



Nordic Regional Youth Camp – Young Eyes on Sustainability in the Arctic Dimension

PRIORITIZE THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

Today, economic interests are always prioritized over environmental interests.

The drilling of Arctic oil is dangerous, high-risk enterprise, as the difficult Arctic weather conditions and logistical challenges drastically increase the risks of major oil spills. Any major oil spill in the Arctic region can severely damage the already vulnerable ecosystems and the businesses of local fisheries. Additionally, the oil industry has demonstrated that it is unprepared to respond to any major oil spill with the required urgency. At present, the oil industry cannot guarantee the safety of Arctic drilling, yet due to the large profits involved it continues to extract oil from the area. Hence, Arctic oil presents major environmental and technical risks that make it an unworthy enterprise.

One of the most important resources in the Arctic throughout history is fish. Most of the coastal settlements in the Arctic have relied on fish for sustenance and trade. The marine ecosystem is vulnerable and with the increased size of fishing vessels and higher extraction of the resource the consequences for the environment are growing. Trawlers can extract fish in higher quantities more efficiently, yet this causes more damage to the local environment and does not provide the advantages for the coastal communities that the coastal fleet does. While trawlers have a high economic yield in the short term, they have huge consequences for the future of the marine ecosystem and take jobs and opportunities away from the local settlements along the coast in the Arctic. Since smaller ships do less damage to the local environment and deliver the fish locally, strengthening the coastal fleet in the long-term will create more sustainable fishing and ways of living in the Arctic.

Through cooperation between countries in the Arctic, especially Norway and Russia, we have had some success in both innovation and preservation. Even so the regulations and restrictions have to be stricter than they are today and more countries should be included in the cooperation. Today, the quotas are mostly calculated on a species to species basis, but ecosystem-based should also be taken into account.

The mismanagement of mining waste presents another environmental risk in the Arctic region. In Norway, the disposal of mining waste is still allowed directly to the sea, polluting the pristine marine environment. Disposing waste in the sea is an economic decision that prioritizes the interests of mining companies over environmental concerns. Additionally, it does not take into consideration the potential of utilizing the waste in other economic activities and the opportunities for innovation. There is a lack of cooperation in the Arctic region, in terms of sharing the best practices of safe waste disposal.

In the future, we should implement a circular economy as the basis for growth in the Arctic. By reusing and recycling resources instead of taking “waste” out of the economy economic growth is maximized without increasing resource extraction. For the societies in the Arctic to be sustainable



the exponential growth in resource extraction must be stopped. From both an environmental and an economic point of view, only a circular economy based on keeping resources in circulation for as long as possible can be sustainable.

These are just some of the examples of how abusing the environment today kills opportunities tomorrow. We, the New Arctic Generation acknowledge that environmental interests are economic interests. Only through sustainable use of our resources can we protect our future.

What do we want to see happening now?

- The oil industry to phase out current petroleum extraction in the Arctic and prevent all future extraction and exploration.
- Promotion of alternative renewable forms of energy in the Arctic region.
- Improvement in the enforcement mechanisms of the fishing regulations.
- Increase in the assessment of the impacts of the fishing industry to the local communities.
- Strengthening of small entrepreneurship in fishing and supporting of local businesses and communities.
- Fishing quotas to be based on ecosystem-based sustainability
- Phasing out bottom trawling in favor of pelagic trawling.
- Banning dumping of waste from fishing vessels.
- Improved waste management of mining companies in a way that minimizes the risks for the local ecosystems.
- Promotion of the utilization of waste from mining industries and encouragement of sustainable innovation.
- Increase in the reuse and recycling of Arctic resources.

The demands listed here should be implemented on a national level by the government and harmonized through the Arctic Council and bilateral agreements.