

THE ARCTIC: A DIALOGUE FOR DEVELOPMENT

In September 2010, Moscow hosted the International Arctic Forum “The Arctic – Territory of Dialogue”. The Arctic Forum focused its attention on elements of sustainable development in the Arctic region, i.e., ecology, economics, infrastructure, social services, security, and geopolitics. The forum was attended by many Russian experts and many well-known politicians and experts from leading research centers of the Arctic countries (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and USA), as well as by participants from France, Germany, Netherlands, and other countries. Scholars and public figures from the European countries, representatives of the NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other institutions were also present at the conference. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Russian Geographical Society (RGS), Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Vladimir V. Putin, addressed the Arctic Forum in his key-note speech. Mr. Putin formulated the principles of Russian national policy in the Arctic. It is symptomatic that these principles were supported in the speeches of high-ranking officials from Western countries, in particular, in the speeches of the Reigning Prince Albert II of Monaco and the President of Iceland, O.R. Grimsson, who specifically emphasized the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the Arctic.

The Arctic Forum was the first major socially significant event in the life of the RGS that has been virtually revived in 2009. The interest of the RGS to the Arctic issues as a priority area for this country's oldest scientific society is profoundly logical. This interest is associated not so much with the fact that Russia is the

world's largest polar power, but rather with the place occupied by the Arctic region in Russian history, geography, economics, and culture.

The Arctic Forum has repeatedly stated that Russia is increasing its presence in the region. There are clearly seen “contours” of modern strategies for the development of the Russian Arctic focused on its sustainable development. Russia will consistently defend its national interests in the Arctic which is unachievable outside the appropriate scientific approach traditionally associated with geography. The RGS President Sergei Shoigu expressed this idea in his welcoming speech, “Today we, more than ever, need national geography. Geography, which contributes to the national interest...At the beginning of the 21st century, when the time faces us with new challenges, we need modern geographic research and integrated methods and approaches.” These words emphasize the call to revive the traditions of the RGS known for its outstanding work for the benefit of the nation. The RGS President also stated that publication of the modern National Atlas of the Arctic should become an important step towards pursuing these national goals, obtaining a cartographic interpretation of the geographical aspects of sustainable development, and developing a database for further research in this region.

The RGS Honorary President, Academician V.M. Kotlyakov, the RGS Vice-President, Academician N.S. Kasimov, other RGS executives, members of the Board of Trustees, and volunteers from many Russian cities took part in preparation for the Arctic Forum and its work.

A multifaceted dialogue of the Arctic Forum was mainly confined to the three areas: “*Environment in the Arctic: Climate Change and Impacts of Human Activity*,” “*Natural Resources in the Arctic: the Source of Wealth in the Region and the Area of Cooperation*,” and “*Sustainable Development of the Arctic: Problems and Prospects*.” The titles of these areas reflect a modern vision of policy priorities of the Arctic countries. The three plenary sessions of the Arctic Forum covered the most pressing problems related to studies of the development of the Arctic. The reports presented in the first section included: *Assessment of Climate Change Impact on the Arctic Environment and their Consequences* (V.M. Katsov, A.I. Voyeikov Main Geophysical Observatory; Y. G. Winther, Norwegian Polar Institute); *The Natural Heritage of the Arctic in National and Global Politics* (B. Eichbaum, the World Wildlife Fund, USA; Yu.L. Mazurov, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University); and *Conservation of Biodiversity in the Arctic* (V.V. Rozhnov, A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution).

The second section addressed the following issues: *Resource and Natural Potential of the Arctic, its Assessment* (L.I. Lobkovsky, P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology; C. Markusen Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland); *Efficient Development of the Arctic Resources* (V. Alekperov, LUKOIL); *Ensuring Safety of Economic and Infrastructure Projects in the Arctic* (I.A. Veselov, Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations; H. Schreiber, the World Bank, Germany); and *Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Ensuring the Balance of Interests in the Arctic* (A.V. Vasilyev, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Russia's representative to the Arctic Council; R. Rafaelsen, the Norwegian Barents Secretariat; V.D. Kaminsky, All-Russian Research Institute “Oceanology”).

The presentations of the third section included: *Cooperation for Development of the Arctic Territories* (P. Wohl, the Northern Forum, USA); *The Development of Regional Transportation Infrastructure* (V.I. Peresyarkin, Central Marine Research and Design Institute

of the Navy; L. Brigham, University of Alaska, Fairbanks); *Investment Attractiveness of the Far North, the Growing Points* (M.V. Slipenchuk, RGS); *The Role of Higher Education Cooperation in Building a Sustainable Arctic Region* (Mauri Yla-Kotola, University of Lapland, Finland), *Russia's Strategy of the Arctic Development up to 2020* (A.N. Pilyasov, Council for the Study of Productive Forces, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation and RAS).

The words «Arctic – the territory of the dialogue» were also included in many shorter presentation at the Arctic Forum's sections. The organizers of the Arctic Forum have not spared time and effort to ensure that these presentations were included in the Arctic Forum's sections, a decision which proved to be very rewarding. First, many presentations stressed the need for not being limited to just the issues of exploitation of potential resources of the Arctic, but of also focusing on the conservation of biodiversity and natural and cultural heritage (V.V. Rozhnov, A.A. Tishkov), on the development of ecological tourism (N.G. Ovsyannikov), etc. The idea of geo-information support of the Arctic research activities, of a geo-information portal creation, of coordination efforts for the compilation of the digital database based on the standards of the world's data centers (V.S. Tikunov) was also well received.

Adequate environmental policy and sustainable development in the Arctic region were widely presented in the agenda of the Arctic Forum. They were the themes of the key-note presentations. Thus, V.V. Putin made a crucial statement, “I support, endorse, and will support everything that is related to minimizing the negative impact of mankind on climate change and nature. I will support, as well as will the Russian government and all the leaders of Russia, all our efforts related to the conservation of nature.” Such a statement could not but encourage the priorities for environmental policy in the Russian Arctic and beyond.

Speaking at the concluding session of the Arctic Forum, the President's envoy on the Arctic and Antarctica, A.N. Chilingarov, praised highly the scientific and political significance of the Arctic Forum. He, like other Russian and foreign participants, supported the continuation of dialogue on the Arctic under the RGS's umbrella and the transformation of the Arctic Forum into a permanent platform for discussions on the most urgent issues in the region.

The work of the Arctic Forum was covered by Russian and international media. However, according to many participants, the coverage was obviously insufficient for the timely inclusion of ideas and suggestions expressed at the meeting into the practice of environmental management. There is an

urgent need for a complete publication of the entire collection of materials presented at the Arctic Forum in both its working languages (English and Russian) and in electronic and traditional book formats.

The Arctic Forum was a reaffirmation of the well-known saying by M.V. Lomonosov that, "Russia's wealth will grow through Siberia and the Arctic Ocean". That is why, for the implementation of this prophecy by the genius founder of Russian geography, the immediate mobilization of science in order to respond adequately to the challenges of the modern era in the Arctic becomes so urgent.

Yury L. Mazurov, Vladimir S. Tikunov

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS, CONTRIBUTING TO “GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY”

AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE JOURNAL

The scientific English language journal ‘GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY’ aims of informing and covering the results of research and global achievements in the sphere of geography, environmental conservation and sustainable development in the changing world. Publication of the journal will be aimed at foreign and Russian scientists – geographers, ecologists, specialists in environmental conservation, natural resource usage, education for sustainable development, GIS technology, cartography, social and political geography, and also – on field studies in the sphere of environmental science. Publications that are interdisciplinary, theoretical and methodological are particularly welcome.

Among the major sections of the journal will be: basics of geography and environmental science; fundamentals of sustainable development; environmental management; environment and natural resources; human (economic and social) geography; global and regional environmental and climate change; environmental regional planning; sustainable regional development; applied geographical and environmental studies; geo-informatics and environmental mapping; oil and gas exploration and environmental problems; nature conservation and biodiversity; environment and health; education for sustainable development.

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EDITORIAL OFFICE

M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University
Moscow 119991 Russia
Leninskie Gory,
Faculty of Geography, 2108a
Phone 7-495-9392923
Fax 7-495-9328836
E-mail: GESJournal@yandex.ru

DESIGN & PRINTING

Advertising and Publishing Agency "Advanced Solutions"
Moscow 105120 Russia
Nizhnyaya Syromyatnicheskaya, 5/7, 2
Phone 7-495-9167574
Fax 7-495-9167673
E-mail: om@aov.ru

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