

Remarks by President António Costa at the press conference following the European Arctic Summit

Good afternoon. I would like to start by thanking you, dear Petteri, for taking the initiative to organise this first European Arctic summit.

Being here in Rovaniemi, Lapland, and discussing the Arctic with colleagues, has reinforced my conviction about one thing: this region is of strategic importance, not just for Arctic countries, but for Europe as a whole.

My first message is simple: what matters for the Arctic, matters for all the European Union's member states. Looking at a map, the case for the European Union in the Arctic is clear. Three of our member states – Denmark, Finland, Sweden – are Arctic nations. What happens here is not a regional story, it is a European one. That means that Arctic security is European security.

The priorities of the European Union's Arctic strategy were set in 2021 – and they remain valid today: climate protection, sustainable development, peaceful cooperation. But when it comes to Arctic security, we need to adapt to the new geopolitical reality.

Indeed, the Arctic is another victim of the weakening of the multilateral system. Sovereignty and the respect of territorial integrity can no longer be taken for granted, and fundamental concepts of international law, such as freedom of navigation, are challenged. And Russia, the largest Arctic nation, is one of the main drivers of this trend.

The European Union is – and will remain – a reliable, long-term partner to all Arctic allies, European and non-European alike. I fully support the ambition of this summit to promote coordinated action. To build a ring of partners, from the Baltic, through the Arctic and the North Atlantic, to ensure a comprehensive, rules-based approach to the security and defence of the Arctic region.

This new geopolitical reality will be reflected in the next long-term European budget – and in its increased investment in Europe's security and defence, including in the Arctic region.

Beyond the geopolitical and security dimension, we cannot lose sight of the major threat that climate change poses to the region, nor of the economic opportunities it offers for our strategic autonomy, in particular for critical raw materials. That is why the Commission and the European External Action Service are currently updating the European Union's Arctic Strategy, to make sure it is fit for purpose in a new world of geoeconomic and environmental challenges.

In a nutshell, the European Union is committed to contributing to a safe, peaceful, resilient and prosperous Arctic region, to the benefit – first of all – of the people living here.

I want to thank Petteri again, dear Prime Minister, for this initiative. We look forward to continuing the work that has been started here today. And we will return to this issue in a future meeting of the European Council.

Thank you very much.

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