alarmed** by the speed of the climate change in the Arctic regions;
2. **Mindful** of the growing geostrategic importance of the Arctic as the changing climate creates new opportunities for shipping, exploitation of mineral resources, fishing and tourism, as well as for military activities;
3. **Concerned** that – while the threat of an armed conflict in the Arctic is still low – it cannot be entirely ruled out that a possible spill-over of tension between Russia and NATO Allies, as well as China's increasing engagement, could lead to more strategic rivalry in the region;
4. **Acknowledging** the scale and scope of Russia's military build-up in the Arctic, including the revamping of the Northern Fleet, the establishment of military infrastructure across the region, the development of anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, and dramatic increases in air and submarine activity on the Alliance's borders;
5. **Recalling** that at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, the Alliance committed to strengthening its maritime posture in the North Atlantic and to improving the Alliance's comprehensive situational awareness in the region to deter and defend against any potential threats, including against sea lines of communication and maritime approaches of NATO territory;
6. **Welcoming** NATO's decision to establish a new Atlantic Command in Norfolk, Virginia, (United States);
7. **Mindful** of the different perspectives among the Allies on the scope of NATO's presence in the Arctic, yet **persuaded** that NATO can offer added value in the region;
8. **Aware** that the increasing human activity in the region raises serious concerns relating to human security and the protection of critical economic infrastructures, particularly in the context of harsh weather conditions and limited search and rescue (SAR) capabilities;
9. **Convinced** that international cooperation as well as close partnership between the military, public and non-governmental sectors are essential in order to provide adequate civilian protection in the High North;

* Presented by the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and adopted by the Plenary Assembly on Monday 19 November 2018, Halifax, Canada

10. **Highlighting** the role of the Arctic Council as the main vehicle for cooperation in the Arctic;
 11. **Emphasising** that interstate relations and Arctic economic development should adhere to international law, both customary and case law, as well as relevant international conventions and rules, including the Polar Code;
 12. **URGES** member governments and parliaments of the North Atlantic Alliance:
 - a. to steer international efforts towards promoting cooperation in the Arctic in a spirit of responsible stewardship, and preventing tensions and competition in the region from becoming insurmountable;
 - b. to adapt NATO strategic posturing in the High North to the new security realities identified in the Assembly's 2017 report "NATO and Security in the Arctic", including supporting the Allied Arctic littoral states in developing adequate defensive assets and capabilities and organising more joint exercises such as *Trident Juncture*;
 - c. to bolster NATO's enhanced situational awareness through greater expertise in the Arctic region;
 - d. to promote and exchange best practices in terms of SAR and contribute to the interoperability of SAR units through joint exercises both among NATO countries and with non-NATO countries;
 - e. to maintain and further develop constructive cooperation with Russia in the fields of search and rescue, fisheries and scientific research;
 - f. to support the work of multinational frameworks, such as the Arctic Council, and to ensure full compliance with international law, both customary and case law, the implementation of the Polar Code and the further development of higher international safety and environmental standards for the High North;
 - g. to ensure that Indigenous peoples and communities are adequately consulted and represented throughout decision-making processes concerning the Arctic region;
 - h. to strengthen efforts to minimise the impacts of climate change on the Arctic, especially by reducing greenhouse emissions and implementing the Paris Agreement.
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