



**THINK ARCTIC**

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# THE ARCTIC AS A SPECIAL AREA OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: PROSPECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## 1. The United Nations SDGs and the development of the Arctic region

Sustainable development is the main trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, enshrines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that cover the key global challenges of the century and aim to overcome them, including eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing intra- and inter-country as well as gender inequalities, protecting human rights, environmental protection and combating climate change.

In the Arctic region, the SDGs can set the framework for both inter-state cooperation and national policies of each of the Arctic states. Several groups of SDGs are most relevant across the Arctic. First, the environmental group of SDGs 13-15 reflects the key threats facing the region: melting ice sheets and the transformation of local ecosystems due to climate change, as well as the resulting and exacerbated by human activities damage to the locations and habitats of marine and terrestrial species. In addition, the SDGs 8-12 group, dedicated to the economic component of sustainable development brings together the problems of improving the sustainability of human settlements, infrastructure development, preserving the culture and the way of life of indigenous peoples, and the depletion of natural resources in the Arctic. All of these problems cannot be overcome in the absence of SDG 17: the Arctic is a space controlled by several states, and measures to ensure its sustainable development and protection from the threats it faces can only be taken in cooperation between all Arctic countries.

The implementation of the UN SDGs in the Arctic has a number of peculiarities due to the geographical, socio-cultural, and economic uniqueness of the region.

For example, **SDG 1 – no poverty** relates to improving the living standards of the Indigenous Minorities of the North (IMN). In the Arctic Zone of Russia, 8% of the population is below the poverty line in Murmansk Oblast, 9% in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 4.5% in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 4.7% – in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, 14.5% – in Krasnoyarsk Krai, 14% in Komi Republic, 13% in the Republic of Karelia, 11.8% in Arkhangelsk Oblast, and 15.6 in the Republic of Sakha<sup>1</sup>. Thus, many of these values are above the Russian average (9.8% of the population)<sup>2</sup>. The cost of living in regions located in the Arctic zone is increasing, while traditional occupations and opportunities for self-sufficiency in food are decreasing due to the adverse effects of climate change – ice cover reduction, changes in the amount and the regime of rainfall, thawing of permafrost, etc.<sup>3</sup>.

**SDG 2 – zero hunger** is also closely related to this issue. The regions within the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF) do not have this problem, but food security remains a significant challenge for them. The regions independently supply a very small part of food consumption, and

1 Population with monetary incomes below the poverty line (subsistence level) in Russia as a whole and by subjects of the Russian Federation, as a percentage of the total population // Rosstat. URL: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/tab2-1.xlsx> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

2 Ibid.

3 Rosqvist G. C., Inga N., Eriksson P. Impacts of climate warming on reindeer herding require new land-use strategies //Ambio. 2022. V. 51. №. 5. P. 1247-1262.



they are highly dependent on imports from other regions or from abroad. At the same time, transport and logistics threats to food security have also traditionally arisen due to both the inaccessibility of many settlements in the AZRF and the high cost and length of food deliveries<sup>4</sup>. In other states, population living in Arctic areas, including IMN, experience similar problems, with some cases having food security levels 5-6 times lower than the rest of the population<sup>5</sup>. In addition, for the Russian Indigenous Minorities of the North, the situation is complicated by the legislative gaps in the regulation of traditional activities: lack of formalization of the status of reindeer herder, fisherman and hunter as professions, inability to register nomadic housing as residential premises, the gap in legislation on the mechanisms of formation of traditional nature use territories, etc.<sup>6</sup>.

**SDG 3 – good health and well-being** has several aspects for the Arctic region. First, there is a number of health challenges in the Russian Arctic. On the one hand, there are also external challenges such as atmospheric, soil and in some cases food contamination by harmful substances and adverse climatic conditions<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, there are also internal problems related to the functioning of the healthcare system in the Arctic federal subjects: the lack of human resources and low salaries, insufficient digitalization, limited access to ambulance and emergency medical care, especially in remote areas, and a shortage of the feldsher-midwife stations<sup>8</sup>. Secondly, across the Arctic region, new vector-borne diseases may emerge and spread due to climate warming, and previously extinct diseases may also intensify due to thawing permafrost<sup>9</sup>. Finally, climate change and general environmental degradation have a particularly significant impact on Arctic indigenous peoples – their nutrition and lifestyle, and in some cases mental health, are becoming less healthy; all of which, combined with insufficient access to healthcare, reduces the overall health well-being of indigenous peoples<sup>10</sup>.

**SDG 4 – quality education** also belongs to the human capital of the Arctic region. In the Russian regions of the AZRF, there is a rather acute shortage of personnel (25-30%) and obsolescence of the material and technical base of educational institutions (30-40%). In addition, there are difficulties in organizing the education of school-age IMN children<sup>11</sup>. Characteristic

4 Dudin M. N., Anischenko A. N. Ensuring food security of the Arctic zone regions: new challenges and opportunities in the context of entering Industry 4.0 // Food policy and security. 2021. V. 8. №. 2. P. 167-178.

5 UN Sustainability Development Goals SDG 2 - Zero Hunger // Arctic Risk Platform. URL: <https://arcticrisk.org/sdg/sdg2/> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

6 Nikitenko M. E., Trofimova I. B. Food security in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation // Society: politics, economics, law. 2016. №. 9. P. 33-37.

7 Ruzanova P. D., Mazhinsky S. V. The problem of health care in the the Arctic Zone of Russia // The Newiman in Foreign Policy. 2021. V. 5. №. 62 (106). P. 42-46.

8 Decision of the Arctic and Antarctic Expert Council under the Federation Council of the Russian Federation on "Current Problems of Healthcare in the Subjects of the Russian Federation that are Part of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation" // Federation Council. URL: <http://council.gov.ru/media/files/bE6wXytkoamQKVBg39yyPq6wR0grnayf.pdf> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

Perspectives on the Development of Healthcare in the Arctic // Arctic Council. Russian Chairmanship. URL: <https://arctic-council-russia.ru/analytics/analiticheskie-materialy/perspektivy-razvitiya-zdravookhraneniya-v-arktike/> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

9 Everett L. Understanding and Responding to Global Health Security Risks from Microbial Threats in the Arctic: Proceedings of a Workshop. — 2020.

10 UN Sustainability Development Goals SDG 3 - Good Health & Well-Being // Arctic Risk Platform. URL: <https://arcticrisk.org/sdg/sdg3/> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

11 Peculiarities of the education system development in the Arctic regions of the Russian Federation // Alexey Akimov. URL: <https://aleksandrakimov.ru/posts/osobennosti-razvitiya-sistemy-obrazovaniya-v-arkticheskikh-regionah-rossiyskoy-federacii> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)



challenges for the region include long distances and low population density, which predetermines the difficulty of access of many students to educational institutions, difficulty in full enrolment of students, etc.; difficulty in transition to digital technologies; and the need to organize education in a way that includes all socio-cultural features of the region<sup>12</sup>. Cultural inclusiveness and the inclusion of diversity in the broadest sense of the word in the learning system is one of the key components of the so-called “Arctic education system” that meets the criteria of sustainability<sup>13</sup>.

**Gender equality – SDG 5** is also an important element in the political agenda of the Arctic region, especially at the international level. Gender is somehow present in the Arctic policies of all the states in the region. However, at the supranational level, the Arctic Council (AC) itself has not sufficiently taken gender issues into account in its policies and objectives. Gender equality issues have several dimensions in the region. For example, the governance dimension requires the Arctic states have formal commitments to gender equality, including special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples. Further, gender in the region is linked to issues of migration and mobility. It also includes one of the key issues connected to violence and its relation to social, cultural, political, legal and other aspects<sup>14</sup>.

Ensuring gender equality is of particular importance for the Russian Arctic. In the northern regions there are differences in wages between men and women. In particular, in the Chukotka JSC, the average salary of women is only 62.1% of men’s, in the Kamchatka Territory — 85.4%<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, a high representation of women in public authorities is a characteristic feature for a number of Russian northern regions. For example, in the Chukotka Autonomous Region, women and men are equally represented in local legislative bodies<sup>16</sup>.

**SDG 6 – clean water and sanitation** is one of the key concerns in the Arctic region regarding the well-being of the population. There are exceedances of hygienic standards for the content of inorganic and organic substances and for sanitary indicators in drinking water samples in all regions of the AZRF. The most unfavorable indicators are observed in the Republic of Karelia, Arkhangelsk Oblast and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug<sup>17</sup>: thus, in Karelia, 81.5% of centralized sources do not meet sanitary and epidemiological requirements. In this region, as well as in Murmansk Oblast, 55-58% of the water pipes do not meet the sanitation regulations; here and in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the 2021 targets set in the federal project “Clean Water” are not being met<sup>18</sup>.

12 Määttä K., Uusiautti S. Arctic education in the future // Human migration in the Arctic: the past, present, and future. 2019. P. 213-238.

13 Määttä K. et al. Five basic cornerstones of sustainability education in the Arctic // Sustainability. 2020. V. 12. №. 4. P. 1431.

14 Oddsdóttir E. E. et al. Gender equality for a thriving, sustainable arctic // Sustainability. 2021. V. 13. №. 19. P. 10825.

Gender Equality in the Arctic // Gender Equality Arctic. URL: <https://arcticgenderequality.network/> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

15 Fauser V.V., Smirnov A.V., Lytkina T.S., Fauser G.N. Sustainable development of the northern regions of Russia: labor dimension // Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast. 2018. No.5. P. 120–136.

16 Pan-Arctic Report on Gender Equality in the Arctic // Gender Equality in the Arctic, 2021. URL: <https://arcticgenderequality.network/phase-3/pan-arctic-report> (Date of access: 16.05.2023).

17 The state of sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population living in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation in 2020 // The Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare. URL: <https://rusarctic.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/byulleten-seb-az-rf-2020.pdf> (Date of access: 16.05.2023)

18 On the state of sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population in the Russian Federation in 2021: State Report. M.: The Federal



Water supply problems in the Russian Arctic stem from the geographical features of the region: often the only sources of water are shallow thermokarst reservoirs located in the permafrost zone, seasonal streams and swamps, or confined to a lake or river<sup>19</sup>. Centralized water supply systems are characterized by increased deterioration and not always satisfactory condition; in addition, due to violations of the tightness of water supply networks, water can clog during transportation<sup>20</sup>. Consequently, not all people in the AZRF have equal and sufficient access to drinking water; in some areas the main source is melt water, which in turn contains very low amounts of useful micro-nutrients, which affects the health of people who drink it. At the same time, climate change will lead to a reduction in snow cover and consequently reduced access to drinking water<sup>21</sup>.

**Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (SDG 7)** is one of the priority areas of the Arctic SDGs for Russia. Several key issues can be highlighted in this context. Firstly, it is of fundamental importance to improve the quality and reduce the cost of energy supply to the Russian Arctic. As not all settlements can be gasified and supplied with electricity from the main grid, some 12,000 diesel power stations are in operation in the Russian Arctic; also, the energy supply is provided by coal, wood and atomic energy. Diesel and coal are particularly environmentally unsound fuels and can account for up to 70% of the total cost of electricity through imports from the north. In addition, there is a high deterioration of the energy infrastructure of the Russian Arctic. On the other hand, the AZRF regions have the largest technical wind energy potential in the country. In addition, options are being considered for the construction of small nuclear and hydro power plants, as well as solar power installations. Nuclear power plants could be located in the vicinity of industrial facilities, while renewable energy installations could serve to provide electricity to the residential sector.

Secondly, the AZRF is of key importance to Russia's oil and gas sector – for example, 80% of the country's natural gas is produced here. Russia's energy strategy indicates that not only production, but also refining, petrochemicals and energy supply routes will be expanded in the region. Thus, the resources of the AZRF are a guarantee of energy security for both Russia and the foreign countries that import them.

Finally, the AZRF is one of the most promising regions for the development of hydrogen energy, which should also become one of the bases for increasing the share of low-carbon energy in Russia's energy supply. According to the Hydrogen Energy Development Concept<sup>22</sup>, one of the

Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare, 2022. 340 p.

19 Bogdanova E., Lobanov A., Andronov S. et al. Challenges of changing water sources for human wellbeing in the Arctic Zone of Western Siberia // *Water*. 2023. V. 15. №. 8. P. 1577.

20 Vyucheykaya D.S., Noskov S.N., Eremin G.B. Problems of water supply and sanitation in the Russian Arctic according to the results of the analysis of scientific and practical works // *Health - the basis of human potential: problems and ways to solve them*. 2019. №1.  
URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/problemy-vodosnabzheniya-i-vodootvedeniya-v-rossiyskoy-arktike-po-rezultatam-analiza-nauchno-prakticheskikh-rabot> (Date of access: 23.05.2023)

21 Bogdanova E. et al. Op. cit.

22 Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation "The concept of development of hydrogen energy in the Russian Federation" dated August 5, 2021, No. 2162-r // Official Internet portal of legal information. - 2021.



three planned hydrogen clusters is to be established in the Russian Arctic with projects in Murmansk Oblast, the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Arkhangelsk Oblast and other subjects of the AZRF. The first hydrogen using a domestic electrolyzer has already been produced in 2022 at the Kola NPP, where a bench-testing complex is planned to be launched in 2025.

**Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (SDG 8), as well as building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation (SDG 9),** are among the key goals of Russian policy in the Arctic. In particular, ensuring a high quality of life and well-being of the Arctic population is highlighted as the third priority national interest in the Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the Period up to 2035<sup>23</sup>.

The Russian Arctic is characterized by a relatively low level of infrastructure development, difficult natural and climatic conditions, and the remoteness of settlements from one another. Such regional conditions ultimately lead to a relatively high level of unemployment and a low standard of living for the Arctic population. As a result, for a long period the AZRF has been characterized by a migratory outflow of population<sup>24</sup>.

On the other hand, active efforts have been made to overcome the socio-economic problems typical for the region in recent years. A significant part of these efforts is related to the improvement of the institutional framework for the development of the AZRF. In particular, the State Commission for Arctic Development was established in 2015<sup>25</sup>, whose tasks include coordinating the activities of various agencies at both the federal and regional levels to improve the effectiveness of policies in the field of socio-economic development. The authority of the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East was also expanded to include issues related to the socio-economic development of the Arctic in 2019<sup>26</sup>.

In addition to improving the structure of institutions that coordinate policies aimed at socio-economic development, much attention is being paid to improving the attractiveness of the Russian Arctic for investors. The Federal Law "On State Support of Entrepreneurial Activity in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation"<sup>27</sup> was adopted in 2020 which, among other aspects, defined a special investment regime in the Arctic and preferences for investors. Also, in 2020 on the territory of the Murmansk region was created the area of advanced development "Capital of the Arctic"<sup>28</sup>.

23 Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the Period up to 2035. URL: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/media/files/file/W5J-eWAnrAypIMIMHXFRXEmQwLOUfoesZ.pdf> (Date of access: 14.05.2023).

24 Shaparov A. E. Migration processes in the regions of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation // Russia: trends and prospects for development. 2019. №. 14–1. P. 626–631.

25 On Approval of the Provision on the State Commission for the Development of the Arctic // Official Internet-portal of legal information. URL: <http://www.pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&prevDoc=102699091&backlink=1&&nd=102369476> (Date of access: 14.05.2023).

26 The Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic has been renamed the Ministry for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/6161204> (Date of access: 14.05.2023).

27 Federal Law dated July 13, 2020, N 193-FZ "On state support of entrepreneurial activity in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation" // RG. URL: <https://rg.ru/documents/2020/07/16/193-fz-ob-arkticheskoy-zone-dok.html> (Date of access: 14.05.2023).

28 Territory of Advanced Development "Capital of the Arctic" // Murmansk Region Development Corporation. URL: <https://invest-murman.ru/tor/> (Date of access: 14.05.2023).

Finally, some of the efforts are directly related to the economic development of the Arctic region. The “Arctic Hectare” program has been in force since 2021, under which Russian citizens can obtain land for economic activities<sup>29</sup>. 11 thousand applications for participation in the program had been received by February 2023<sup>30</sup>.

The Arctic is home to more than 40 different indigenous peoples, and these peoples make up about 10% of the total Arctic population<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, supporting these groups and protecting their rights is of particular importance to the region, and is closely related to **SDG 10 – reduce inequality within and among countries**.

Historically, the most acute problems for the indigenous peoples of the Arctic are those related to their relations with the non-indigenous populations of the countries in which they live. Among these problems are displacement from traditional areas, and problems related to the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the political and economic system of nation-states<sup>32</sup>.

On the other hand, the problems caused by global climate change are now becoming more acute<sup>33</sup>. Climate change is drastically changing the environment in which indigenous peoples are accustomed to living and maintaining their traditional ways of life. In particular, due to changes in the chemical composition of water due to melting ice, many fish species that make up the traditional diet of indigenous peoples are endangered. In addition, changes in the ecosystems of indigenous territories have altered reindeer migration routes, threatening indigenous peoples whose traditional way of life is based on reindeer herding. Finally, the sacred sites of indigenous peoples are also threatened by global climate change<sup>34</sup>.

The support of indigenous peoples and the protection of their rights is given special attention in the international cooperation agenda on sustainable development. It should be noted that indigenous peoples’ organizations have the status of permanent participants of the Arctic Council<sup>35</sup>.

Protection of the rights of indigenous peoples plays an important role in Russia’s Arctic policy. In particular, in Russia special rights of indigenous peoples are defined and guaranteed by law, including the use of traditional lands, rights related to language and self-government<sup>36</sup>.

The problem of **making human settlements in Arctic resilient (SDG 11)** is particularly

29 “Hectar in the Arctic. Difficulties of development // Go Arctic. 24.10.2022. URL: <https://goarctic.ru/work/gektar-v-arktike-trudnosti-osvoeniya/> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

30 Almost 11 thousand applications were received for “Hectar of the Arctic” since the start of the program // TASS. 17.02.2023. URL: <https://tass.ru/v-strane/17078497> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

31 Arctic Communities // WWF. URL: <https://www.arcticwwf.org/our-priorities/arctic-communities/> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

32 Slezkin Y., Werth P. Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North. - New Literary Review, 2019.

33 Stammler F. M., Ivanova A. From spirits to conspiracy? Nomadic perceptions of climate change, pandemics and disease // Anthropology Today. 2020. Vol. 36. №. 4. P. 9.

34 Davydov, A., & Mikhailova, G. (2011). Climate change and consequences in the Arctic: perception of climate change by the Nenets people of Vaigach Island. Global Health Action, 4(1), 8436.

35 Permanent participants // Arctic Council. URL: <https://arctic-council.org/about/permanent-participants/> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

36 Sharapova A. et al. Indigenous Rights and Interests in a Changing Arctic Ocean // Arctic Review on Law and Politics. – 2022. – T. 13. – C. 286-311. MLA



relevant for the Russian Arctic. It should be noted that the AZRF is characterized by high urbanization rates. For example, the population density for the entire AZRF is about 0.641 people per km<sup>2</sup>, while in some cities it can reach values of 1793 people per km<sup>2</sup><sup>37</sup>. Such indicators are largely due to the historical features of the development of the Russian Arctic, which throughout history has been quite centralized and largely driven by economic considerations. In the context of economic crises such an approach to the development of the Arctic has had a serious impact on the well-being of the region's population<sup>38</sup>.

Russia's Arctic policy implements a set of measures aimed at improving the urban environment and supporting the local population. First of all, it should be noted that partly the goals of sustainable development have already been integrated into the municipal development strategies of Arctic cities<sup>39</sup>. In addition, tools are used to ensure the supply of hard-to-reach settlements. In particular, in March 2023, in the first reading was approved the draft law "On northern delivery", which involves the creation of a centralized system for managing the supply of goods by sea to hard-to-reach areas of the Arctic<sup>40</sup>. Finally, it is necessary to mention the concept of a "smart city," which involves the use of modern information and communication technologies for city management. The development of "smart cities" in the Arctic will make them more sustainable, "green" and resilient<sup>41</sup>.

Global climate change is making the Arctic region more accessible to economic exploitation and development, which makes **SDG 12 - ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns** - very important. Mineral extraction rates are increasing in various Arctic countries. At the same time, the accelerating pace of economic development threatens the sustainability of both regional ecosystems and local communities.

One of the key problems associated with the accelerating pace of Arctic development is pollution. In 2011 Russia launched a program aimed at cleaning up the AZRF, including the Franz Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya archipelagos. As a result, by 2016 about 42,000 tons of waste were removed from these areas and 349 hectares of island land were cleaned up<sup>42</sup>. In addition, the Arctic contains a significant amount of nuclear waste. In 2016 Russia launched a program to clean up nuclear waste at the former submarine base in Andreyeva Bay in Murmansk Region<sup>43</sup>.

In the context of SDG 12 international cooperation in the Arctic aimed at the rational use of marine bioresources should also be noted. In particular, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Cooperation

37 Detter G., Tukkel J., Ljovkina A. Arctic region and arctic cities VS sustainable region and smart cities //E3S Web of Conferences. – EDP Sciences, 2021. – T. 258. – C. 06003.

38 Heleniak, Timothy. 1997. "Internal Migration in Russia During the Economic Transition," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 38 (February), 81–104.

39 Sergunin A. Russian Arctic Cities' Sustainable Development Strategies //Handbook of Research on International Collaboration, Economic Development, and Sustainability in the Arctic. – IGI Global, 2019. – C. 495-511.

40 State Duma legalizes the northern delivery // Kommersant. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5888943> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

41 Raspotnik A., Grønning R., Herrmann V. A tale of three cities: the concept of smart sustainable cities for the Arctic // *Polar Geography*. 2020. Vol. 43. №. 1. P. 70.

42 Sergunin A. Op. Cit. P. 500.

43 Ibid.



Organization<sup>44</sup> and the Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Cooperation Commission<sup>45</sup> operate in the region. The main activity within the framework of these institutions is reduced to determination of international quotas for catches of certain fish species in order to preserve stable stocks of marine bioresources.

The Arctic region is most acutely affected by climate change. In particular, the temperature in the Russian Arctic is rising about 2 times faster than in the rest of the world<sup>46</sup>. In turn, this actualizes **SDG 13 – taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**.

The key effect of climate change for the Arctic is primarily ice melting. In particular, the length of Arctic summer sea ice is decreasing by 13% over a decade. At the same time the ice cover is becoming thinner. Because the ice surface effectively reflects the sun's rays, the Arctic has facilitated keeping global temperatures steady; as the ice surface decreases and the ocean surface becomes bare and much more capable of absorbing the sun's heat, global temperatures may rise by as much as 25-40%<sup>47</sup>. Ice melting also raises global sea levels, potentially flooding coastal areas and islands around the world: Arctic Sea ice is responsible for 35% of this rise<sup>48</sup>.

In addition to the shrinking and thinning of the global ocean ice sheet, permafrost is also thawing as a result of global climate change. In Russia it covers 65% of the entire territory and is especially widespread in the eastern part of the country<sup>49</sup>. This process leads in turn to soil erosion and threatens with serious negative consequences the Arctic infrastructure, up to 50% of which may be at risk by 2050. In some areas and settlements, the carrying capacity of permafrost soils has already been reduced to 4-20% of what it was in the 1970s<sup>50</sup>. The stability of urban infrastructure throughout the permafrost zone is expected to decline by at least 25% by mid-century<sup>51</sup> (in some regions it could exceed 50% by then<sup>52</sup>). All these processes also cause additional emissions of methane, which has 25 times the global warming potential of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>53</sup>.

In the context of the ecological and climatic situation in the Arctic region, of critical importance are the closely related **SDGs 14 and 15 - conservation of marine ecosystems and terrestrial ecosystems**. Climatic changes causing constant reduction of ice cover pose a risk for species especially dependent on ice availability: polar bears, narwhals, walruses, seals, etc. Over the past

44 Convention on Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries // Northern Atlantic Fisheries Organization (Official source). URL: <https://www.nafo.int/Portals/0/PDFs/key-publications/NAFOConvention.pdf> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

45 Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation In North-East Atlantic Fisheries // The North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (Official source). URL: <https://www.neafc.org/system/files/Text-of-NEAFC-Convention-04.pdf> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

46 IPCC special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate // IPCC, 2019.

47 Duan et al., 2019

48 Climate Change // WWF. URL: <https://www.arcticwwf.org/threats/climate-change/> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

49 Permafrost // National Atlas of Russia. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://nationalatlas.ru/tom2/240-242.html> (date of reference: 13.05.2023).

50 Streletskiy D.A., Suter L.J., Shiklomanov N.I., Porfiriev B.N., Eliseev D.O. Assessment of climate change impacts on buildings, structures and infrastructure in the Russian regions on permafrost // Environmental research letters. 2019. Vol. 14, No 2. P. 1–15.

51 Shiklomanov N. I., Streletskiy D. A., Swales T. B., Kokorev V. A. Climate Change and Stability of Urban Infrastructure in Russian Permafrost Regions: Prognostic Assessment based on GCM Climate Projections // Geographical Review. 2017. Vol. 107. No. 1. P. 125-142.

52 Streletskiy D. A., Suter L. J., Shiklomanov N. I., Porfiriev B. N., Eliseev D. O. Op. cit.

53 Stepanov I.A., Makarov I.A., Makarova E.A., Smolovik E. Climate Change and Challenges to Sustainable Development in the Russian Arctic // Climatic Change. 2023. Vol. 176. Article 39.



20 years the area covered by winter ice has decreased by a third, and the rate continues to grow<sup>54</sup>. Research shows that polar bears are spending much more time on land than in the 1980s; whereas previously 5-10% of bears spent only a few weeks of summer on land, now up to 50% of the species remain out at sea for two months, which leads to increased problems of food production and conflicts with humans<sup>55</sup>. Further, changes in snow cover are also leading to changes in the way some species live<sup>56</sup>: many species can rely less and less on the thick layer of snow that would provide winter hibernation, and it is becoming more difficult to obtain food.

Issues related to combating climate change and protecting the environment are in the center of the international cooperation agenda on the topic of sustainable development. In this context, the Oslo Declaration on the Prevention of Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean<sup>57</sup> and the Agreement on the Prevention of Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean are particularly important<sup>58</sup>. These international documents are more of a precautionary nature and are aimed at preserving marine biodiversity in regions where no active economic activity has yet been initiated. Also, at the level of regional international institutions, the Agreement on the Protection of Polar Bears, signed in 1973<sup>59</sup>, plays an important role. This agreement banned the hunting, killing and capturing of polar bears, except in situations where polar bears might endanger human life and health, and for scientific purposes or by indigenous peoples who use traditional hunting methods<sup>60</sup>.

**SDG 16 – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels** – in the Arctic is about governance as well as geopolitical struggles in the region. It is as much about governance systems as it is about building stable and effective international regimes in the region, including the management of common spaces (water, etc.) and resource development (fisheries). Another important aspect is the rights of indigenous peoples, especially in cases where members of the same people are divided among several nation states, as is the case, for example, with the Eskimos, Saami, Aleuts, and others. An important problem in the Arctic is also increasing militarization, which has become especially urgent for Russia in 2022, because in the context of geopolitical crisis unfriendly for the country states, primarily the US and NATO, have increased proactive actions in the military sphere in the region<sup>61</sup>. The issue of oil and

54 Polar Bears Affected by Climate Change // Defenders of Wildlife. 08.11.2022. URL: <https://defenders.org/blog/2022/11/polar-bears-affected-climate-change> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

55 Rode K. D. et al. Observed and forecasted changes in land use by polar bears in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, 1985–2040 // Global Ecology and Conservation. – 2022. – T. 40. – С. e02319.

56 Makarov I. A., Stepanov I. A. Ecological factor of economic development of the Russian Arctic // ECO. 2015. No. 11. pp. 120–138.

57 Declaration concerning the prevention of unregulated high seas fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean // WTO. 16.05.2015. [Электронный ресурс]. URL: [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/rulesneg\\_e/fish\\_e/2015\\_oslo\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/rulesneg_e/fish_e/2015_oslo_declaration.pdf) (дата обращения: 07.05.2023).

58 On signing the Agreement on Prevention of Unregulated Fishing on the High Seas in the Central Arctic Ocean // Electronic Fund of Legal and Regulatory and Technical Documents. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/551032531> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

59 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears // Arctic portal.

URL: <http://library.arcticportal.org/1867/1/Agreement-on-the-Conservation-of-Polar-Bears.pdf> (Date of access: 05.05.2023).

60 Ibid.

61 On the Militarization of the Arctic // RSMD. 22.12.2022. URL: To the question of militarization of the Arctic (Date of access: 05.05.2023).



gas deposits in the Arctic and the rights of the Arctic and non-Arctic states to them is traditionally important. According to some estimates, the Arctic contains about 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and about 30% of its natural gas<sup>62</sup>; moreover, as the climate warms, there is a chance to expand the use of the Northern Sea Route as a logistical artery, reducing the sea route between Europe and Asia by 40% compared with the Suez Canal<sup>63</sup>. Accordingly, international competition for influence in the Arctic will only increase, which could have a negative impact on the realization of the SDGs.

Finally, all of the examined SDGs are united by **Goal 17 – the global partnership for sustainable development**. This goal, in the context of the Arctic, calls for international cooperation, joint scientific research involving various Arctic states, partnerships in implementing the SDGs with non-Arctic countries, etc.

## 2. Outline of international cooperation in the Arctic

### 2.1. Current status of international cooperation in the Arctic

International political crisis of 2022 had a serious negative influence on the status of international cooperation institutions in the Arctic. It is important to note that for a long time the concept of «Arctic exclusiveness» had been popular. It implied sustainable cooperation in the Arctic in the face of overall international political tension<sup>64</sup>. Nevertheless, as a result of the 2022 crisis a series of international cooperation institutions has de-facto terminated their existence in the region while the joint activities have been seriously impeded in general.

The key event of this trend was the decision made by the seven Arctic countries to stop visiting the occasions that took place during the Russia's chairmanship and to suspend participation in all meetings of the Council and subsidiary bodies<sup>65</sup>. On June 8, 2022, the same countries decided to partially restore cooperation in the Arctic Council projects that did not involve Russia<sup>66</sup>. Russia's attitude towards this problem is that the Arctic Council is a significant regional forum<sup>67</sup> the activities within which should be restored as soon as possible<sup>68</sup> and Russia, in its turn, would resume the chairmanship program realisation<sup>69</sup>.

62 King H. Oil and natural gas resources of the Arctic //Geology. com. Date of access December. – 2014. – Vol. 4.

63 Makarov I. A., Sokolova A., Stepanov I. A. Prospects for the Northern Sea Route Development // International Journal of Transport Economics. 2015. Vol. 42. No. 4. P. 431-460.

64 Brańka T. et al. The End of Arctic Exceptionalism? New Arctic Approach after February 24, 2022 //Przegląd Strategiczny. 2022. T. 12. №. 15. C. 373-392.

65 Joint Statement on Arctic Council Cooperation Following Russia's Invasion of Ukraine // US Department of state. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-arctic-council-cooperation-following-russias-invasion-of-ukraine> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

66 Joint Statement on Limited Resumption of Arctic Council Cooperation Ukraine // US Department of state. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-limited-resumption-of-arctic-council-cooperation> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

67 Russia's Top Arctic Diplomat: We Still Consider the Arctic Council an Important Forum // The High North News. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russias-top-arctic-diplomat-we-still-consider-arctic-council-important-forum> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

68 Russian Chair of the Arctic Council: "The Council's Work Should Be Resumed As Soon As Possible" // The High North News. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russian-chair-arctic-council-councils-work-should-be-resumed-soon-possible> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

69 Comment by the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, M.V. Zakharova, in connection with the statement of the Western member countries of the Arctic Council. // Russian Foreign Ministry. [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/1802852](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1802852) / (Date of access: 18.05.2023)



Finally, on May 11, 2023, Russia passed the chair to Norway at the meeting of the Arctic Council that took place in Salekhard. It should be noted that normally such meetings are held at the level of the Arctic state ministers. However, at the Salekhard meeting only senior officials were present via videoconference<sup>70</sup>. In addition, the meeting participants adopted the joint statement that defined the 2023-2025 work plan and admitted the importance of work accomplished during the Russia's chairmanship<sup>71</sup>. According to the message of the new Senior Arctic Officials Committee chairperson, the Council will resume its activities in the middle of June 2023 although particular spheres of interaction including meetings at the political level will remain non-functional at this stage<sup>72</sup>.

Apart from the Arctic Council, the international political crisis of 2022 adversely affected other institutions of international cooperation in the Arctic as well. In particular, on March 9, 2023, the European Union, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden issued the joint statement on suspending collaboration with Russia within the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BUAC)<sup>73</sup>. At the same time, EU-Russia cross-border cooperation programs were suspended including the «Kolarctic», «Karelia», and «Russia-Southeast Finland» programs<sup>74</sup>. Soon after the crisis occurred, the project financing within the activities of The Norwegian Barents Secretary continued. However, in November 2022, the Barents Secretary representative offices in Arkhangelsk, Naryan-Mar, and Murmansk were closed and therefore the cooperation with Russia was ceased<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, UArctic membership of Russia was paused<sup>76</sup>.

Finally, bilateral cooperation between Russia and other Arctic countries was complicated. In particular, cooperation with Norway within the Joint Commission in the Field of Environmental Protection<sup>77</sup> as well as in the field of science and education<sup>78</sup> was terminated. Norwegian-Russian coast guard exercises were cancelled<sup>79</sup>.

70 All Arctic States Behind Joint Arctic Council Statement // The High North News. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/all-arctic-states-behind-joint-arctic-council-statement> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

71 Arctic Council Statement On The Occasion Of The Thirteenth Meeting Of The Arctic Council Salekhard, Russian Federation 11 May 2023 // Arctic Council [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/3146/SPXRU202\\_2023\\_Final-Draft-AC-Statement.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/3146/SPXRU202_2023_Final-Draft-AC-Statement.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

72 The Arctic Council Resumes Some Activities in Mid-June // The High North News. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/arctic-council-resumes-some-activities-mid-june> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

73 Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation: Joint Statement of the European Union, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on suspending activities with Russia // European Union. External action. [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/barents-euro-arctic-cooperation-joint-statement-european-union-finland-denmark-iceland-norway\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/barents-euro-arctic-cooperation-joint-statement-european-union-finland-denmark-iceland-norway_en) (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

74 EU-Russia cooperation programmes // Delegation of the European Union to the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/russia/eu-projects-russia\\_en?s=177#4254](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/russia/eu-projects-russia_en?s=177#4254) (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

75 Баренцев секретариат закрывает офисы в России // The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://barents.no/ru/barencev-sekretariat-zakryvaet-ofisy-v-rossii> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

76 Russian Membership Paused // UArctic. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.uarctic.org/members/member-profiles/russia/> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

77 Miljøsamrådet mellom Norge og Russland // Regjeringen. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/svalbard-og-polaromradene/innsiktsartikler-polaromradene/miljoversamarbeid-med-russland-og-i-barentsregionen/id2343387/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

78 Regjeringen fryser forsknings- og utdanningsamarbeidet med Russland // Regjeringen. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/regjeringen-fryser-forsknings-og-utdanningsamarbeidet-med-russland/id2903021/> (Date of access 08.05.2023)

79 Norwegian-Russian Preparedness Exercise in the Barents Sea Cancelled // The High North News. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/norwegian-russian-preparedness-exercise-barents-sea-cancelled> (Date of access 08.05.2023)

In addition, international cooperation in the Arctic region was damaged by the introduction of restrictive economic measures against Russia. In particular, a number of multinational companies withdrew from the projects that Russia has been implementing, «Arctic LNG-2» included<sup>80</sup>. The Finnish company Fortum that took part in several renewable energy projects also pulled out of Russia<sup>81</sup>.

On the other hand, a number of international platforms continued operating. In particular, cooperation with Russia remained within the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization although the Russia's representative had to step down from chairmanship<sup>82</sup>. The cooperation within the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Commission also remained. Specifically, the annual meeting of this organisation took place in November<sup>83</sup>. Cooperation within the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission continued. In October, another Commission session took place via videoconference<sup>84</sup>. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that during this session the counterparts agreed, in particular, to create four working groups within the Commission, including a group devoted to scientific cooperation.

Apart from that, in the new conditions the cooperation with the countries that adopted a constructive approach to Russia, including APAC and BRICS states, was catalysed.

## 2.2. Russia-China cooperation in the Arctic region

As a part of cooperation with China in the Arctic region, **Russian-Chinese Working Group on Cooperation in the Arctic** has been operating on a permanent basis since 2017<sup>85</sup>. In February 2022, **the Joint Statement on International Relations Entering a New Era and Global Sustainable Development** was signed<sup>86</sup>. In particular, it elaborated on the necessity to deepen arctic cooperation and collectively develop arctic transportation routes.

Russian and Chinese companies collaborate in the field of mineral extraction. It is worth noting the Yamal LNG project, in which the Chinese corporation CNPC (China National Petroleum Corporation) has been participating since 2013<sup>87</sup>. In 2018, the «Arctic LNG-2» project implementation

80 The media learned about Novatek's intention to change contractors for Arctic LNG – 2 // «Prime» Economic Information Agency. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://1prime.ru/business/20220728/837630091.html> (Date of access 08.05.2023)

81 PJSC "Fortum" // Fortum. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.fortum.ru/media/2022/05/soobschenie-pao-fortum> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

82 Russia out as head of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization // CBC News. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/russia-out-atlantic-fisheries-organization-1.6408120> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

83 Notification on recommendation adopted at the forty-first annual meeting on NEAFC, 15-18 November 2022 // Federal Agency for Fisheries. [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://fish.gov.ru/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/neafk\\_41\\_notification.pdf](https://fish.gov.ru/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/neafk_41_notification.pdf) (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

84 Protocol of the fifty-second session of the Mixed Russian-Norwegian Commission on Fisheries // Mixed Russian-Norwegian Commission on Fisheries. URL: <https://www.jointfish.com/rus/content/download/525/6904/file/52-russisk.pdf> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

85 Russian-Chinese cooperation in the field of sustainable development // Russian Chairmanship in the Arctic Council. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://arctic-council-russia.rcfiles.rcmedia.ru/dl/analytics/russian-chinese-cooperation-in-the-field-of-sustainable-development-ru.pdf> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

86 Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on international relations entering a new era and global sustainable development // Official Network Resources of the President of Russia.2022. [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/5770> (Date of access: 26.04.2022)

87 Ibid.



was initiated. It also involves the Chinese capital usage («CNPC» - 10% and «China National Offshore Oil Corporation» - 10%)<sup>88</sup>.

In 2015, «China Oilfield Services Limited» (COSL), the subsidiary company of «China National Offshore Oil Corporation» and «Magadanmorneftegaz», «Lysianskmorneftegaz», joint ventures OJSC «Rosneft Oil Company and Statoil ASA» signed an agreement on drilling two exploratory wells in the waters of the Sea of Okhotsk in the Magadan-1 and Lisyansky sections<sup>89</sup>.

A number of joint Russian-Chinese projects are being implemented in the sphere of transportation and logistics. In 2015, the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic and the National Development and Reform Commission of China signed an agreement on **North-ern Sea Route partnership**<sup>90</sup>. On June 20, 2017, the State Oceanic Administration and National Development and Reform Commission of China jointly published the «**Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative**». This document proposes to add the Arctic Ocean route to the «traditional» set of China-Europe routes<sup>91</sup>.

Russia-China cooperation in the field of science and education is actively developing. In 2019 within the framework of the International Arctic Forum «The Arctic - the Territory of Dialogue», **Sino-Russian Arctic Research Centre** was created<sup>92</sup>. In 2022, the **Russian-Asian Arctic Research Consortium** began operating, and more than 10 higher education institutions of Russia and China are expected to participate in its activities<sup>93</sup>.

Apart from that, Chinese Arctic tourism is developing at a rapid pace in Russia. During the «Russian-Chinese cooperation in the field of sustainable development of the Arctic region» conference, that took place as a part of the **ThinkArctic** project, issues related to Arctic tourism were discussed. The participants noted that Chinese tourists demonstrated significant interest in the Arctic. During the discussion, it was suggested that the Russian Arctic tourist infrastructure should be developed, institutional framework for cooperation in the field of tourism should be enforced, and the collaboration within intergovernmental commissions should be expanded. The problematic lack of personnel that would be trained to work with Chinese tourists in the Russian Arctic was also mentioned when it came to the prospects for tourism sector development.

88 Ice Age: Energy Cooperation between Russia and China in the Arctic // Carnegie Endowment. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://carnegiemoscow.org/2021/12/27/ru-pub-86088> (Date of access: 26.04.2022)

89 China Oilfield Services Limited will perform drilling within the framework of the Rosneft and Statoil project in the Sea of Okhotsk // Oil and Capital. 2.09.2015. URL: <https://oilcapital.ru/news/upstream/02-09-2015/china-oilfield-services-vypolnit-burenie-v-ramkah-proekta-rosnefti-i-statoil-v-okhotskom-more>

90 Hsiung C. The Emergence of a Sino-Russian Economic Partnership in the Arctic // The Arctic Institute. 19.05.2020. URL: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/emergence-sino-russian-economic-partnership-arctic/> (Date of access: 26.04.2022)

91 Kolzina A. L. Mindubaeva A. A. "Polar Silk Road" as a sphere of strategic partnership of the Russian Federation and China // Bulletin of the Udmurt University. 2020. T. 4. № 2. C. 186–195.

92 Russia and China will start joint research in the Arctic // P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. URL: <https://ocean.ru/index.php/novosti-left/novosti-instituta/item/1311-rossiya-i-kitaj-v-arktike> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

93 Russian-Asian Consortium for Arctic Research established on the basis of NEFU // The Arctic. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://ru.arctic.ru/international/20220614/1001928.html> (Date of access: 18.05.2023)



### 2.3. Russia-India cooperation in the Arctic region

Similar strategic vision of Russia and India in terms of Arctic-related issues was several times pointed out during the conference on the **ThinkArctic** project «Russia-India: The Fairway of joint development of the Arctic». Both countries advocate for development of this region as a region of peace and stability the importance of which is steadily growing every year. Moreover, as the experts put it, this approach was incorporated into the joint statement of the Russian and Indian leaders following the results of the XXI Russian-Indian summit «Russia-India: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity» that took place on December 6, 2021, in New Delhi. The Indian participants were also extremely positive about the Russia-India cooperation within the Arctic Council. The experts drew attention to the fact that in the current international political conditions constructive interaction between Russia and India becomes increasingly important.

The key sphere of Russia-India interaction within the framework of sustainable development of the Arctic is natural resource exploration and extraction as well as energy partnership. Currently, the Indian «Oil and National Gas Corporation» is operating on the basis of the «Sakhalin-1» project, 20% of which it owns.

India is interested in taking commercial advantage of the Northern Sea Route and providing its economy with Arctic oil and gas since it strives for diversification of supply routes. India's active involvement in matters concerning Arctic development is encouraged by its willingness to secure Russia's commitment to transport Arctic resources to India via the extended version of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)<sup>94</sup>.

### 2.4. Russia-Brazil cooperation in the Arctic

Russia and Brazil are implementing a number of projects, among which the study of the World Ocean is of particular importance in the context of Brazil's Arctic interests. Within this direction, experts from both countries compare hydrophysical and biogeochemical processes occurring in the Amazon River and in large Arctic rivers such as the Lena, the Yenisei, and the Ob<sup>95</sup>.

Brazil-Russia cooperation do not only take place in a bilateral form but also in the form of the BRICS working group on cooperation in oceanic and polar research zones with the aim of coastal Arctic exploration. In 2015 at the meeting of BRICS, China's representatives proposed organising expeditions to the East Siberian Sea, the Chukchi Sea, the Kara Sea and the Laptev Sea to examine the processes that are crucial for environmental protection of the Arctic<sup>96</sup>.

94 Avdaliani E. The Expansion of the International North-South Transport Corridor: Geopolitical Updates // The Silk Road Briefing. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2023/04/04/the-expansion-of-the-international-north-south-transport-corridor-geopolitical-updates> / (Date of access: 18.05.2023)

95 Scientists from Russia and Brazil are working on projects in the field of environmental safety in the basins of the Amazon and the Arctic rivers of Siberia // Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. 28.04.2022. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo/50737> / (Date of access: 05.03.2023)

96 Joint statement on the 4th meeting // BRICS. 2021. URL: <https://brics.land-ocean.ru/> (Date of access: 05.03.2023)

## 2.5. Russia's cooperation with other non-Arctic countries

Bilateral cooperation of Russia and South Korea in the Arctic began to intensify in 2017. At the Eastern Economic Forum in the same year, the concept of the Nine Bridges was proposed, which includes the main areas of interaction in the Arctic<sup>97</sup>. In 2020, Korean and Russian representatives signed a Joint Statement on the Implementation Plan for the Nine Bridges Concept of Russian-Korean Trade and Economic Cooperation Version 2.0 that became the roadmap for further cooperation between the countries<sup>98</sup>. In addition, the states have held annual Russian-Korean Arctic consultations at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2017<sup>99</sup>.

In 2016, Russia and Japan introduced the Cooperation plan consisting of eight clauses, which was supposed to become the framework for implementation of numerous bilateral projects in the Arctic<sup>100</sup>, including those in the field of transportation and energy.

One of the main directions of Russian-Japanese cooperation is LNG production. Currently, Russia accounts for about 10% of Japanese LNG imports<sup>101</sup>. In 2018, two Japanese energy companies («JOGMEC» and «Seibu Gas») signed memoranda of understanding regarding the projects on the Yamal Peninsula, including those with «Novatek»<sup>102</sup>. In 2019, the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation JOGMEC together with the «Mitsui & Co» consortium obtained a 10%-share in the Novatek's Arctic LNG-2 project<sup>103</sup>. Japanese input into the project accounted for \$3 billion but in spring 2022 the country stopped financing and froze investments<sup>104</sup>.

## 3. Priorities and perspectives of international sustainable development cooperation in the Arctic

Over the past decades, international cooperation in the Arctic region in the field of sustainable development has become more intensive both in terms of quantity and quality. Countries have strengthened cooperation through multilateral institutions as well as on bilateral basis. In general, it is possible to identify several priority areas for international cooperation in the Arctic in the field of sustainable development.

97 Ibid.

98 "Nine bridges" of interaction // Sea news of Russia.5.10.2021. URL: <http://www.morvesti.ru/themes/1699/91958/> (Date of access: 10.08.2022)

99 Leksyutina Y. V. China and India in the Arctic: interests, strategies, and cooperation with Russia // Ojkumena. Regional researches. 2019. № 4. P. 40–48. DOI: 10.24866/1998-6785/2019-4/40-48 [https://ojkum.ru/images/articles/2019-4/2019\\_4\\_40-48.pdf](https://ojkum.ru/images/articles/2019-4/2019_4_40-48.pdf)

100 The Japanese Prime Minister presented Putin with an eight-point cooperation plan // RBC.7.09.2016. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/05/2016/572d10399a7947c413bf3020> (Date of access: 10.08.2022)

101 Shipping boss says Japan has no choice but to buy Russian gas // Financial Times. URL: <https://www.ft.com/content/01ea5892-a13c-4e3c-95a1-e2c2ee4efdae> (Date of access: 10.08.2022)

102 Streltsov D. V. The Russian direction of Japan's policy in the Arctic // Japanese Studies. 2021. № 2. C. 110–126.

103 Ibid

104 NOVATEK will specify the launch dates and ways of financing Arctic LNG 2// Interfax. 21.04.2022. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/business/836126> (Date of access: 10.08.2022)



### 3.1. Environmental protection and combating climate change

The issues of climate change and the preservation of Arctic ecosystems play a significant role in international cooperation in the Arctic. Russia takes part in projects in this area on a bilateral and multilateral basis, including initiatives implemented on the basis of international platforms, such as the Arctic Council and the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council.

Arctic council (AC) is a key international institution for multilateral cooperation on environmental protection and climate change mitigation in the Arctic. From the historical perspective, the AC has always performed functions related to environmental protection and climate change mitigation. In 1991 Arctic countries adopted Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS)<sup>105</sup>. For the purposes of strategy implementation Arctic countries agreed on launching the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP)<sup>106</sup>. The goal of AMAP was to analyze and assess the pollution processes in the region, as well as climate change processes in the Arctic. The AC was founded on the basis of AMAP in 1996 with Arctic countries signing Ottawa declaration on the establishment of the Arctic council<sup>107</sup>. The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was established under AC in 1998<sup>108</sup>. Under the auspices of the AC, the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA) was signed in 2013<sup>109</sup>.

In 2018, to prevent unregulated fishing in the high seas section of the central Arctic Ocean by implementing sustainable use measures for fish resources, Arctic countries have signed an Agreement to prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean<sup>110</sup>. As part of this agreement, a joint research program should be established to gain knowledge and expertise on the marine ecosystem of the central Arctic Ocean and subsequently develop approaches to sustainable marine fisheries.

Another important format for multilateral cooperation in the Arctic is the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)<sup>111</sup>, of which the Regional Council is a part. The Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Regional Council facilitate regional cross-border cooperation between Russian regions and Arctic regions of Norway, Finland and Sweden<sup>112</sup>.

105 Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy // Arctic portal. URL: [http://library.arcticportal.org/1542/1/artic\\_environment.pdf](http://library.arcticportal.org/1542/1/artic_environment.pdf) (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

106 The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme // AMAP. URL: <https://www.amap.no/about> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

107 Declaration on the establishment of the Arctic council // Arctic council. URL: [https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/85/EDOCS-1752-v2-ACMMCA00\\_Ottawa\\_1996\\_Founding\\_Declaration.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y](https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/85/EDOCS-1752-v2-ACMMCA00_Ottawa_1996_Founding_Declaration.PDF?sequence=5&isAllowed=y) (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

108 Terms of Reference for a Sustainable Development Program // Arctic council. URL: <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/1658> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

109 Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic // Arctic council. URL: [https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/529/EDOCS-2068-v1-ACMMSE08\\_KIRUNA\\_2013\\_agreement\\_on\\_oil\\_pollution\\_preparedness\\_and\\_response\\_signedAppendices\\_Original\\_130510.PDF?sequence=6&isAllowed=y](https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/529/EDOCS-2068-v1-ACMMSE08_KIRUNA_2013_agreement_on_oil_pollution_preparedness_and_response_signedAppendices_Original_130510.PDF?sequence=6&isAllowed=y) (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

110 Agreement to prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean // FAO of UN. URL: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mul199323.pdf> (Date of access: 20.05.2022)

111 Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region // The Barents Euro-Arctic Council. URL: <https://www.barents-council.org> (Date of access: 26.05.2022)

112 Konyshov V., Sergunin A. International Organizations and Arctic Cooperation // International Organisations Research Journal. 2011. №3. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mezhdunarodnye-organizatsii-i-sotrudnichestvo-v-arktike> (Date of access: 20.05.2022)



In 1992, Russia and Norway signed an Agreement on cooperation in the field of environmental protection and established a Joint Russian-Norwegian commission on cooperation in the field of environmental protection<sup>113</sup>.

It should be noted that cooperation in the field of environmental protection and climate change in the new international political realities has been significantly limited. Firstly, the Arctic countries decided to suspend cooperation with Russia within the framework of the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Secondly, interaction between the Arctic countries and Russia at the bilateral level has been curtailed.

### **3.2. Transport and logistics**

The Polar Code was signed in 2014 under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization and entered into force in 2017<sup>114</sup>. The main purpose of the Code is to ensure the safe operation of ships, as well as to protect the environment in polar regions regarding the risks posed by the decreasing area and thickness of ice in the Arctic Ocean.

In the context of cooperation in the area of transport and logistics another important issue is maritime safety. In 2011, an Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic was adopted under the auspices of the Arctic Council<sup>115</sup>. This agreement obliges countries to exchange the information and data, including in real time, to facilitate access of rescue vessels and aircrafts to disaster areas located in the territorial waters of respective countries, and to conduct joint exercises. In addition to this agreement, the Arctic Council's working group on Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response has implemented a number of projects aimed at strengthening cooperation in search and rescue at sea, including joint exercises<sup>116</sup>.

Another regional international institution aimed at cooperation in maritime search and rescue is the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which was established in 2015 during a meeting of Arctic coastal nations in the United States. The forum is based on the Joint Statement of Intent to Strengthen Cooperation among Coast Guard Agencies, as well as the forum's terms of reference<sup>117</sup>. The forum also included the «Arctic Guardian» exercise in 2017 and the Polaris exercise in 2019<sup>118</sup>.

113 Overenskomst mellom Kongeriget Norges regjering og den Russiske Føderasjons regjering om samarbeid på miljøvernområdet // Regjeringen. URL: [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/66b54513e82d453c88f030135513d582/overenskomst\\_av\\_1992\\_no.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/66b54513e82d453c88f030135513d582/overenskomst_av_1992_no.pdf) (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

114 Shipping in polar waters // International Maritime Organization. 2017. URL: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Polar-default.aspx> (Date of access: 20.05.2022)

115 Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic was adopted under the auspices of the Arctic Council // Arctic council. URL: [https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/531/EDOCS-1912-v1-ACMMDK07\\_Nuuk\\_2011\\_Arctic\\_SAR\\_Agreement\\_unsigned\\_RU.PDF?sequence=6&isAllowed=y](https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/531/EDOCS-1912-v1-ACMMDK07_Nuuk_2011_Arctic_SAR_Agreement_unsigned_RU.PDF?sequence=6&isAllowed=y) (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

116 International Cooperation to Develop Arctic Emergency Preparedness // EPPR. URL: <https://eppr.org/projects/arctic-rescue/> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

117 Joint Statement of the Intent to Further Develop Multilateral Cooperation of Agencies Representing Coast Guard Functions // Arctic portal. URL: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/2497060/joint-statement-draft-25-march-no-track-changes.pdf> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

118 Arctic Guardian Exercise in Search and Rescue and Marine Environmental Response in the Arctic // The Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF). URL: <https://www.arcticcoastguardforum.com/news/arctic-guardian-acgfs-first-operational-exercise-successfully-completed> (Date of access: 05.05.2023) Live Exercise Polaris 2019 // The Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) (official resource). URL: <https://www.arcticcoastguardforum.com/news/live-exercise-polaris-2019> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)



The largest infrastructure project in the Arctic is the Northern Sea Route. A number of international initiatives within this project are related to the construction of Arctic-class icebreakers and gas carriers. For example, Russia and Finland have extensive experience in the production of icebreakers. Until 2022, joint Russian-Finnish projects to build icebreakers were implemented<sup>119</sup>.

In the context of the deepening international political crisis, opportunities for cooperation in transport and logistics within the Arctic region have diminished. In particular, projects aimed at joint construction of icebreakers and other vessels capable of sailing in Arctic waters have ceased to exist<sup>120</sup>. Opportunities for cooperation at the level of coast guards and maritime security have also narrowed<sup>121</sup>.

On the other hand, Russia's cooperation with non-Arctic countries, especially on the development of the Northern Sea Route, has been preserved. The development of cooperation with non-Arctic countries, which have taken a constructive stance toward Russia, on the infrastructural development of the Northern Sea Route was noted as a priority in the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation adopted in 2023<sup>122</sup>.

The interaction with China occupies a special place in this case. In 2015, the Chinese side published the "Concept of the Action Plan to Promote the Joint Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road"<sup>123</sup>, which implies China's involvement in cooperation in the Arctic region on the development of Russian northern routes. Also, in 2015, the Russian Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and China's State Committee for Development and Reforms signed an agreement on cooperation on the Northern Sea Route<sup>124</sup>. In 2017, the State Oceanographic Administration and China's National Development and Reform Committee jointly published the "One Belt, One Road Maritime Cooperation Concept," which proposed adding one more route, via the Arctic Ocean, to the "traditional" China-European routes<sup>125</sup>. Finally, in March 2023 an agreement was reached to establish a joint Russian-Chinese working body on the development of the NSR<sup>126</sup>. On May 17, 2023 there was a meeting of the RF President with the members of the Government, which focused on

119 Russia and Finland intend to cooperate in the construction of icebreakers and the development of the Arctic // Portnews, 2021.

URL: <https://portnews.ru/news/313432/> (Date of access: 20.05.2022)

120 Finland did not issue an export license for the icebreaker construction project for Norilsk Nickel// TASS.

URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15949811> (Date of access: 05.05.2023)

121 Norwegian-Russian Preparedness Exercise in the Barents Sea Cancelled // The High North News.

URL: <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/norwegian-russian-preparedness-exercise-barents-sea-cancelled> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

122 Decree on approval of Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation) // President of Russia,

URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70811> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

123 Concept of the Action Plan to Promote the Joint Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road // Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

URL: [http://kz.china-embassy.gov.cn/rus/qygz/201503/t20150331\\_1044050.htm](http://kz.china-embassy.gov.cn/rus/qygz/201503/t20150331_1044050.htm) (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

124 Hsiung C. The Emergence of a Sino-Russian Economic Partnership in the Arctic // The Arctic Institute. 19.05.2020.

URL: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/emergence-sino-russian-economic-partnership-arctic/> (Date of access: 26.04.2022)

125 One Belt, One Road Initiative as a New Model of China's Cooperation with Russia and Central Asian Countries) // RUDN Journal of World History. 2018. Vol. 10. №. 4. P. 382-392.

126 Russian-Chinese talks // President of Russia. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/351/events/70748> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

the development of the NSR<sup>127</sup>. During the speech of the Minister for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic it was noted that China, India and other countries of South-East Asia show a growing interest in the use of the NSR. The interest on the part of foreign partners was also noted during the speech of the President himself in the framework of the said meeting. Strengthening cooperation with Russia on the development of the NSR is also actively considered by India<sup>128</sup>.

### 3.3. Energy

International energy projects are carried out primarily in the field of oil production, geological exploration, and the production of liquefied natural gas, but given the importance and severity of the climate problem, initiatives are gradually being put forward to develop renewable energy. Russia's main technological partner in the oil and gas industry is China, whose projects include joint drilling of exploration wells in the Sea of Okhotsk at the Magadan-1 and Lisyansky sites<sup>129</sup>, use of the Chinese «Nanhai VIII» semi-submersible drilling platform (SSDR), and joint production of liquefied natural gas<sup>130</sup>. The key projects in this area of cooperation are Yamal LNG, which resulted in the construction of an integrated gas treatment and liquefaction plant by Chinese company «CNPC» and Russian company «Novatek» and «Arctic LNG-2», which plans to build three process lines for LNG production<sup>131</sup> (SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy).

At the Think Arctic conference «The Eastern Dimension of International Cooperation in the Arctic» it was noted that the energy sector plays a key role in Russian-Japanese relations. Japanese companies are involved in the Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2 projects. During the event it was noted that Japan to a large extent relies on energy imports from Russia. Apart from the Middle East region Russia is one of the largest suppliers of energy resources to Japan. This state of affairs requires developing a constructive position on the part of both Russia and Japan and building mutually beneficial bilateral relations. The constructive position of both countries regarding the formats of legal registration of Japanese participation in the Sakhalin-2 project was positively mentioned.

### 3.4. Science and education

Interaction at the level of scientific and expert communities, as well as data exchange and joint research are playing a key role in the framework of international cooperation in the field of sustainable development.

127 Meeting with Government members// President of Russia. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71146> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

128 The Ministry for the Development of the Far East said that India is considering the creation of a container line on the NSR // TASS. URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/17390629> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

129 China Oilfield Services Limited will perform drilling within the framework of the Rosneft and Statoil project in the Sea of Okhotsk. 02.09.2015. [Electronic resource] // Oil and capital. URL: <https://oilcapital.ru/news/upstream/02-09-2015/china-oilfield-services-vypolnit-burenie-v-ram-kah-proekta-rosnefti-i-statoil-v-ohotskom-more> (Date of access: 08.05.2023).

130 On the way to the Kara Sea. Drilling platforms Arctic and Nanhai VIII left the port of Murmansk // Neftegaz. (2018). URL: <https://neftegaz.ru/news/Geological-exploration/199847-na-puti-k-karskomu-moryu-burovye-platformy-arkticheskaya-i-nanhai-viii-vyshli-iz-porta-murmansk/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)

131 Arctic LNG 2 Project. // Novatek. (n.d.). Business. URL: <https://www.novatek.ru/ru/business/arctic-lng/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)



In 2017, the Agreement on Enhancing International Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic was adopted<sup>132</sup>. The largest international platform in this area is the University of the Arctic (UArctic<sup>133</sup>), which brings together universities and training centers involved in Arctic research.

Scientific cooperation in the Arctic has always been seen as a way to maintain an ongoing dialogue between the countries of the region, despite the worsening political situation<sup>134</sup>. The activities of the Arctic Council, the International Arctic Science Committee, the International Arctic Social Science Association, the International Science Initiative in the Russian Arctic (ISIRA), the Russian - American Pacific Partnership (RAPP), «Horizon 2020», and the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council conferences are also aimed at reducing tensions in the interaction between Arctic countries.

Nevertheless, in the context of the deepening international political crisis, cooperation in science and education, both in multilateral formats<sup>135</sup> and at the bilateral level<sup>136</sup>, was curtailed. On the other hand, Russia's interaction with non-Arctic countries has intensified. In particular, in 2022, the Russian-Asian Consortium for Arctic Studies was established on the basis of NEFU, whose participants included academic, research, professional and educational institutions from Russia and Asia<sup>137</sup>.

### **3.5. Support for the residents and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic**

Indigenous peoples, as well as other local communities, are an important part of the Arctic's sociocultural landscape. The challenge of securing the rights of indigenous peoples in the Arctic is further complicated by the fact that some indigenous groups are dispersed across several states.

The Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group currently has a number of projects supporting indigenous peoples<sup>138</sup>. Other formats for international cooperation to support indigenous peoples and other local communities include the **International Union for Circumpolar Health**<sup>139</sup>, which addresses the health and needs of the peoples of the North, and **the World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples**<sup>140</sup>, which is held every four years and is supported by Russia and Finland.

- 132 Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation // Arctic council. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/542624227> (Date of access: 26.04.2022) China & The Arctic: A View to 2050 // UArctic. URL: <https://www.uarctic.org/news/2021/4/china-the-arctic-a-view-to-2050/> (Date of access: 26.04.2022)
- 133 China & The Arctic: A View to 2050. 19.04.2021. [Electronic resource] // UArctic. URL: <https://www.uarctic.org/news/2021/4/china-the-arctic-a-view-to-2050/> (Date of access: 26.04.2022).
- 134 Tishkov, A.A. (2020). Mezhdunarodnoye nauchnoe sotrudnichestvo v Arktike: priority v period predsedatelstva Rossii b Arkticheskom Sovete (2021-2023) [International scientific cooperation in the Arctic: priorities during Russia's Chairmanship in the Arctic Council (2021-2023)]. International Cooperation, 1, 32–39.
- 135 Russian Membership Paused // UArctic URL: <https://www.uarctic.org/members/member-profiles/russia/> (Date of access 08.05.2023)
- 136 Regjeringen fryser forsknings- og utdanningssamarbeidet med Russland // Regjeringen (Official resource). URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/regjeringen-fryser-forsknings-og-utdanningssamarbeidet-med-russland/id2903021/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)
- 137 The Russian-Asian Arctic Research Consortium was created on the basis of NEFU // Arctic. URL: <https://ru.arctic.ru/international/20220614/1001928.html> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)
- 138 Arctic demography index. [Electronic resource] // Sustainable Development Working Group. URL: <https://sdwg.org/what-we-do/projects/arctic-demography-index/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023).
- 139 International congresses. // International Union for Circumpolar Health. URL: <https://iuch.net/meetings/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023)
- 140 Eighth World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples. // Fenno-Ugria. URL: <https://fennougria.ee/ru/predstavitelstva/vsermirnye-kongressy/vosmoj/> (Date of access: 08.05.2023).

### **3.6. Sustainable tourism**

The Arctic region, by virtue of its unique natural, climatic, and geographical properties, has considerable potential for tourism development. Nevertheless, at present, the development of sustainable tourism is more of a potential area of cooperation, some aspects of which are incorporated into the Arctic strategies of states, including Russia.

It should be noted that in the context of cooperation in the field of sustainable development, Arctic tourism plays a dual role. Firstly, the development of sustainable tourism in the region will improve the economic situation, contribute to the development of the urban environment and infrastructure, and create new jobs (SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 - Industrialization, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Towns). On the other hand, the Arctic as a unique natural region disposes to the creation of environmentally sustainable tourism, with a focus on "rapprochement with nature" and recreation, so the work in this area is consistent with SDG 15 - Life on Land.

### **3.7. Prospects for the development of international cooperation in the field of sustainable development of the Arctic**

Harsh tension of the international politics in 2022 had a serious impact on the interaction between countries within the existing institutions and cooperation platforms in the Arctic. During the Think Arctic project session "**Multilateral cooperation in the Arctic through the lens of international Arctic organizations: a situational analysis**", 4 main scenarios for the potential development of international cooperation in the region were identified, based on two parameters: the rate of post-crisis economic recovery and the degree of conflict in international relations.

In case of high rates of post-crisis recovery and a low degree of conflict in international relations, **scenario 1 - "Arctic reset"** will be implemented. This scenario assumes the most active development of international cooperation in the Arctic region. The high functionality of international organizations in the Arctic will be spurred by a fairly rapid recovery of the world economy and the readiness of countries to invest in new international projects. This will facilitate the conclusion of new international agreements in the Arctic, investment in existing projects and working groups of the Arctic Council, the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council, and the creation of new working groups with a narrower focus on the problems of the Arctic region, such as regulation of navigation in polar waters and related environmental damage and adaptation to climate change in certain areas in the Arctic.

This scenario is characterized by the low fragmentation of the system of Arctic multilateral cooperation, which is largely due to Russia's ability to get involved in previous cooperation formats, being perceived by other Arctic countries as a full-fledged actor in the Arctic within the traditional cooperation formats. As a result, such international cooperation institutions as the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and others will continue their work in their previous formats.

In addition, international cooperation in the Arctic would not be limited to environmental protection and climate change mitigation. In the case of this scenario, it is possible to implement international projects aimed at economic development, joint scientific research, and support for indigenous peoples and other local communities.

**Scenario 2 “Isolation of Russia”** describes the state of international cooperation in the Arctic when international relations remain at high degree of conflict and post-crisis economic growth is high. Under this scenario, Russia is excluded from the key formats of international interaction in the region. Isolation of a key player from the architecture of multilateral cooperation in the Arctic will reduce the functionality of international organizations in the region, including the Arctic Council. Programs of cross-border cooperation with the EU – «Kolarctic», «Karelia» and «Russia - Southeast Finland» will be put on pause. It is likely that a small part of the projects will be developed without Russian participation, including a number of projects in the Arctic Council working groups and BEAC. Various scientific cooperation platforms, including the International Arctic Science Committee and the University of the Arctic, will continue their work, but the weight of these formats is likely to fall due to the absence of Russia as a key state in the region. Due to its isolation, Russia will be deprived of the opportunity to effectively defend its interests on international platforms in the Arctic.

Nevertheless, the high rates of post-crisis recovery will ensure higher global demand for energy resources, and the relatively higher profitability of Arctic transport corridors. As a result, non-Arctic countries will involve more actively in various formats of regional cooperation in the sphere of sustainable development. It is likely that the list of the Arctic Council observer countries will be expanded, and new projects with the participation of non-Arctic countries will be created. Moreover, non-Arctic countries will participate more actively in other international regimes, by analogy with the Agreement on the Prevention of Unregulated Fishing on the High Seas in the Central Part of the Arctic Ocean, which China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the European Union have joined. However, under this scenario, the increased interest of non-Arctic countries will not automatically translate into advanced interaction with Russia because of secondary U.S. sanctions. Overall, the window of opportunity for Russia to implement projects in multilateral formats will narrow in the short term.

The isolation of Russia within the existing institutions of international cooperation will lay the groundwork for strengthening the fragmentation of regional cooperation relationships in the field of sustainable development. Nevertheless, the emergence of alternative venues for cooperation is unlikely in the short term.

In this scenario, the priorities of international institutions for cooperation on sustainable development in the Arctic will narrow to politically neutral issues related to environmental protection and combating climate change.

**Scenario 3 “Arctic without Borders”** involves a combination of a slow post-crisis economic recovery and a low level of conflict in international relations. If this scenario materializes,



the institutions of international cooperation on sustainable development in the Arctic, including the Arctic Council, the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council, and cross-border cooperation programs between the European Union and Russia will continue their work in the former format. However, low rates of economic growth will result in low interest from key regional actors in stepping up activities in the Arctic. As a result, under this scenario, the emergence of new international institutions aimed at cooperation on specific problems of socio-economic nature, the conclusion of large-scale sectoral agreements, and the implementation of projects related to the economic development of the region are unlikely in the short term.

Due to the low sanctions pressure in this scenario, Russia may have opportunities to promote its interests and agenda on international platforms in the Arctic, its inclusion in the activities of key structures in the Arctic - the Arctic Council and the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council will increase the political weight and functionality of these organizations. Also in this scenario, former and new channels of expanding alternative foreign economic and political ties may be preserved, including by reducing the scale of the secondary U.S. sanctions on Russia's partners. In this regard, Russia will be able to maintain and increase the number of joint projects with China and India in the Arctic region.

The low level of conflict in international relations in general will determine the interest of non-Arctic states in multilateral cooperation in the Arctic, but the slow global economic recovery will act as a deterrent to the involvement of non-Arctic countries in the region in the short term and will not create a foundation for their rapid inclusion in international projects in the Arctic.

The low pace of post-crisis development will make it unlikely that the agenda for international cooperation in the region will be extended to problems related to the socio-economic well-being of the residents of the Arctic region. On the other hand, due to the low level of conflict in international relations, there are still great opportunities for socio-cultural interaction in the Arctic region, technological transfer, research on Arctic ecosystems and Arctic monitoring, due to the low impact of sanctions and the involvement in multilateral cooperation in the Arctic of actors largely interested in studying climate change processes in the region, including China and India.

Finally, **scenario 4 "Stagnation in Arctic Cooperation"** implies both low rates of post-crisis economic recovery and a high level of conflict in international relations.

International multilateral formats in the Arctic (the Arctic Council, the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council, the Northern Dimension, the Northern Forum, the International Arctic Science Committee, the University of the Arctic, etc.) will be characterized by low functionality caused by the general economic recession and a high level of disagreement among participants. Existing projects will be suspended and delayed, and new initiatives will probably not be implemented.

In addition, due to the weak recovery of the world economy after the recession, cash flows of the Arctic states will be redirected to the recovery of national economies, which will lead to a lack of financial resources for the active development of the Arctic.



Due to the reduced functionality of the most international of platforms, the Arctic Council may remain the main platform for cooperation in the Arctic, whose functions will be minimized. Other international platforms, the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council, Northern Dimension, the University of the Arctic, etc., will probably continue their activities, but with very limited functionality and a reduced number of projects in which Russia will not take part.

In this scenario, the international cooperation agenda in the field of sustainable development will be limited. Political tensions and low rates of post-crisis growth will lead to an inability to implement sectoral projects, as well as a decrease in the intensity of socio-cultural interaction and cooperation in the field of environmental protection and combating climate change.

# Socio-economic challenges of Arctic zone of Russian Federation

In the Arctic regions of Russia , below the poverty line is:

**8%**

Murmansk  
Oblast

**9%**

Nenets  
Autonomous Okrug

**4,5%**

Yamalo-Nenets  
Autonomous Okrug

**4,7%**

Chukotka  
Autonomous Okrug

**14,5%**

Krasnoyarsk Krai

**14%**

Komi Republic

**13%**

Republic of Karelia

**11,8%**

Arkhangelsk Oblast

**15,6%**

Republic of Sakha

## Arctic energy



~ **12 000**

diesel power stations are in operation  
in the Russian Arctic



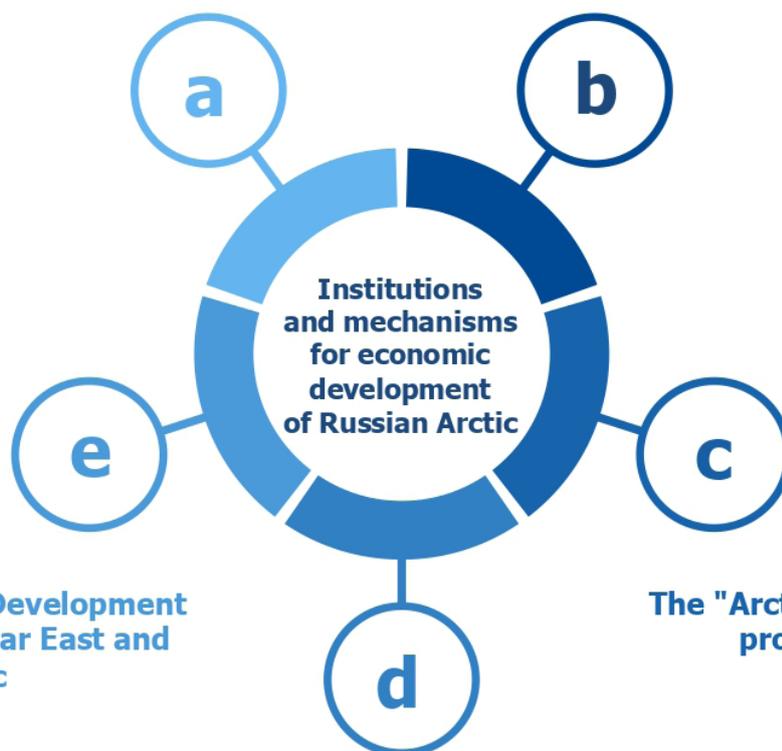
**80%**

of the country's natural gas is  
produced in the Arctic

# Institutions and mechanisms for economic development of Russian Arctic

State Commission  
for Arctic Development

The Federal Law "On State  
Support of Entrepreneurial  
Activity in the Arctic Zone  
of the Russian Federation"



Ministry for the Development  
of the Russian Far East and  
Arctic

The "Arctic Hectare"  
program

The area of advanced  
development "Capital  
of the Arctic"

# The "Arctic Hectare" program



**11 000**

applications for a hectare were  
received in 2023



**~3 500**

contracts were concluded



**69%**

of applicants use land  
for individual housing construction



**11%**

of applicants use land  
for agriculture



**9%**

of applicants use land  
for business

# Key priorities of international cooperation in the Arctic and main international institutions and projects



## Protecting the environment and combating climate change

- Arctic council
- Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic
- Agreement to prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean
- Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)
- Joint Russian-Norwegian commission on cooperation in the field of environmental protection



## Science and education

- UArctic
- International Arctic Science Committee
- International Arctic Social Science Association
- International Science Initiative in the Russian Arctic (ISIRA)
- Russian - American Pacific Partnership (RAPP)
- Russian-Asian Consortium for Arctic Studies



## Transport and logistics

- Polar code
- Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic Coast Guard Forum
- Agreement between the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the State Committee for Development and Reforms of the PRC on cooperation along the Northern Sea Route



## Energy

- joint drilling of exploration wells in the Sea of Okhotsk at the Magadan-1 and Lisyansky sites
- Yamal LNG
- Arctic LNG-2
- Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2



## Support for the residents and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic

- International Union for Circumpolar Health
- World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples