

Arctic Yearbook 2024

Year in Review

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2024

January

The Ice Innovation Festival in Kirkenes, Norway, highlights technological solutions in addressing Arctic challenges.

Arctic Frontiers 2024 takes place in Tromsø, bringing together over 1,000 participants from 30 countries to discuss sustainable development priorities in the Arctic.

In Brussels, an EPB policy briefing is held at the European Parliament, examining the findings of OCEAN:ICE and Arctic PASSION.

On 31st January, the Arctic Council's Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) publishes a report showing a 37 % increase in Arctic shipping over the past decade, based on the Arctic Ship Traffic Data (ASTD) System.

February

The Jokkmokks Market in Sweden celebrates Sámi culture, aligning with Sámi National Day on 6 February.

In Toronto, the Arctic360 Annual Conference explores Arctic development opportunities from the North American perspective by focusing on supporting sustainable economic growth.

The Polar Symposium in Monaco showcases the increasing international interest in Arctic affairs, with discussions on the region's environmental and economic issues.

At the end of the month, Finland hosts Polar Bear Pitching, an event that connects Arctic-based startups with international investors.

March

On 7 March, Sweden formally becomes NATO's 32nd member.

Between 20 and 22 March, the 16th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region takes place in Kiruna, Sweden.

The Arctic Science Summit Week in Edinburgh brings together scientists worldwide to present new research on Arctic climate impacts.

The month concludes with the Sámi Easter Festival in Kautokeino, Norway, which celebrates Sámi cultural heritage and resilience through performances and traditions.

April

The Arctic Encounter symposium takes place in Anchorage, and the Arctic Security Conference is in Copenhagen.

Environmental concerns are addressed at the 3rd International Conference on Ecosystem Approach to Management in Tromsø.

In an effort to strengthen regional cooperation, Russia and China's PLA navies signed a MoU on naval search and rescue. Additionally, Russia invites BRICS countries to participate in Arctic exercises in 2025 to test equipment suitable for extreme environments.

The Arctic Council's Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) publishes its fifth Arctic Shipping Status Report, based on data from the Arctic Ship Traffic Data (ASTD) System. The report reveals that over 1,660 unique vessels operated in the Arctic since 2022, with fishing vessels making up the largest share (44 %).

May

The Arctic Circle Berlin Forum expands Arctic discussions to Central Europe. At the same time, the EU Arctic Forum and Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue in Brussels reinforce cooperation frameworks focused on sustainable development and regional security.

In Bodø, the Arctic Congress and Assembly 2024 foster academic collaboration on Arctic research, while the High North Dialogue emphasises sustainable economic development.

On 23 May, the European Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) comes into force to secure essential raw materials critical to the EU's climate goals and technological advancements. This legislation seeks to strengthen the EU's autonomy in sourcing, processing, and recycling critical materials.

June

Early in June, China hosts the inaugural session of the Third Pole Climate Forum (TPCF), the first regional climate forum for high mountain regions. The TPCF issues a seasonal climate outlook for June to September 2024 to inform regional decision-making and address knowledge gaps in climate impacts.

The UArctic Assembly in Bodø focuses on strengthening networks in Arctic higher education, supporting collaborative research, and capacity-building initiatives across northern institutions.

The Arctic Development Expo in Inuvik showcases economic opportunities in the North, highlighting resource development and infrastructure projects.

July

The Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) ban in Arctic waters officially takes effect on 1st July. While the ban marks a step toward reducing environmental risks, there are concerns that alternative fuels introduced due to this regulation could pose a higher environmental risk in the event of spills, potentially impacting Arctic ecosystems.

Canada, Finland, and the United States form the Icebreaker Collaboration Effort (ICE Pact), recognizing their joint priority of upholding safety and security in the Arctic.

July

On July 22, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) released its updated 2024 DOD Arctic Strategy, the first revision since 2019. The strategy outlines the DOD's approach to ensuring a secure and stable Arctic, in alignment with the 2022 National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.

On July 24, China and Russia held the 11th meeting of the China-Russia Investment Cooperation Committee in Moscow, where both countries agreed to deepen cooperation in investment and energy sectors, strengthening their strategic partnership in Arctic development.

On 27 July, a Ukrainian drone hits a Tu-22M3 bomber at Olenya airfield on the Kola Peninsula.

August

August 2024 marks a record-breaking summer on Svalbard, with temperatures reaching new highs. At Svalbard Airport, the average summer temperature reaches 8.5 °C, making it the third consecutive year of record-breaking summer temperatures in Svalbard.

September

Arctic sea ice retreats to near-historic lows, with the minimum extent likely reached on September 11, 2024, as reported by NASA and the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC).

The European Polar Science Week in Copenhagen and the 17th Polar Law Symposium in Östersund convene to address this issue, combining scientific and legal perspectives.

On 24 September, Michael Sfraga is confirmed by the Senate as Ambassador-at-Large for Arctic Affairs as the inaugural U.S. Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs.

October

On October 10, two United Nations committees find that Finland violated Sámi Indigenous rights by granting mineral exploration permits on their territory without an impact assessment or adequate participation process.

Joint Russian and Chinese military activities in the Arctic Ocean area emerge. Moscow and Beijing begin joint naval and aerial patrols in the region, prompting the U.S. to monitor the interactions between the two countries closely.

The Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik focuses on pressing regional challenges, while the 9th China-Nordic Arctic Cooperation Symposium highlights growing Asian engagement in Arctic affairs.

November

On November 8, the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee meets in Ottawa to advance shared priorities for a more prosperous Inuit Nunangat.

The Calotte Academy 2024 takes place from 11 to 17 November in the European Arctic and Sapmi, with sessions and excursions in Rovaniemi, Luleå, Hetta, Kautokeino, Inari, and Sodankylä.

November records a milestone as global sea ice extent reaches a historic low of 23.15 million km².

In Kiruna, the Forum for the Arctic and Antarctic promotes cooperation across both polar regions