



Vivekananda
International
Foundation



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

UNITING NORTH AND SOUTH

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC



OUTCOME REPORT



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**UNITING
NORTH AND SOUTH**

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN THE ARCTIC

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Editor's Note

On March 20, 2025, the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), in collaboration with The Northern Forum (NF), convened a high-level, one-day international conference titled “*Uniting North and South for Sustainable Development in the Arctic.*” The event provided a timely and vital platform for in-depth dialogue on Arctic geopolitics, environmental imperatives, and the expanding prospects for India-Russia cooperation in the region.

The conference brought together a distinguished assembly of diplomats, policymakers, scholars, and institutional representatives from India, Russia, and other Arctic stakeholders. Their collective engagement underscored the growing global interest in the Arctic, and the importance of inclusive, multilateral dialogue in shaping its future.

The conference was, perhaps, the largest gathering of experts on the Arctic, in India, after the release of India's Arctic Policy in 2022. The highlight of the conference was the in-person participation of over 40 participants from overseas, including Russia, Japan and Italy. The majority of the Russian delegates were from the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), located in the Russian Far East, the largest administrative territory within the Arctic and one of the most expansive regions in the world. Covering over 3 million square kilometres, it is nearly the size of India. However, while India is home to over 1.4 billion people, the Sakha Republic has a population of just under one million.

The conference was successful due to the combined institution wide efforts for both, the VIF as well as the Northern Forum. Efforts of the following toward making the conference arrangements and addressing the professional and logistics aspects, are particularly noteworthy.

- Daryana Maksimova, Deputy Director, The Northern Forum
- Aleksandra Ponomareva, Project Manager, The Northern Forum
- Dr Pravesh Kumar Gupta, Associate Fellow, VIF
- Heena Samant, Research Associate, VIF

The session wise proceedings of the conference are summarised in the succeeding paragraphs. For '*Busy Eyes*', the conference recommendations, distilled from the panellists' suggestions and discussions, are listed at the beginning itself.

Anurag Bisen
Senior Fellow, VIF

Policy Recommendations

Session I (Scientific Cooperation for the Future: Challenges and Prospects for Arctic Research)

- **Institutionalise Scientific Diplomacy and Indo-Russian Cooperation** It was recommended that India and Russia establish a formal institutional framework for Arctic collaboration, potentially through the creation of an Indo-Russian Arctic Research Office. Such a body would facilitate long-term strategic research planning, enable academic and technological exchanges, and serve as a platform for coordinated initiatives on issues such as climate modelling, permafrost monitoring, and renewable energy deployment in polar regions.
- **Expand India's Engagement through Observer State Mechanisms** India was encouraged to further leverage its observer status in the Arctic Council and related forums by supporting long-term research programs, environmental assessments, and multilateral dialogues. This would help strengthen India's role as a constructive global stakeholder in Arctic governance and science-policy integration.
- **Foster Knowledge Exchange between Cryosphere Regions** Enhancing collaboration between research institutions working in the Arctic and the Himalayas was identified as a priority. Comparative studies across these cryosphere regions, including International Polar Year in 2032-2033, would improve understanding of shared vulnerabilities and adaptive responses. Joint expeditions, data-sharing platforms, and integrated forecasting systems were proposed as practical measures to advance this objective.
- **Scientific Research and Education** Recommendations included launching joint research projects focused on Arctic meteorology, climate change, oceanography, glaciology, and permafrost studies. Opportunities were identified for collaboration through initiatives such as the Russian-Asian Consortium of Arctic Research (RACAR), Arctic Floating University, the Snowflake International Arctic Station, the ICE BASE of the Russian Geographical Society, and the ice-resistant platform "North Pole." Strengthening research collaboration through the BRICS scientific centre and Arctic field stations was also proposed as a way to deepen scientific ties.
- **Energy and Digital Transformation** The forum underscored the need to prioritise the deployment of renewable energy solutions in remote Arctic regions to ensure sustainability. It was also

recommended to advance the digitisation of electric power systems, thereby improving management efficiency and supporting regional development.

- **Construction and Infrastructure** The creation of a Russian-Indian project office for designing buildings suited to extreme Arctic conditions was recommended. Attracting Indian students to Siberian universities for specialised Arctic education was encouraged to build a future skilled workforce. In addition, the organisation of regular Indo-Russian scientific expeditions to Arctic regions was proposed, along with developing pantotherapy centers based on traditional reindeer products for joint healthcare initiatives.
- **Promote Youth Participation and Academic Mobility** The inclusion of early-career researchers, scholars, and students in Arctic research networks was seen as essential to sustaining long-term scientific engagement. Public diplomacy initiatives through platforms like the Project Office for Arctic Development (PORA) were supported to foster international collaboration. Educational, outreach, and Arctic tourism programs aimed at children and youth from India and Russia's Arctic regions were proposed to nurture future generations' interest and expertise in Arctic affairs.
- **Integrate Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Dimensions in Research** A multidisciplinary and inclusive approach to Arctic studies—one that incorporates Indigenous perspectives, artistic expressions, and local knowledge systems—was advocated. This would enrich scientific discourse and support culturally sensitive models of sustainable development. Platforms that bridge science with creative and community-based knowledge were encouraged.
- **Develop Climate Security Frameworks Involving Arctic and Non-Arctic States** The panel proposed the formulation of international risk assessment mechanisms that account for climate-induced disruptions in the Arctic. India, with its advanced scientific capabilities and geopolitical engagement, was encouraged to contribute to scenario-based modelling and the design of integrated frameworks for climate resilience, particularly in vulnerable regions.

Session II (A fair world order: development and challenges of international cooperation in the Arctic in the era of turbulence)

- **Technological and Digital Cooperation** It was recommended to develop bilateral platforms for joint work in artificial intelligence, blockchain, digital connectivity, and smart Arctic infrastructure. Joint ventures in satellite communications, climate monitoring technologies, and secure cross-border financial transactions using blockchain and Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) were also proposed. Furthermore, initiatives for digital education of Indigenous Arctic youth, development of smart settlements, and public-private partnerships in digital and energy sectors were encouraged to build a resilient, technology-enabled Arctic.
- **Transport, Logistics, and Industrial Cooperation** Continuing the development of joint transport corridors such as the Chennai–Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and the North-South Corridor was strongly recommended. Prospects for cooperation in Arctic shipbuilding

and logistics infrastructure were discussed, with emphasis on leveraging the industrial base of the Chelyabinsk Region to supply equipment, engineering solutions, and technology for Arctic development projects.

- **Energy Sector Collaboration** Expanding cooperation beyond hydrocarbons to include nuclear energy and renewable energy sectors was emphasised. Participants highlighted India's strengths in offshore exploration and its potential contributions to mineral resource development in the Arctic zone.
- **Blue Economy and Marine Sustainability** Joint research initiatives in the blue economy were recommended, focusing on areas such as carbon-neutral shipping, eco-friendly port development, and marine habitat restoration. Establishing a structured bilateral working group was proposed to ensure sustained collaboration, with the aim of setting global benchmarks in marine sustainability and participating jointly in international forums.
- **Improving Tourism and Travel between Russia and India**
 - Resolving visa issues: Visa-free entry, Visa-free entry for tourist groups, Transit visa-free entry.
 - Increase bilateral flights: An increase in the number of flights connecting the countries with the resources of Indian air carriers.
 - Development of payment instruments for tourists arriving in Russia from India and vice versa.
 - Simplification of mutual settlements between travel companies in Russia and India.
 - Joint promotion of tourism opportunities of the countries, information exchange between travel companies, participation in national stands in tourism exhibitions of both countries.
- **Indian Professional Participation in Russia** Encourage the recruitment of Indian professionals in Russian academia and industry to foster deeper knowledge exchange, technical cooperation, and cultural understanding.
- **Economic Incentives for Indian Enterprises** Provide targeted incentives to Indian businesses investing in Arctic-related sectors such as green energy, shipbuilding, and logistics, promoting mutual industrial development.
- **Trade Balance and Market Access** Address the growing trade imbalance by reducing non-tariff barriers and increasing market opportunities for Indian products—especially pharmaceuticals and IT services—in Russia.
- **Investment in Satellite and Digital Infrastructure** Develop advanced satellite and communication networks to support reliable operations, data transmission, and emergency services in remote Arctic regions.

- **Joint Scientific and Technological Research** Strengthen bilateral cooperation in cutting-edge research areas, particularly climate science, digital innovation, and sustainable development technologies tailored to Arctic conditions.
- **Development of the jewelry and cutting cluster** Initiate policy steps to attract Indian companies to the jewelry and cutting cluster in Russia.
- **Strengthening interregional ties** To continue the development of sister city relations between Russia and India as well as regional cooperation within The Northern Forum.
- **Geopolitical Considerations** Finally, it was recommended to conduct a comprehensive analysis of external geopolitical factors, on the development of Russia-India relations in the Arctic.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The following MoU were also signed during the conference: -

1. Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi and The Northern Forum.
2. Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi and the Autonomous Non-Commercial Organisation “Expert Center – Project Office for Arctic Development (PORA)”, Moscow.
3. Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) and Russian Union of Travel Industry.
4. Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) and Russian Union of Travel Industry.





Plenary Session

Welcome Remarks:

- **Dr Arvind Gupta**, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation
- **Vladimir Vasilev**, Executive Director, The Northern Forum

Keynote Address:

- **Ambassador Pavan Kapoor**, Deputy National Security Advisor, GOI
- **Ambassador Vladislav Maslennikov**, Director, Department of European Problems, Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry (Online)

Speakers:

- **Ambassador Kanwal Sibal**, the Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University

- **Kim Borisov**, Deputy Chair, the Government of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Permanent Representative of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) in the Far East Federal District, Russia

Strengthening Ties between the North and South through cooperation between Yakutia and India

The proceedings commenced with opening remarks by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director of the Vivekananda International Foundation, and Mr. Vladimir Vasiliev, Executive Director of the Northern Forum. Both speakers laid the groundwork for the day's deliberations by underscoring the significance of the Arctic in global strategic and environmental contexts. They emphasized that in an era of increasing geopolitical fragmentation—exacerbated by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict—it is imperative to maintain and strengthen channels for international cooperation.

During the inaugural session, speakers highlighted the pressing need for structured dialogue between Arctic and non-Arctic states. It was unanimously agreed that the vision for sustainable development in the Arctic cannot be pursued in isolation. The region's complex challenges—ranging from climate change and environmental degradation to the management of natural resources—demand a collaborative, inclusive, and science-driven response. Several interventions stressed the necessity of building trust and fostering mutual understanding among stakeholders, which is essential for long-term regional stability and sustainable development.

Given the current impasse within the Arctic Council, which has historically served as the premier forum for Arctic governance, the conference emphasised the importance of identifying and utilising alternative mechanisms for constructive engagement. Within this framework, the evolving partnership between India and Russia was presented as a promising model. The dialogue examined how both nations could leverage their strategic relationship to promote sustainability, peace, and innovation in the Arctic.

The discussions also focused on the disproportionate impacts of climate change in the Arctic, where warming is occurring at a rate significantly faster than the global average. This alarming trend reinforced the urgency of enhancing joint research initiatives, fostering technological cooperation, and aligning policy efforts to mitigate climate-related risks. The potential for deeper scientific collaboration between India and Russia was especially noted, particularly in polar research, environmental monitoring, and energy transition technologies.

The presence of representatives from Japan and Italy was warmly acknowledged. Their participation contributed to a richer and more nuanced dialogue, reflecting the increasingly global nature of Arctic governance and development.

The opening remarks set a constructive tone, reaffirming the importance of multilateralism, dialogue, and shared responsibility in promoting sustainable development and preserving the ecological integrity of the Arctic.

Key Themes and Discussions

Arctic Climate Change and Environmental Impact The Arctic is experiencing unprecedented environmental transformation, with temperatures rising over three times faster than the global average. This accelerated warming has significant global implications, including rising sea levels, the loss of critical biodiversity, and the alarming release of methane gases from thawing permafrost. These developments highlight the urgent need for coordinated climate action, enhanced investment in Arctic research, and strengthened mitigation and adaptation strategies.

A key point of discussion was the deep interconnection between climate patterns in the Arctic and those in the Global South. Notably, changes in Arctic ice cover have been shown to directly affect monsoon dynamics in the Indian Ocean, which are vital to agricultural productivity and water security in developing countries such as India. As a result, participants underscored the importance of sustained international scientific collaboration in Arctic climate research as a means of building resilience against increasingly complex climate-related risks.

Geopolitical Developments and Arctic Governance The evolving geopolitical landscape has complicated traditional mechanisms of multilateral cooperation in the Arctic. The Arctic Council, historically a cornerstone of regional governance, has faced operational setbacks due to heightened tensions among member states. This reality has prompted renewed calls to revitalise Arctic governance through mechanisms that insulate environmental and scientific collaboration from political disruptions.

Participants explored the feasibility of alternative platforms for Arctic cooperation, including regional and multilateral forums. The increasing involvement of non-Arctic states was acknowledged as a positive development, particularly in light of their contributions to scientific research, infrastructure investment, and sustainable development initiatives. Enhanced engagement through platforms such as BRICS and the Northern Forum was recommended as a way to promote more inclusive, flexible, and resilient forms of Arctic governance.

Economic and Strategic Opportunities The Arctic holds vast economic potential, particularly in its untapped reserves of hydrocarbons, rare earth minerals, and marine resources. However, realising these opportunities must be approached with caution, ensuring that resource extraction aligns with international environmental norms and sustainable development goals. Emphasis was placed on responsible resource governance and the incorporation of environmental safeguards in all economic undertakings.

The Northern Sea Route (NSR) featured prominently in the dialogue as a strategic maritime corridor. As Arctic ice recedes, the NSR is emerging as a viable and significantly shorter shipping route between Europe and Asia, capable of reducing both transit time and fuel consumption. Collaborative efforts to

develop the NSR's supporting infrastructure, enhance navigational safety, and mitigate environmental risks were strongly recommended. Participants also noted that expanded use of the NSR could play a crucial role in strengthening global supply chains and facilitating energy trade between continents.

Scientific Research and Technological Collaboration Scientific cooperation was recognised as a central pillar of Arctic engagement for non-regional states. Establishing research stations, undertaking joint scientific expeditions, and participating in multilateral research initiatives were viewed as effective ways to contribute to the global body of Arctic knowledge. Technological innovation—particularly in the areas of satellite observation, remote sensing, and climate data modelling—was identified as critical to improving environmental monitoring and forecasting capabilities.

The conference encouraged the formation of multilateral scientific partnerships to address urgent issues such as glacial retreat, permafrost degradation, and loss of Arctic biodiversity. Participants advocated for the strengthening of bilateral agreements on polar research, the expansion of scientific exchange programs, and increased funding for Arctic-focused collaborative projects.

Strengthening People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges The cultural and social dimensions of Arctic cooperation received considerable attention. Participants emphasised the value of fostering people-to-people ties through cultural programs, educational exchanges, and academic collaboration. Indigenous communities in the Arctic were recognised as essential knowledge holders whose traditional practices can complement scientific inquiry and guide sustainable development strategies.

Non-Arctic states were encouraged to broaden their partnerships with Arctic universities and research institutions. Specific recommendations included the creation of joint academic programs, the facilitation of student and faculty mobility, and the integration of Indigenous perspectives into policy discussions. These initiatives are vital to ensuring that Arctic governance remains inclusive, culturally respectful, and informed by the lived experiences of local communities.



Session I : Scientific cooperation for the future: Challenges and prospects for research in the Arctic

Moderator:

Dr Uttam Sinha, Senior Fellow-MP IDSA, India

Speakers:

- **Dr Rasik Ravindra**, Current Chair, INSA National Committee for Scientific Committee on Antarctic Dr Research (SCAR)

India's scientific endeavours in the Arctic: Contributions to global efforts to Understand Arctic's role in global perspective

- **Roman Kuchin**, Rector, Yugra State University, Co-Chair, Russian-Asian Consortium of Arctic Research, Russia

Methods of Digital Processing of Operating Parameters in Electric Power Systems

- **Dr Manish Tiwari**, Group Director (Arctic Operations), NCPOR (Online)

India's Arctic program-Scientific Rationale and Way Forward

- **Prof Irina Strelnikova**, Associate Professor, Department of International Regional Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, researcher and expert CCEIS, HSE University, Russia
Prospects and Opportunities for Scientific and Technological Cooperation Between Russia and India in the Arctic
- **Dr Anu Gopinath**, Professor in Chemical Oceanography & Head of the Department of Aquatic Environment Management Institute, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies
Science Diplomacy and the Arctic- The Need for International Science Collaboration
- **Yuri Zakharinsky**, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Natural Resources and Ecology of the Legislative Assembly of the Krasnoyarsk krai, senior researcher at Siberian Federal University and the V.N. Sukachev Institute of Forestry, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia
Prospects for Scientific Cooperation, Interaction in Personnel Training, Development of Tourism in Krasnoyarsk Krai and India
- **Sherri Goodman**, Senior Fellow, Polar Institute and Environmental Change & Security (Recorded Interview)
- **Prof Nadezhda Kharlampeva**, Associate Professor, Department of World Politics, Faculty of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University; The Northern Forum Goodwill Ambassador, Russia
Culture and Art of Research for a Creative Arctic

Session I was moderated by Dr. Uttam Sinha, Senior Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), and featured a distinguished panel comprising prominent experts from India, Russia, and other international institutions.

The discussions brought forth the following key themes:

The Arctic as a Climate Regulator and Global Thermostat A prevailing topic of discussion was the Arctic's critical function as a global climate regulator. With the region warming at nearly four times the global average, panellists emphasised its significant impact on global weather systems, particularly the South Asian monsoon. The accelerated loss of Arctic Sea ice, alterations in oceanic heat distribution, and shifts in atmospheric circulation were identified as major contributors to extreme climatic phenomena in equatorial regions, including India. Empirical evidence correlating Arctic changes with increased cyclonic activity and anomalous rainfall patterns in the Indian subcontinent was cited to highlight the region's global climatic influence.

Cryosphere Monitoring and Interregional Climate Linkages Speakers stressed the importance of integrating climate research across polar and high-altitude cryosphere, particularly the Arctic and the

Himalayas. Despite their geographic separation, both regions exhibit acute sensitivity to global warming, manifesting in glacier retreat, permafrost thaw, and biodiversity threats. Establishing data convergence between these cryospheres was viewed as essential for improving predictive models of freshwater availability, monsoonal behaviour, and ecological balance. India's sustained commitment to cross-regional research, including joint monitoring programs and expeditions, underscores its emerging leadership in cryospheric science.

Methane Emissions and Permafrost Thaw: An Underestimated Threat The thawing of Arctic permafrost and its consequent release of methane—a potent greenhouse gas—was identified as a pressing concern for global climate stability. Speakers highlighted the inadequacy of current carbon budget models in accounting for these emissions and called for enhanced observational mechanisms. Indian and international research institutions are actively leveraging satellite-based systems and remote sensing to improve the accuracy and scope of methane tracking. These efforts are contributing to more comprehensive assessments of the long-term climatic and ecological consequences associated with permafrost degradation.

Smart Energy Systems and Infrastructure for Arctic Sustainability Technological innovation aimed at enhancing sustainability in extreme climates was a major theme. Russian researchers presented advanced developments in smart microgrids, AI-controlled power systems, and climate-resilient infrastructure suited for Arctic conditions. These technological solutions—tailored to address logistical challenges in remote environments—hold significant potential for adaptation in India's mountainous and isolated regions. The discussions underscored the mutual benefits of cross-regional technology transfer in bolstering energy security, infrastructure resilience, and sustainable development.

Science Diplomacy and Multilateral Collaboration The session reaffirmed the need for synergy between science and diplomacy in addressing transboundary Arctic challenges such as pollution, biodiversity loss, and evolving maritime routes. Panellists underscored the necessity for interdisciplinary cooperation and international scientific engagement. India's proactive participation in Arctic initiatives—through research collaborations, bilateral agreements, and its observer status in the Arctic Council—was presented as a model of constructive involvement by a non-Arctic nation in global governance frameworks grounded in scientific collaboration.

Arctic Governance and Observer State Roles The strategic role of observer states in Arctic governance was a focal point of deliberation. Experts advocated for greater involvement of countries like India in supporting global environmental agreements, contributing to monitoring programs, and facilitating sustainable development initiatives. Observer states were described as critical intermediaries capable of bridging scientific research with policy implementation. India's growing presence in Arctic forums was recognised as instrumental in ensuring that governance structures are inclusive and responsive to diverse global perspectives.

Scientific Cooperation with Russia: Strategic and Technological Dimensions The discussion highlighted expanding avenues for Indo-Russian cooperation in Arctic research. Russian facilities such as the Snowflake Station and the Arctic Floating University were presented as strategic assets for collaborative efforts in areas including permafrost observation, environmental modelling, and sustainable resource utilisation. The proposal to establish a dedicated Indo-Russian Arctic Research Office received particular attention, as did plans for academic exchange programs and bilateral training initiatives. These collaborations reflect a deepening strategic partnership rooted in shared scientific objectives and technological innovation.

Integrating Arts, Culture, and Indigenous Knowledge in Arctic Research The Arctic was portrayed not only as a scientific frontier but also as a space for cultural and creative exploration. Emphasis was placed on the value of incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary perspectives into Arctic research. Initiatives like the *Creative Arctic Culture* journal were highlighted as platforms that blend scientific inquiry with cultural narratives, thereby enhancing public understanding and engagement. Encouraging broader Indian involvement—from artists to educators—was suggested as a means of promoting culturally grounded and inclusive approaches to sustainability.

Arctic Resource Management and Sustainable Development With the Arctic becoming increasingly accessible due to climatic shifts, the necessity of balancing economic development with environmental protection was thoroughly examined. The panel emphasised that resource extraction must be governed by robust scientific frameworks to safeguard fragile ecosystems. India's capabilities in environmental assessment, satellite monitoring, and geospatial analysis were noted as critical assets in shaping responsible and transparent resource governance in the region.

Climate Security and the Need for Integrated Risk Frameworks The session underscored the Arctic's role as a barometer for emerging global risks—including geopolitical instability, competition over resources, and displacement due to environmental change. The speakers advocated for institutionalised climate-security dialogues that integrate Arctic and non-Arctic perspectives. India's scientific and policy expertise was seen as a valuable contribution to developing scenario-based frameworks that enhance resilience and international cooperation in the face of accelerating Arctic transformations.



Special Address

- **H.E. Denis Alipov**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of India
- **Dr M. Ravichandran**, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **H.E. Vinay Kumar**, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation

A special address was held at the conference to deliberate on the evolving geopolitical, economic, and environmental landscape of the Arctic region. The special address brought together senior diplomats and experts, reflecting the importance of Arctic cooperation. Discussions underscored the growing relevance of the Arctic in global affairs and emphasized the need for enhanced international collaboration to address both opportunities and challenges.

Key Themes and Discussions

Geopolitical Dynamics and Arctic Governance The Arctic region has gained strategic significance, with both Arctic and non-Arctic states recognising its importance in global geopolitics. The increased

militarisation and heightened geopolitical competition, particularly by military alliances, have disrupted the cooperative spirit of Arctic governance. The suspension of the Arctic Council's activities in 2022 was identified as a challenge, underscoring the need for renewed diplomatic efforts to restore multilateral cooperation.

It was emphasised that the Arctic should remain a zone of peace and cooperation, free from confrontational agendas. To this end, it was recommended that non-Arctic states play a constructive role in supporting inclusive and depoliticised governance mechanisms. Strengthening forums such as the Arctic Council, Northern Forum, and other regional platforms was seen as a means to ensure balanced and cooperative Arctic governance.

Climate Change and Environmental Challenges The Arctic is experiencing climate change at an accelerated rate, with temperatures rising nearly four times faster than the global average. This phenomenon has led to significant ice melt, changes in sea levels, and disrupted ecosystems. Furthermore, Arctic climate patterns have a direct impact on the global climate system, particularly on monsoon patterns in regions like South Asia, making Arctic research critical for climate adaptation and resilience.

It was deliberated that the scientific cooperation should be prioritised to enhance understanding of Arctic climate dynamics. Establishing joint research initiatives, deploying observation stations, and promoting collaborative climate modelling were suggested as essential steps. Additionally, fostering partnerships in climate monitoring technologies and promoting the integration of Indigenous knowledge into scientific research were highlighted as key recommendations.

Economic and Strategic Opportunities The distinguished speakers stressed that the Arctic holds immense economic potential, particularly in sectors such as energy, mining, and maritime transport. The presence of vast reserves of oil, natural gas, and rare earth minerals was acknowledged as a strategic opportunity. The development of the NSR as a shorter and more efficient maritime trade corridor was also highlighted, offering a viable alternative to traditional shipping routes.

To realize these opportunities, it was recommended expanding bilateral and multilateral investments in Arctic infrastructure projects, promoting sustainable resource extraction, and establishing transparent regulatory frameworks. Enhancing energy cooperation and developing joint ventures in the extraction and processing of Arctic resources were also proposed. Additionally, increasing cargo traffic along the NSR through stronger collaboration in maritime logistics was emphasized as a mutually beneficial objective.

Scientific Research and Technological Cooperation Scientific research forms a vital component of Arctic engagement. It was noted that the Arctic provides a unique environment for studying the impacts of climate change and understanding polar ecosystems. Strengthened cooperation in Arctic research was

recommended, focusing on areas such as atmospheric sciences, oceanography, glaciology, and polar biology.

Participants encouraged the establishment of joint research programs, exchange initiatives for scientists and researchers, and the development of collaborative academic institutions. It was also suggested that investments in advanced technologies for polar navigation, satellite monitoring, and data analysis be prioritized to enhance scientific understanding and operational efficiency in the Arctic.

Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection While economic activities in the Arctic present opportunities, participants acknowledged the importance of sustainable development. The Arctic's fragile ecosystem requires comprehensive environmental regulations and responsible resource management. Implementing effective environmental monitoring systems and adhering to global standards for ecological protection were proposed as essential measures.

Strengthening cooperation on environmental protection, promoting clean energy projects, and supporting Indigenous-led environmental initiatives were recommended to ensure that Arctic development remains sustainable. Additionally, increased international dialogue on climate mitigation strategies and cross-border pollution control was highlighted as a necessary step toward environmental stewardship.

Enhancing People-to-People and Institutional Cooperation Fostering people-to-people connections and institutional collaborations was seen as integral to deepening Arctic engagement. Encouraging cultural exchanges, academic partnerships, and joint research programs were recommended to build long-term cooperation. Additionally, providing training programs for Arctic navigation, polar research, and maritime operations was suggested to build capacity and enhance human resource development.

Expanding sister-city agreements, promoting educational exchanges, and establishing joint Arctic research centres were also seen as measures to strengthen cross-border ties. Participants further recommended leveraging platforms such as the Northern Forum to facilitate dialogue between Arctic regions and non-Arctic states.



Book Release - 'Evolution of India's Polar Policies' authored by Bhagwat J and Bisen A.

- **H.E. Denis Alipov**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of India
- **Dr M. Ravichandran**, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **H.E. Vinay Kumar**, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation
- **Dr Arvind Gupta**, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation
- **Vladimir Vasilev**, Executive Director, The Northern Forum
- **Jawahar Bhagwat**, Associate Professor, Northern Arctic Federal University named after M. V. Lomonosov, Arkhangelsk, Russian Federation
- **Captain Anurag Bisen (Retd.)**, Senior Fellow, Vivekananda, International Foundation

The book titled 'Evolution of India's Polar Policies' (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), authored by Prof Jawahar Bhagwat and Captain Anurag Bisen (Retd.), was released by H.E. Denis Alipov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of India, Dr M. Ravichandran Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), H.E. Vinay Kumar Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation,

Dr Arvind Gupta, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, and Mr Vladimir Vasilev, Executive Director, The Northern Forum, in presence of both authors. The book explores India's involvement in the Polar regions, tracing its historical development and current scientific and political initiatives. It also provides recommendations for strengthening India's Polar policies, which mainly focus on climate change and scientific research. The book emphasizes the potential threat to India's vast coastline due to global warming and the melting of Arctic and other ice sheets. As a key global player, India is well-positioned to significantly influence Arctic nations' policies, encouraging sustainable development initiatives and playing a vital role in the region's sustainability, especially given the geopolitical shifts caused by the Ukraine conflict. The book also covers important issues like Arctic geopolitics, shipping, and energy security, making it a valuable resource for policymakers, diplomats, political scientists, academics, and students interested in these topics

Addresses by Dignitaries

Opening remarks by Dr Arvind Gupta, Director of the Vivekananda International Foundation

Members of strategic community,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the International Conference ‘Uniting North and South for Sustainable Development in the Arctic’ co-hosted by the VIF and The Northern Forum.



I would also take this opportunity to welcome the substantial Northern Forum delegation and our co-hosts, who have made the trip from the northern regions of Russia, coming from sub-zero temperatures to experience the warmth of Indian spring.

The conference couldn't be timelier. As global dynamics shift profoundly in the Trumpian world-order, the Arctic region, which has been lately emerging as an arena of significant geopolitical tension and environmental concern, holds out hope as a frontier of immense opportunity.

Recognising these challenges and opportunities, our conference is committed to bridging regional divides and enhancing cooperation among nations.

I am also happy to note that this conference is perhaps the largest gathering of overseas stakeholders of the Arctic, in India, after the launch of India's Arctic Policy in 2022. Since capacity Building is one of the pillars of India's Arctic Policy, I am sure that this Conference will be instrumental in raising awareness about the Arctic in India, and providing actionable inputs to the policy makers. Towards that we intend to release an Outcome Document collating all the recommendations made by the various delegates and the speakers.

I am grateful that policymakers at the apex level in India, dealing with Arctic affairs, are participating in this conference. The Arctic's accelerated warming underscores the urgent need for collaborative efforts across continents. This forum seeks to address how cooperation between diverse regions, particularly between the northern regions and the Global South, can contribute positively to sustainable development and environmental stewardship in the Arctic. Our shared goal is to identify innovative scientific and technological solutions that can navigate the complexities posed by the Arctic's changing landscape. Since the climate change in the Arctic also impacts the entire planet, we must also explore options to make research in the Arctic region, particularly Svalbard, more participative and inclusive.

Since March 2022, the Arctic Council has remained largely inactive in response to Russia's special military operations in Ukraine.

Amidst this diplomatic standstill, military activities in the Arctic have surged. NATO countries have ramped up their presence through large-scale exercises, while Russia has expanded its military infrastructure, constructing airbases and radar systems. The Arctic Council, as it shifts focus toward bilateral relations. Moscow is working to establish an alternative governance framework. This includes plans for an international scientific and educational hub in Svalbard for BRICS and SCO nations, signalling an effort to build new Arctic alliances outside Western-led institutions.

I do hope that the Conference will focus on these relevant issues.

Recognising the primacy of India's scientific oriented Arctic Policy, the pre-lunch session will be devoted to scientific co-operation in the Arctic while the post lunch discussions will focus on the geo-politics and governance issues.

Some of the recommendations for Indian policy makers are for consideration:

Deepening India-Russia Arctic Cooperation Bolster bilateral collaboration with Russia to address energy security needs and access rare earth and strategic minerals, providing Moscow alternatives to China.

Enhance Arctic Engagement Increase Arctic involvement to safeguard national interests and strengthen ties with Western Arctic nations like the US, Norway, and Canada.

Expanding Influence in the Arctic Council Actively participate in Arctic Council Working Groups and advocate for the resumption of the Council's activities while pushing for an enhanced role for Observer States.

Reforming the Arctic Council Work towards broader reform of the Arctic Council, including seeking full membership to solidify India's position as a significant stakeholder in Arctic governance.

Today's agenda brings together distinguished experts, policymakers, and researchers from India, Russia, and beyond. Through this initiative, we aim to foster dialogue, share critical insights from ongoing Arctic research, and propose inclusive governance strategies. Our discussions will not only consider the geopolitical impacts of current tensions but also explore practical cooperation frameworks involving international entities such as BRICS and the Northern Forum.

It is imperative that we move forward together, overcoming political differences to ensure sustainable development, scientific innovation, and peace in the Arctic region. We at VIF firmly believe that the insights generated here will make meaningful contributions toward an inclusive, cooperative, and sustainable future for the Arctic.

Thank you all for your valuable participation and commitment to this essential dialogue.

**Opening remarks by Mr. Vladimir Vasiliev,
Executive Director of the Northern Forum**

Good morning, dear colleagues,

It is very nice day today, bright and very hot, I guess, in New Delhi. Thank you for all of you that you are joining us today for very good discussions. Special thanks to Vivekananda International Foundation and its Director, Dr. Arvind Gupta for hosting us. We had a very good discussions yesterday already on geopolitical issues but we will continue all discussions today on research and educational issues and again on geopolitical things We will need more and more meetings after our forum, our conference to continue and to strengthen cooperation between our countries.



I would like to say that the Northern Forum delegation consists Russian experts and Sasakawa Peace Foundations has representatives here as well as the Northern Forum Goodwill Ambassador from Italy has joined us, so we can consider that 3 Arctic Council Observer countries are here. The Northern Forum is also Observer of the Arctic Council. So, we can discuss in details what we can do all together in the Arctic though Russia and other Arctic states has some confrontation. We have no active cooperation nowadays but hopefully the situation can be improved in coming months or years and we need to be prepared well in these conditions. We need to know each other better and exchange opinion what we can do together. We have a very good topic: “Uniting North and South for Sustainable Development in the Arctic”.

We know that climate change in the Arctic changes rapidly, 3 times faster than in the rest of the world as it was indicated on COP29 in Baku. The Northern Forum organised first ever the Arctic Pavilion on COP29 where about 50 international sessions were organised. It was very interesting that southern countries noted that they would like to know more about Arctic knowledge, Arctic experience, to exchange new technologies, etc. So, we need to meet more often in India, Italy, Japan or Russia and other countries to strengthen and widen our understanding what is going on in the world and what we can do all together to save our planet.

We will have a very intensive program here during our short visit which includes meeting in Indraprastha Engineering College, Jawaharlal Nehru University, youth session, roundtable on rare species and wildlife conservation as well as planting trees within “The Friendship Garden” project initiated by Khanty-Mansyisk Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, the Northern Forum Chairing region, and cultural program by the Russian House.

As result of our conference, we will prepare together with VIF team recommendations addressed to Indian and Russian governments and I would to ask you to submit proposals for this final document.

Thank you!

**Keynote Address by Ambassador Pavan Kapoor,
Deputy National Security Advisor, Government
of India**

Good morning, everyone!

It is great pleasure for me to participate in this very important Conference. I would like to thank Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF and Vladimir Vasilev, Executive Director, The Northern Forum, for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on this occasion.



On the face of it, India is geographically distant from the Arctic. Yet, one of the most important factors of India’s economic and food security, the monsoons, are intimately connected to the Arctic in profound ways. The quantum of Arctic ice cover and intensity of Arctic winters affect entities such as the polar vortex and jet streams, which feed into global phenomena such as the El Nino and the Indian Ocean Dipole. These, and other complex interactions, determine the fate of a billion and a half people dependent upon the success of India’s agricultural seasons.

At the same time, Indian actions have a deep resonance in the Arctic. The energy use and ecological footprint of the same billion and a half people — through their choices of solar energy versus coal burning, EVs versus fossil fuel-based vehicles, etc., effect the speed of global warming and the Arctic ice melt through a feedback loop.

But India's engagement in the Arctic is not anchored only in its environmental interests. It is also important for us to preserve our scientific interests and to protect our strategic and commercial interests. The influence of the Arctic on connectivity, resource development, and big power confrontation is not completely understood; it is ongoing and unfolding. We therefore, closely monitor all these vectors in the Arctic.

India's engagement in the Arctic has its foundation in the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in 1920. India is the only developing country, apart from China, that has an Arctic research base - Himadri - there, which was established in 2008.

We see multiple tangible benefits through our presence in the Arctic. For example, the availability of the Northern Sea Route could help India in reducing the cost of supplies, especially energy, from Northern Russia. Previously inaccessible offshore areas may also become available for extraction of potentially vast reserves of rare earths, oil and natural gas.

On the flip side, the effect of global warming on the Arctic region, and on India, are multiple and poorly understood. These will impact, amongst others, navigation, climate, energy security, sourcing of strategic minerals, and scientific research. There are great risks of permanent damage to the delicate Arctic ecosystem. A mad dash to lay claim to Arctic resources will exacerbate territorial claims and geopolitical tensions.

India occupies a unique position in the Global South and North. Firmly located in the Global South, India faces its own major developmental deficits and has many promises to keep in uplifting the lives of its large and diverse population. Our environmental challenges are multifaceted and addressing them has acquired urgency. At the same time, India is the fastest growing major economy in the world. We have achieved significant successes across a range of scientific activities. Our large and skilled human resource pool is engaged in a wide variety of academic pursuits with the goal of addressing India's developmental concerns. Indian industrial prowess drives our economic growth and that of our partners.

All these factors combine to ensure that India acts as a unique vehicle to prioritize the goals of the Global South, refracting the developmental requirements through India's own experiences. India's philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, or "One Earth, One Family, One Future" drives its global endeavours. Towards fulfilment of such objectives, India has already hosted three Voice of the Global South Summits with the overarching theme of "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future".

Industrialisation in the North has triggered climate change. However, the deleterious effects of these changes are being experienced in a profound manner in the South. In turn, now, the South too is contributing to climate change. It is now clear that crises at any geographical location, even if distant, impacts the economy, market and even the very existence of multiple countries. Therefore, the North and South with their disparities need to come together, to address the challenges before they become unmanageable or irreversible.

Keynote Address by Ambassador Vladislav Maslennikov, Director, Department of European Problems, Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry

Dear colleagues, first of all I would like to thank the organisers of today's event for the invitation and for the opportunity to share our perspective on the current situation in the Arctic and the prospects for cooperation with our Indian friends.



The situation in the Arctic is becoming increasingly complex due to the actions of Western countries and NATO. The region faces rise in military and political tensions, new emerging challenges and threats, illegitimate sanctions are actively being used to hinder the development of the Russian Arctic zone and international cooperation in the North in general.

The declaration of once important regional cooperation mechanisms has become one of the constituencies of the Western countries' confrontational approach. Despite these challenges the Russian Federation remains committed to an equal and beneficial dialogue in the High North maintaining peace and stability legal frameworks in the current complex geopolitical environment.

The Arctic Council remains essentially the only platform for multilateral cooperation in the High North. Its effective and non-politicised work is crucial for developing joint solutions in areas such as sustainable social and economic development in the Arctic, cultural heritage and indigenous rights protection, climate issues and preservation of the fragile Arctic environment. In coordination with a regional chairmanship and the Arctic Council Secretariat, we strive to normalise the situation within the council after its fully fledged activity was frozen by the initiative of the Western countries. We look forward to India's active participation in the Arctic Council activities in its capacity as an observer state and the country's positive contribution to the Council's project.

Russia remains open to constructive engagement in the Arctic with the interested non regional states. Together with relevant Russian agencies and the Southern state cooperation, we intend to continue further

collaboration with our Indian partners in the High North. One of the most promising areas for our cooperation is developing the transport and logistic potential of the Northern Sea Route which attracts growing global interest. We believe that participation of the Indian delegates in the upcoming 6th International Arctic Forum “Arctic Territory of Dialogue”, taking place in Murmansk next week on the 26th and 27th March, will further our bilateral cooperation in the Arctic.

We are convinced that the discussions during such major events and agreements reached there contribute to the sustainable development of the region. Further cooperation with Indian partners under the auspices of the Northern Forum also has a great potential. We hope that today’s event will provide additional impetus for the joint efforts to strengthen ties between our countries and regions. Also in high demand is a continued collaboration among our scientists and experts particularly through the Russian Asian Consortium for Arctic Research, which was established and is operating with active participation from the Northern Forum. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia will continue to provide the necessary support for strengthening international cooperation in the Arctic region. I wish all the foreign participants success and constructive discussions. I thank you for your attention.

**Special Address by H.E. Denis Alipov, Ambassador
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian
Federation to the Republic of India**

Dear friends,

I am delighted at the opportunity to share Russian perspectives on the Arctic and the prospects of the Russia-India partnership in the High North.

The interest of the international community in the Arctic is growing with each year and has become one of the key factors in global politics. Along with the Arctic countries, states that do not have direct access to the Arctic Ocean are keen on taking a more active part in the affairs of the region. It is increasingly clear that the Arctic offers many opportunities for major players who are ready to make meaningful investments in developing its potential.

Against this background, the matrix of interstate interaction in this area is becoming more complex, determined by a number of factors. These include climate change opening the Arctic for economic activity and for shipping abundant natural resources, which are an indispensable part in the supply chain of modern economy.



Remaining open to mutually beneficial practical cooperation in the High North, Russia opposes the introduction of confrontational agenda in the Arctic. Instead, it has consistently advocated the development of an enduring international security architecture in the region. Of particular concern is the growing militarisation of the Arctic. Tensions generated by the NATO countries, enhanced tempo of their military activity in the Arctic and attempts by European NATO members to impose their own rules of the game are inimical to sustaining security and stability in the region.

Against this backdrop, Russia sees India's interest in increasing its presence in the Arctic as a stabilising factor. We view India as a strategic partner in the joint development of the Arctic area and coordinated scientific, environmental and commercial efforts.

Russia is in favour of collaboration with India in research on climate change, atmospheric and geosciences, glaciology and polar biology. Indian scientists are testing the hypothesis about the influence of the Arctic on the dynamics of the monsoon with a focus on South Asia. To strengthen ties, in 2024, our two countries signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of scientific research in the Arctic.

There is a mutual interest in exploring projects for the extraction of Arctic mineral riches, including energy resources and rare earths. There are promising opportunities for Indian companies in the development of Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG-2 projects.

Our two countries demonstrate a shared interest in benefiting from the Arctic's unique logistical promise. The Northern Sea Route broke new records in 2024: cargo traffic amounted to 37.9 million tons while the volume of transit cargo exceeded 3 million tons. It serves not only as a vital route for delivering Russian natural resources to the Asian markets but also as a fastest route for shipping goods between Asia and Europe. In the latter case, its salience will increase should the Suez Canal reach its maximum throughput capacity or its operations be disrupted due to accidents or geopolitical reasons. In 2023, 94 million tons of various cargoes were delivered to Indian ports from the Russia's Northwest by passing through the Suez Canal: 63 million tons of oil and petroleum products, 21 million tons of bulk cargoes (coal, coking coal, mineral fertilisers). To mitigate the risks now present in the Red Sea, some of these cargoes could be transported over the Northern Sea Route whose safety is ensured by Russia as the state with sovereign rights to its waters.

In order to develop this potential, a relevant working group has been established under the Russia-India Intergovernmental Commission. Its first meeting was held in October 2024 in New Delhi. Following it, bilateral agreements were inked to increase cargo shipments along the Northern Sea Route.

Russia welcomes India's interest in mastering the skills of polar navigation and its construction of ice-class vessels for exploration of the Arctic and Antarctic. As agreed, we offer training to Indian seamen for navigation in northern latitudes.

The rise of tensions caused by NATO countries has negatively impacted the role of the Arctic Council whose activities have been suspended since 2022. In contrast to their hostile approach, we value India's constructive approach in the Arctic Council since its accession as observer in 2013.

At various multilateral fora, Russia and India stand together to preserve the Arctic as a territory of peace and stability and to unlock opportunities for its development as an engine of growth and cooperation.

Dear friends,

In conclusion, let me emphasise the importance of dialogue and co-operation. Collaboration between Russia and India may serve as a positive example for other constructively minded countries to follow – we are open to that. Let us utilise such opportunities to benefit the needs of our peoples and all stakeholders who are interested in working for peace and development in the Arctic.

Thank you.

**Special Address by Dr M. Ravichandran,
Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences**

**Transcript of Secretary MoES address during the
VIF-NF Arctic Conference | 20 March 2025**

Thank you very much for inviting me to this important forum. I'm truly passionate about fostering bilateral collaboration in this area. As many of you are aware, the polar regions are becoming increasingly critical. Whether it's the Antarctic, the Arctic, or the Himalayas—what we often refer to as the three

poles—these regions are undergoing rapid transformations under the pressures of global warming.

All three are witnessing faster and more dramatic changes than other parts of the world. In particular, the Arctic is warming at a rate approximately four times faster than the global average. Sea ice is retreating significantly, and this has profound implications—not just locally, but globally.

Today, I want to highlight some crucial aspects of how climate change is transforming scientific understanding in the Arctic. There are many things we now know, but there are still significant gaps in our knowledge that need to be addressed—especially to inform better policymaking and governance frameworks.



In my view, the melting of the Arctic has four major consequences:

1. **Climate Change:** The Arctic's transformation has a cascading effect on global climate systems. It's not just a regional issue; it's a global one.
2. **Resources:** As the Ambassador mentioned earlier, both living and non-living resources in the Arctic are becoming more accessible. I'll return to this in a moment.
3. **Shipping Routes:** The Northern Sea Route is gaining strategic importance.
4. **Socio-political and Environmental Impact:** These changes present a complex mix of economic opportunities and challenges, with deep social and environmental implications.

Let me elaborate briefly on the resource dimension. The retreat of sea ice opens up possibilities for offshore oil and gas exploration. However, this comes with major challenges—technological, environmental, and logistical. For example, once the sea ice melts, wave activity intensifies, which can complicate drilling operations, infrastructure development, fuel storage, and pipeline transfers. We must think carefully about how to adapt and mitigate these risks.

As for shipping, newly navigable routes can significantly cut transit times and reduce fuel costs, offering benefits to industries such as fishing, mining, and transport. However, the flip side is that increased activity will degrade fragile marine ecosystems. More traffic means more emissions, a higher risk of oil spills, and disruptions to marine biodiversity.

In terms of mineral resources, especially in the Central Arctic, thawing permafrost and coastal erosion are likely to increase extraction costs and risks for industries. Regarding fisheries, as global temperatures rise, tropical species are migrating to mid-latitudes, and mid-latitude species are moving into polar waters. This shift may bring benefits to some regions, but it also poses ecological and regulatory challenges.

Tourism will also increase with improved access, but this brings potential harm to Arctic wildlife, flora, and local ecosystems. So while there are economic gains to be made, we must also address the social and political disruptions. Indigenous and circumpolar communities may face significant upheaval—from changes to traditional livelihoods and diets, to shifts in local governance and social structures.

Politically, as access to Arctic resources expands, governance mechanisms will need to adapt. No single nation can tackle these transboundary challenges alone. Arctic states must engage with non-Arctic states and non-state actors, and promote stronger science-policy linkages. We need coordinated international efforts to manage oil pollution, regulate shipping, and conserve marine ecosystems.

Let me turn now to India's role and Arctic policy. As you know, India's Arctic Policy is built on six pillars,

with science being the backbone of our engagement and partnerships in the region. This is because the Arctic and tropical regions are increasingly interconnected through atmospheric and oceanic systems.

For example, extreme rainfall in northern India—particularly during August and September—is influenced by heat release from intense rain events, which in turn transfers heat to the Arctic. This accelerates melting, reduces sea ice (especially in regions like the Barents Sea), and sets off feedback loops. Less sea ice leads to more heat absorption, which results in more extreme weather patterns in the tropics. This feedback cycle underscores the importance of studying Arctic processes carefully.

At present, many climate models still fail to accurately predict Arctic conditions. The observed rate of sea ice decline is outpacing model projections, indicating that we still don't fully understand the underlying physical processes. To address this, bilateral and multilateral scientific collaboration is essential.

In this regard, India—through institutions like NCPOR and MoES—is working with Russian counterparts to advance both observational and modelling capabilities. Our goal is to monitor Arctic Ocean and sea ice conditions more effectively and improve the predictability of climate outcomes.

To conclude, the Arctic is warming much faster than anticipated, and this Arctic amplification is influencing not just regional weather, but also global climatic systems. We must better understand the teleconnections between the tropics and the Arctic—across both spatial and temporal scales.

Therefore, I call for enhanced India–Russia cooperation, with increased observational and scientific efforts to deepen our understanding of these linkages. India's involvement in Arctic affairs is not just for scientific reasons—it is driven by economic, environmental, and geopolitical considerations as well.

By the 2040s, I believe all three poles—the Arctic, Antarctic, and Himalayas—will come under significant pressure. Arctic summers may be ice-free, the Antarctic Treaty will come up for review in 2048, and Himalayan glaciers will continue to retreat, affecting freshwater availability. These developments will have serious global repercussions.

In this context, I believe the 2040s may well be the “Polar Decade,” and we must prepare accordingly—through collaboration, cooperation, and a shared commitment to defining policies for these global commons.

Thank you once again for inviting me to this forum.

Special Address by H.E. Vinay Kumar, Indian Ambassador to the Russian Federation

Good Afternoon!

Firstly, I congratulate the organisers namely the Northern Forum and Vivekananda International Foundation for hosting the inaugural conference on the Russian Far East and Arctic. It's my great pleasure to participate in the special session of this conference. The agenda is comprehensive and covers trade, connectivity projects, scientific cooperation in the Russian Far East and Arctic. This truly reflects the comprehensive cooperation between our two countries.



Our 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' has been growing steadily under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and President Putin. Our Prime Minister visited Russia twice last year, to participate in the 22nd Annual Summit in July and in the BRICS Summit in October. We look forward to President Putin's visit to India later this year. The frequency of these visits highlights the importance we attach to our partnership.

In 2023-24, our bilateral trade reached USD 65.7 billion with Indian exports totalling USD 4.26 billion. For 2024-25, the trade is expected to cross USD 66 billion, showing a fivefold increase in last five years. However, the bilateral trade remains very skewed in favour of Russia. To address this, last year we signed nine MoUs/agreements covering diverse fields of economic engagement. We now target USD 100 billion for bilateral trade turnover including through increased Indian exports by 2030.

We have been actively promoting economic cooperation by organizing numerous buyer-seller meets. Last year, we organized the first-ever India-Russia Investment Forum. These initiatives have received positive feedback, and increased India's exports in areas such as auto components, electronics, medical devices, textiles, and agricultural products. We firmly believe that addressing the trade imbalance requires tackling market access restrictions, non-tariff barriers, payment issues, and logistical challenges through mutual understanding and collaborative efforts.

Friends,

Our PM outlined India's Act Far East policy in 2019 which guides our cooperation with Russia in this region. Since 2019, several positive developments have taken place – for e.g. development of new transport corridors like the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC), training of

Indian seafarers for Polar Operations in Russian Far East universities and growing partnership between our companies in the region.

Russian Far East and Arctic could play an important role in diversifying our relations in trade, connectivity, resources and other strategic areas. A key achievement in this regard was last year the signing of an MoU for cooperation in trade, economic and investment spheres in the Russian Far East and Arctic for 2024-2029. Subsequently, a joint working group was setup for joint projects in Arctic and Far East. Its meeting was held last November in New Delhi.

We believe that strengthening economic cooperation in Far East is a realistic goal by virtue of complementary nature of our economies. The vast Oil and Coal reserves in the Russian Far East present alternatives to India in diversifying its requirements. We already know that ONGC Videsh has 20% stake in Sakhalin-1 project which produces 140-150 thousand barrels per day. Similarly, Indian companies can explore opportunities to undertake joint ventures in Coal and Oil reserves in the Russian Far East and Arctic.

Russia is implementing large scale infrastructure projects in Far East region under its National Transport Project and Development plan for Northern Sea Route. There are new requirements for skilled manpower for these projects. India has the largest skilled workforce in the world. Both the sides could explore opportunities to employ the young, skilled and hardworking Indians in these infrastructure projects.

Furthermore, India can play a multifaceted role in Arctic, focusing on scientific research, environmental protection, economic development, and international cooperation. At last year's annual summit, an MoU was signed between National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Ministry of Earth Sciences of India and the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute on Cooperation in Research and Logistics in polar regions of Russia. The MoU focuses on joint research, and cooperation in polar logistics and exchanges of personnel. Last November, we also operationalized Eastern Maritime Corridor, carrying shipments of crude oil, metal and textiles, and reducing transit time from 45 days to 25 days.

In conclusion, I would say that the growing cooperation between India and Russia in Far East and Arctic underscores a broader shift towards Act East, with both countries seeking to leverage their partnership for strategic and economic gains. The cooperation is mutually beneficial as it presents India opportunities to diversify its requirements and engage in infrastructure and mining projects in Arctic and Russia in effectively developing the Northern Sea Route and the Far East region. I hope that your deliberations today will contribute to this cooperation.

Thank you.



Session II - A fair world order: development and challenges of international cooperation in the Arctic in the era of turbulence

Moderator:

Ambassador Pankaj Saran, Former Deputy National Security Advisor, GOI and Former Indian Ambassador to Russia & Convener, NatStrat

Speakers:

- **RAdm TVN Prasanna**, Joint Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat, GOI
- **Maksim Dankin**, Director General, Project Office for Arctic Development (PORA) Expert Center
Polar Priorities: Conflicting Perspectives in Circumpolar Relations
- **Anurag Bisen**, Senior Fellow, VIF
Using the ATCM Model for Regulation of Scientific Research in Svalbard
- **Vadim Mamontov**, General Director, Russia Discovery; Vice-President, Russian Union of Tourist Industry
Discover Russia — a new travel brand of Russia. Examples of tourism products in Russia in the expedition cruise segment — North Pole, Arctic, Far East

- **Mariia Lagutina**, Professor, Department of World Politics, Faculty of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, Russia
Positions of Non-Arctic Asian Countries Towards Arctic governance
- **Jawahar Bhagwat**, Associate Professor Northern Arctic Federal University named after M. V. Lomonosov, Arkhangelsk, Russian Federation (Online)
India-Russia cooperation in the Arctic and the NSR: Influence of geopolitical factors
- **Indraraj Vanraj Dodiya**, Director, Dodiya Enterprises LLC, India
Digital Synergy in the Arctic and International IT Expert group: How India-Russia IT Cooperation Can Shape the Future
- **Maksim Gutenev**, Head of the Department of International Relations, Political Science and Regional Studies, South Ural State University, Russia
Technological and Engineering Solutions of the Chelyabinsk Region for the Arctic: New Opportunities for Russian-Indian Cooperation

The second session was chaired by Ambassador Pankaj Saran, former Deputy National Security Advisor and former Ambassador of India to Russia, who serves as Convener at NatStrat. The session addressed several critical themes:

Arctic Geopolitics and International Cooperation The session commenced with a comprehensive discussion on the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Arctic and its implications for international cooperation. Experts highlighted increasing global interdependence, emerging regional rivalries, and the breakdown of traditional alliances as necessitating a re-examination of multilateral governance frameworks. The Arctic, once viewed as geopolitically peripheral, now holds central relevance in matters such as energy security, maritime connectivity, climate regulation, and strategic surveillance. It was noted that governance failures in the Arctic could result in far-reaching environmental and geopolitical repercussions. Given the weakening of established multilateral mechanisms, panellists advocated for the adoption of more adaptable bilateral and trilateral cooperation formats. Western sanctions on Russia were acknowledged as a catalyst for altering Arctic engagement patterns, prompting Russia to deepen partnerships with non-Western countries, notably India and China. As scientific cooperation diminishes and governance vacuums emerge, the panel underscored the need for an inclusive global order underpinned by either revitalized or newly constituted multilateral institutions.

India's Role in the Arctic The panel highlighted India's rising engagement in the Arctic and its capacity to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development in the region. India's Arctic Policy, launched in 2022, places strong emphasis on sustainability, scientific exploration, and international collaboration. Despite intensifying global tensions, India has demonstrated steadfast commitment to multilateral Arctic

cooperation, particularly through its observer role in the Arctic Council. The session identified key areas where India could contribute, including renewable energy, climate science, and human resource deployment. Panellists emphasised the importance of advancing India–Russia Arctic collaboration by integrating India’s technological expertise with Russia’s infrastructure in the region to produce sustainable and mutually beneficial outcomes.

India–Russia Arctic Collaboration: Key Areas of Cooperation

Scientific Research and Exploration: Building on their longstanding partnership in Antarctic exploration, India and Russia were encouraged to expand joint scientific efforts into the Arctic. Specific focus areas identified included spatial planning, environmental monitoring, and climate change research. India’s *Himadri* research station in Svalbard and Russia’s extensive polar research infrastructure offer strong platforms for collaborative investigations into biodiversity, extreme weather conditions, and technological innovation.

Maritime Transport and Connectivity Ongoing deliberations within the India–Russia Joint Working Group on the NSR were highlighted as instrumental in enhancing Arctic maritime connectivity. Key areas of cooperation include LNG transport, seafarer training, and operationalisation of the Chennai–Vladivostok Maritime Corridor. Increased utilisation of Arctic Sea routes was viewed as a strategic means to diversify India’s energy logistics and bolster resilience against global shipping disruptions.

Tourism and Cultural Exchange The growing interest of Indian tourists in Arctic destinations presents fresh opportunities for bilateral engagement in tourism. Suggestions included promoting the Arctic as a filming location for Indian cinema to enhance visibility and attract investment. The panel also advocated for academic collaborations and cultural festivals as mechanisms to deepen people-to-people connections.

Academic and Institutional Cooperation The development of academic linkages through the Russia–India Network of Institutions (RIM) was considered vital for nurturing long-term cooperation. Establishing Indo-Russian Arctic fellowships, facilitating joint degree programs, and promoting cross-institutional research initiatives were recommended to build enduring academic partnerships.

Multilateral Engagement India’s active involvement in multilateral platforms such as BRICS was noted as indicative of its commitment to global Arctic governance. Strengthening India’s presence in institutions like the Arctic Council would ensure that its perspectives and developmental priorities are reflected in evolving governance frameworks.

Capacity Building and Technological Exchange India’s competencies in sectors such as renewable energy, shipbuilding, and information technology were identified as complementary to Russia’s infrastructure

needs in the Arctic. These shared interests provide a foundation for bilateral industrial cooperation and technological partnerships.

Inclusive Development and Indigenous Rights A key aspect of the discussion focused on the imperative of integrating indigenous communities into Arctic development strategies. The DIAM (Digital Inclusion and Arctic Modernisation) model was introduced as a valuable tool for evaluating the socio-economic implications of technological interventions on indigenous populations. Panellists warned that exclusionary or top-down approaches to development could result in displacement and long-term marginalization of these communities.

Technology and Innovation for Arctic Resilience Participants acknowledged the transformative potential of emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, augmented and virtual reality, and satellite communication systems—in shaping Arctic governance and service delivery. Innovative applications in mobile healthcare, remote education, and smart contracting were cited as promising solutions to address infrastructure and accessibility challenges in remote Arctic regions. Infosys' health delivery model in Africa was presented as a potential blueprint for replicable, tech-enabled service models in the Arctic.

Human Capital and Professional Mobility The underrepresentation of Indian professionals in Russia's academic and industrial sectors was noted as a gap that merits attention. The panel proposed proactive measures to attract Indian engineers, researchers, and business professionals to participate in Arctic projects in Russia. Such engagement would contribute to deepening bilateral ties and diversifying human capital exchange.

Challenges and Geopolitical Constraints The session also addressed significant geopolitical and economic challenges affecting Arctic cooperation. Secondary sanctions were identified as major obstacles, particularly in financial transactions, energy investments, and infrastructure ventures. While India has gained from discounted Russian oil and derivative export earnings, ventures like Arctic LNG 2 and Vostok Oil face uncertainties. Additionally, India's trade deficit with Russia—peaking at \$57 billion in 2024—was flagged as a concern. Enhancing Indian export performance through tariff reductions and increased market access, particularly in pharmaceuticals and IT, was emphasized as a priority.

The Way Forward Despite the prevailing challenges, panellists agreed that India and Russia possess significant potential to expand their Arctic engagement. Continued interaction through formal channels, such as the Intergovernmental Commission and the Joint Working Group on the Northern Sea Route, will be crucial for realizing this potential. Strengthening institutional frameworks, enhancing academic input into policymaking, and expanding science and education-based exchanges emerged as key strategic

imperatives. As India balances its global partnerships with the United States, Japan, Europe, and Russia, Arctic cooperation will increasingly shape its strategic and economic direction. Enhancing the involvement of Indian academic institutions was seen as essential for ensuring long-term planning, generating evidence-based insights, and crafting innovative responses to Arctic challenges.

Concept Note

The Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of Earth, driving sea-level rise and permafrost thaw. While this opens new resources and shipping routes, it also creates geopolitical tensions. After the Crimea and Ukraine crises, seven Arctic Council members stopped cooperating with Russia, halting scientific research and data exchange, undermining climate change monitoring. Due to its isolation, Russia itself has temporarily halted the funding of Arctic council till restoration of normalcy. The U.S. has increased its Arctic presence through military expansions and diplomatic efforts. NATO's involvement and Finland and Sweden's NATO membership have further complicated Arctic security. These shifts have impacted the global understanding of Arctic climate trends and their worldwide implications. Now, post-Trump, like in the rest of the world, the Arctic geo-politics and strategic postures are also poised to undergo significant changes.

In light of the profound transformations in today's geopolitical landscape and the emergence of new challenges, we find ourselves in a complex global environment. In order to navigate these turbulent times effectively, strengthening partnerships at all levels is essential. Cooperation stands out as one of the most effective strategies for tackling the pressing issues of sustainable development and climate change in the Arctic.

To strengthen implementation strategies and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, The Northern Forum, in collaboration with the Vivekananda International Foundation, will host an international conference titled "Uniting North and South for Sustainable Development in the Arctic" on March 20, 2025. This conference will address critical issues such as sustainable development policies and technologies, as well as the geopolitical processes influencing interactions between countries and regions in the Arctic.

Additionally, it will explore measures to foster cooperation between regions of different countries within frameworks like BRICS, the Northern Forum, and other international organisations. A key focus will be the governance of the Arctic, aiming to enhance inclusivity in scientific research across the region.

The conference will also delve into the main challenges facing multilateral scientific cooperation in the Arctic, sharing practical experiences from expeditions and research initiatives, and examining their impact on existing Arctic institutions. Furthermore, it will discuss the implementation of scientific and technological advancements in regions with extremely low temperatures, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities they present.

Brief Profiles of Speakers and Moderators



Dr. Arvind Gupta is the Director of the Vivekananda International Foundation and a former Deputy National Security Adviser of India (2014–17). He has held key roles including Director-General of IDSA and served as a career diplomat in the Ministry of External Affairs. He frequently lectures on foreign policy and national security, and holds academic roles at leading Indian universities.



Dr. Vladimir Vasilev is the Executive Director of The Northern Forum and President of The Northern Forum Academy, with expertise in ecology, biodiversity, and Arctic cooperation. He has held senior governmental roles in the Sakha Republic, including Minister on Federative and External Relations (2014–2016). He is actively involved in international environmental policy and serves on Russia’s State Council Commission on Tourism.



Ambassador Pavan Kapoor is the Deputy National Security Advisor of India and a seasoned diplomat with over three decades in the Indian Foreign Service. He has served as Ambassador to Russia, Israel, UAE, and High Commissioner to Mozambique and Swaziland. His experience includes roles in the Prime Minister’s Office and the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.



Ambassador Vladislav Maslennikov is the Director of the Department of Pan-European Cooperation at the Russian Foreign Ministry, appointed in October 2024. A career diplomat since 1991 and MGIMO graduate, he previously served as Ambassador to Montenegro (2019–2024) and Deputy Director of the same department (2011–2019). He holds the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.



Ambassador Kanwal Sibal served as India's Foreign Secretary from July 2002 to November 2003 and has been Ambassador to Turkey, Egypt, and France. He holds postgraduate degrees from St. Stephen's College and advanced philosophical degrees from the World Information Distributed University. He is recognized as India's First Grand Doctor of Philosophy and a Full Professor by WIDU and the European Academy of Informatization.



Mr. Kim A. Borisov is the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) to the Far Eastern Federal District and Deputy Chairman of its Government. He holds degrees in foreign languages and international relations from Yakutsk State University and the Diplomatic Academy of Russia. His prior roles include Deputy Permanent Representative (2014–2019) and Assistant to the Head of the Republic (2019–2021).



H.E. Denis Alipov is the Russian Ambassador to India and a senior India affairs expert in the Russian Foreign Service. He has held key roles including Deputy Director of the Second Asia Department and served multiple assignments in New Delhi. He holds an M.A. in History from Moscow State University and completed a study tour at Jawaharlal Nehru University.



Dr. M. Ravichandran has been Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences since 2021, with a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Pune. He previously directed NCPOR Goa (2016–2021) and has extensive experience in ocean and climate sciences across premier Indian institutions. His expertise includes ocean observation, climate modeling, and polar research, contributing significantly to India's earth sciences.



H.E. Vinay Kumar, an IIT Kharagpur graduate, joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1992 and has held key diplomatic roles across Asia, Europe, and North America. He has served in missions including New York, Tehran, and Kathmandu, and held senior positions in India's Ministry of External Affairs. Former Ambassador to Afghanistan and Myanmar, he became India's Ambassador to Russia in April 2024.



Uttam Kumar Sinha is a prominent expert on transboundary rivers, climate change, and the Arctic, and served as Co-Chair of the Think-20 Task Force during India's G20 Presidency. He has been with MP-IDSA since 2001, where he leads the Non-Traditional Security Centre and edits the journal *Strategic Analysis*. A JNU PhD, he has held prestigious fellowships at institutions including Harvard, LSE, and the Peace Research Institute Oslo.



Dr. Rasik Ravindra is a veteran geologist and polar expert, currently serving on the National Committee on Antarctic Governance and the Governing Body of NCPOR. He was Director of NCPOR (2006–2012) following a 35-year career with the Geological Survey of India. He has led multiple polar expeditions and Indian delegations to ATCMs, earning numerous national and international awards for his contributions.

Abstract- The rapid decline in Arctic Sea ice significantly impacts global climate, influencing monsoon patterns, extreme weather events, sea levels, and marine ecosystems. Polar climatic variability and ocean-atmosphere teleconnections play a crucial role in these changes. India began its Arctic research efforts in 2007 to better understand and respond to these global consequences.



Mr. Roman Kuchin is the Rector of Yugra State University and holds a PhD in Biological Sciences with an academic background as an Associate Professor in human anatomy and physiology. He plays a prominent civic role as co-head of the All-Russian People's Front in Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug–Yugra. He also chairs and serves on multiple public councils related to internal affairs, spatial development, and sports in the region.

Abstract- Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug - Yugra is implementing a digital transformation strategy across key sectors like energy and education. Yugra State University plays a key role by advancing digital tools to cut electricity costs, promote microgeneration, and enhance digital skills. Modern labs and technical solutions have been developed to improve power grid reliability and quality.

Dr. Manish Tiwari is a scientist at NCPOR, Goa, specializing in stable isotopes and geochemical proxies to study past climate dynamics, particularly in Polar Regions. He earned his PhD from the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, focusing on Indian Monsoon variations through marine sediment analysis. He has received the Young Scientist Medal (2007) and a Certificate of Merit from the Ministry of Earth Sciences (2012), with over 70 peer-reviewed publications.



Abstract- India is deeply invested in Arctic research due to its role as a key indicator of global warming. Changes in the Arctic significantly influence global climate patterns, including the Indian monsoon. India's focus is on studying climate change, biodiversity, and marine ecosystems in the region.

Irina Strelnikova is a Research Fellow and Associate Professor at the Higher School of Economics, Moscow, co-heading the Master's program in International Relations with a focus on European and Asian studies. She earned her PhD in Legal Science from Moscow State Law Academy in 2009. She leads the research group on "BRICS+ as a platform for cooperation in the Arctic," exploring its challenges and development prospects.



Abstract- The Russian Arctic holds vast resources and strategic value amid climate change and emerging transport routes. Russia is emphasizing digital transformation and scientific innovation in the Arctic for environmental protection, resource development, and logistics. Exploring Russian-Indian cooperation in Arctic research and infrastructure offers promising opportunities for both nations.

Dr. Gopinath is a Chemical Oceanography specialist with 20 years of teaching and research experience and is a Commonwealth Fellow. She has participated in three Indian Arctic Expeditions organized by NCPOR and collaborates on major research projects with leading Indian scientific institutions. Her current research focuses on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and emerging contaminants in the Arctic.



Abstract- Scientific research is vital for understanding Arctic climate change, its impact on indigenous communities, and global environmental challenges. Arctic amplification and permafrost melting threaten to turn

the region from a carbon sink into a carbon emitter, with worldwide consequences. These urgent issues call for enhanced international scientific cooperation despite ongoing geopolitical tensions.



Yuri Zakharinsky is the Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources and Ecology and a Deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Krasnoyarsk Krai. He has served as Minister of Energy and Housing and Deputy Chairman of the Government for Northern Territories development. He has also been the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Governor for multiple territorial districts in the region.

Abstract-Russia and India have strong potential for deeper collaboration in Arctic research and sustainable development. Joint initiatives like climate monitoring via space technology, Arctic expeditions, and infrastructure projects for extreme conditions are key areas of focus. Enhancing academic exchange by inviting Indian students to Siberian universities can further strengthen this partnership.



Sherri Goodman is a leading expert on climate change and national security, credited with coining the term “threat multiplier” to describe climate’s impact on global stability. A former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense and Senate Armed Services Committee staffer, she has guided numerous research organizations on energy, environment, and policy. Her 2024 book, *Threat Multiplier*, explores the military’s role in addressing climate-related security challenges.



Nadezhda Kharlampeva holds a Candidate of Historical Sciences degree specializing in foreign policy and international relations, focusing on the history of Arctic international associations. She is an Associate Professor at St. Petersburg State University’s Department of World Politics, dedicated to Arctic cooperation research and teaching. Her work involves collaboration with key Arctic institutions like the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute and the Northern Forum.

Abstract- The presentation explores how knowledge about the Arctic is constructed and how to foster international collaboration in Arctic initiatives. It emphasizes the role of intercultural and sociolinguistic communication in Arctic research. The Arctic is envisioned as a future hub for creativity and innovative thinking.

Pankaj Saran is a seasoned diplomat with 40 years of experience, having served as India's Ambassador to Russia, High Commissioner to Bangladesh, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Affairs (2018–2021). He has held key roles in the Prime Minister's Office, National Security Council, and Ministry of External Affairs. Currently, he is the Convenor of NatStrat, a Delhi-based strategic research center.



Rear Admiral TVN Prasanna is Joint Secretary (Maritime Security) at India's National Security Council Secretariat and heads its Polar cell. A Surface Warfare Specialist, he has commanded key naval vessels and holds advanced degrees in Defence, Strategic, and Management Studies. He coordinates India's Polar engagements and contributes to national capacity building and international Arctic and Antarctic governance.



Abstract- Rear Admiral TVN Prasanna will share insights on the Arctic's global importance and its potential role in easing geopolitical tensions. He will highlight India's collaborative efforts with Russia and other emerging Arctic partnerships. The talk will also explore future pathways for strengthening India's Arctic engagement.

Maksim Dankin is a regional development specialist with experience in spatial planning, infrastructure, and socio-economic policy. He has worked in government and NGOs, and from 2022–2024 led Arctic development at the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic, contributing to key national Arctic policy and planning documents.



Abstract- This presentation highlights PORA's international projects and research on Arctic politics, media narratives, and sustainable development. It explores gaps in Western Arctic strategies, contrasts regional media portrayals, and showcases tools like the Polar Index. Opportunities for collaboration and insights from PORA's journal Arctic 2035 will also be presented.



Captain Anurag Bisen is a seasoned Indian Navy submariner with over 35 years of service, including command of a Sindhughosh Class missile submarine. He has served as a Senior Defence Specialist at the National Security Council Secretariat, contributing to maritime security and India's Arctic Policy. He holds advanced degrees in Defence, Electronic Warfare, and Law, and is a PhD candidate in National Security Studies.

Abstract- The 1920 Svalbard Treaty created a unique governance framework, granting Norway sovereignty while ensuring equal access for signatories. This balance supports international cooperation, especially in scientific research. Leveraging Article 5 to establish an international research convention could enhance collaboration, protect the environment, and promote inclusive, democratic governance in Svalbard.



Vadim Mamontov is the founder and CEO of Russia Discovery, specializing in adventure travel, and serves as Vice-President of the Russian Union of Travel Industry (RUTI). He is a recognized expert in tourism, awarded for his personal contribution to adventure tourism development in Russia. Vadim actively mentors hospitality projects and collaborates with the Russian Geographical Society on tourism initiatives.

Abstract- Discover Russia offers a concise overview of the country's diverse tourism opportunities. It highlights cultural landmarks in cities like Moscow and Saint Petersburg, ecotourism at Lake Baikal and the Altai Mountains, and adventure tourism in Kamchatka and Murmansk. The presentation also covers health, beach, wedding, and MICE tourism, along with practical travel tips on visas, etiquette, and transportation.



Dr. Maria Lagutina, Professor at St. Petersburg State University, specializes in Eurasia, BRICS, global governance, and Arctic politics. She is a member of ISA (GIRS Executive Committee) and AEVIS. She was a Visiting Professor at Carleton University (2016) and Visiting Scholar at Ghent University (2023).

Abstract- India views Arctic cooperation as important to its global standing. Although a newcomer, it has actively engaged in Arctic governance, aligning with existing rules and norms. This involvement reflects India's commitment to being a responsible participant in the region and enhancing its international role in emerging global issues.

Mr. Jawahar Bhagwat is an Associate Professor at Northern Arctic Federal University and holds Ph.D. degrees in Political Science and History. A veteran Indian Navy submariner with over 25 years of service, he co-authored *The Evolution of India's Polar Policies*. His research focuses on the Northern Sea Route, Arctic geopolitics, and India's national security, with publications in leading journals.



Abstract- The July 2024 India-Russia joint declaration opened new avenues for Arctic cooperation and transport corridor development. In light of the Red Sea crisis, the talk emphasizes the importance of alternative routes like the NSR and North-South Corridor, highlighting key collaboration areas and current challenges.

Indraraj Vanraj Dodiya is the Director of Dodiya Enterprises LLC, Russia, and a member of the Northern Forum's International Expert Group. With over 15 years of experience in research, academia, and corporate sectors, he has spoken at major international forums including BRICS+ and the International Economic Forum. His interests span Big Data, AI, digital transformation, e-governance, and IT for sustainability, with past projects supported by organizations like the Ford Foundation and World Bank.



Abstract- This presentation highlights the digital collaboration potential between India and Russia in the Arctic and global IT sectors. It explores emerging technologies, cross-border cooperation, and strategic alignment of policy and business. The talk outlines proposals for joint growth, aiming to position both nations as key players in the digital future.

Maxim Gutenev, PhD, is Head of the Department of International Relations at South Ural State University, Russia, specializing in Arctic policy and science diplomacy. He has authored over 70 academic publications on international Arctic cooperation. As Chairman of the Regional Branch of the Russian Association for Political Science, he actively engages in academic and expert discussions.



Abstract- The presentation highlights technological and engineering solutions from Russia's Chelyabinsk region for Arctic applications, focusing on industrial production, specialized machinery, and materials for extreme climates. It also explores opportunities for international collaboration, including potential partnerships with countries like India.

About the Institutions



The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy,

government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues. The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders. Since its inception, VIF has pursued quality research and scholarship and made efforts to highlight issues in governance, and strengthen national security. This is being actualised through numerous activities like seminars, round tables, interactive dialogues, Vimarsh (public discourse), conferences and briefings. The publications of VIF form lasting deliverables of VIF's aspiration to impact on the prevailing discourse on issues concerning India's national interest.



The Northern Forum - The Northern Forum is a non-profit international organization, composed of sub-national or regional governments created on November 8, 1991, and its mission is to improve the quality of life and support the regional sustainable development by providing the regional leaders means to share their knowledge and experience in addressing common challenges; and by implementation of common

socio-economic initiatives at the regional level and through international fora. The Northern Forum has a long history of collaboration on the international level bringing the voice of the regions of the North and the Arctic to the global community. Additionally, the Northern Forum is a stage for discussions and potential outcomes related to the possible productive cooperation between the northern and southern regions, and regional sustainable development. Partner Organizations



Russian-Asian Consortium for Arctic Research (RACAR)- The Russian-Asian Consortium for Arctic Research (RACAR) was established on November 28, 2022 at the initiative of Northeast- ern Federal University (NEFU) in cooperation with the international organization of the northern regions “The Northern Forum”, as a new model of international cooperation “Arctic – Asia” in the field of science and education. The consortium’s mission is to consolidate the creative potential of scientific and educational organizations to study humanitarian processes in the field of natural, humanitarian and public projects and developments. The goal is to increase the effectiveness of scientific research and development in the Arctic agenda based on international cooperation of scientific institutes and educational institutions in the interests of the RACAR’s member countries, in accordance with modern global challenges and the principles of sustainable development of the Arctic. RACAR is in the Russian geostrategic paradigm “Turn to the East”, involving scientific, educational organizations, authorities of the Russian Arctic regions and enterprises of the real sec- tor of the economy in joint activities. NEFU is the permanent chair, consolidating and coordinating institution of RACAR. The Northern Forum – a permanent co-chair. Ugra State University – a co- chair for the period from 2023 to 2025. RACAR consists of 26 participants who represent leading universities, research institutes, organizations of Russia, China, India, Indonesia as well as institu- tions from the regions of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation.



North Eastern Federal University (NEFU)- M. K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (NEFU) is one of the ten Russian federal universities. Recent reforms in the Russian Federation have created a new network of federal universities. This trend towards integration and modern- ization in higher university education is typical of many countries. As international experience shows, additional financial support from government promotes the high quality of education and higher performance in international rankings. Nefu mission: Formation of a new generation of professionals who realize the values and goals of sustainable development of the North and the Far East, influencing the solution of global problems of humankind NEFU was officially established in April 2010th on the basis of M. K. Ammosov Yakutsk State University, the university with 90 years history. The university was named after Maksim Kirovich Ammosov, an outstanding statesman, the son of the Yakut nation and one of the founders of Yakutia and Kyrgyzstan statehood. NEFU ‘s total undergraduate student population number is about 18,582. 1,200 academic staff are currently employed at the University. Of these 126 hold doctor’s degree, 644 candidate of science degree. 12 Institutes, 5 faculties, 3 University branches in Mirny, Nerungry and Chukotka, major research institutes, including 2 colleges and 1 lyceum. 545 Degree Programs are available to our students. The University occupies 40 buildings and 12 residence halls located mostly in the University campus.



Jawaharlal Nehru University- Jawaharlal Nehru University is the foremost university in India, and a world-renowned centre for teaching and research. Ranked number one in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with a Grade Point of 3.91 (on a scale of 4), JNU was ranked no 3 among all universities in India by the National Institutional Ranking Framework, Government of India, in 2016 and no 2 in 2017. JNU also received the Best University Award from the President of India in 2017.



PORA Expert Centre- The Expert Center Project Office for Arctic Development (the PORA Expert Center) was established on 7 December 2017. Among our achievements are: assembling a community of 350 researchers and experts in the field; launching, in close cooperation with the Ministry for Development of the Russian Arctic and Far East, a platform for accumulating ideas for drafting the Strategy of Development of the Russian Arctic till 2035; the implementation of two projects aiming to design and compile the Polar Index -- a sustainability rating for the Barents region -- and an interactive map of the environmental issues existing in the Barents region, respectively. We have completed an ethnological study in Norilsk, organized four Welcome to the Arctic festivals promoting traditional cultures of the Arctic, and contributed to the Garden of Memory nationwide campaign as its planner, co-sponsor and co-host in the Murmansk Oblast.



National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University)- Founded as an economics institute in Moscow in 1992, HSE University has since grown into a renowned research university with campuses in four cities and a strong international presence. It consistently ranks among the top universities in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia, and maintains research partnerships and mobility programmes with institutions all over the world.





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For more information

