

of natural resources such oil, gas and fish. As yet unaffected vulnerable ecosystems at sea and on land in great need of protection require robust regulatory frameworks providing a high level of protection with respect to the exploitation of natural resources and shipping. This is crucial to preserving the unique values in the Arctic.

Sweden will work to ensure that the environmental dimension in the Arctic Council is strengthened and advocates more active participation by the environment ministers of the Arctic countries in the Arctic Council's work. One important part of this is active and strategic bilateral environment and climate cooperation with partners such as Russia and the United States.

The Government has identified three overall priorities for its commitment to greater environmental protection of the Arctic.

1. Stronger climate efforts

The Arctic environment is particularly sensitive. A fundamental element in limiting climate change in the Arctic is international climate cooperation that keeps global warming below two degrees. The Government's approach to this work is outlined in its climate strategy produced ahead of the UN Climate Conference in Paris in December 2015.

The Arctic countries have a particular duty to raise the climate issue and lead the way on global action because of their responsibility for the Arctic, and also because together they are responsible for a large proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions. The Government therefore wants to strengthen the Arctic Council's climate and renewable energy measures. Concrete measures are needed to reduce emissions of climate forcers and to communicate the effects of climate change in the Arctic.

In addition, a reduction in emissions of short-lived climate forcers such as soot and methane remains a priority. With the agreement to reduce emissions concluded at the Arctic Council's meeting of foreign ministers in Iqaluit on 24 April 2015, the Arctic countries are taking the lead. The agreement includes commitments to both enhanced national measures and joint measures to reduce emissions of soot and methane.

Another essential component of an active environmental policy for the Arctic is strengthening resilience, that is, the ability of people and nature to manage and adapt to those adverse effects of climate change that cannot be avoided. Sweden continues to give priority to this work and the Government is working for the Arctic Council to adopt clear recommendations in 2017 to strengthen resilience in the Arctic.

2. Better protection of biodiversity and ecosystems

In its reports and analyses, the Arctic Council has shown that biodiversity in the Arctic is under threat, but it is still possible to preserve large, relatively unaffected ecosystems both on land and at sea – if measures are taken now. The Government is allocating considerable

3. Sustainable use of resources

A large proportion of the world's oil and natural gas resources are found in the Arctic region. As the ice melts, the opportunities for new shipping channels increase and it becomes easier to access new areas for oil and mineral extraction. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is the fundamental international instrument regulating coastal states' right to extract natural resources on the continental shelf. At the same time, the international community has now agreed that global warming must remain under two degrees. To achieve this target, the extraction of oil and gas for burning must be restricted. Every country has a responsibility to take appropriate measures to achieve the target. This is particularly important at sea in the Arctic because the risks associated with extraction in cold waters are high. Robust regulations ensuring the highest possible level of protection on existing oil and gas installations are needed, along with full financial coverage for the costs that may arise in the event of an accident. This particularly applies in areas with permanent or temporary ice cover, where the risk of damaging biodiversity is particularly high.

The movements of fish stocks have changed over time. The parts of the Arctic Ocean and seabeds that have historically been covered by a permanent layer of sea ice must now be protected. Sweden believes that commercial fishing in the central Arctic Ocean should not be allowed until a regional fisheries management organisation to ensure regulated and sustainable fishing is established. Sweden considers generally that a precautionary approach should be taken and that consideration should be given to ecosystems when designing a system of fisheries

represents another important contribution to increasing protection of the Arctic Ocean.

Sweden will be a frontrunner in sustainable development in the mining industry. The Government intends to create new models for the development of environmentally sustainable mining and community development, with mining taking its financial responsibility. In the case of prospecting and mining, it is important that high nature values are not irrevocably lost. Environmental requirements must therefore be reviewed and, where necessary, tightened.