

Arctic Circle Assembly

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I'm currently a second-year graduate student in the Law and Diplomacy program specializing in Marine Policy. I recently traveled to Reykjavik, Iceland to attend the Arctic Circle Assembly held from October 19-21. The conference included over 700 speakers from across 200 panels on topics including marine environmental protection, indigenous perspectives, marine biodiversity, Arctic shipping, rare minerals, and energy. I've always been fascinated by the intersection between international affairs and marine science, and it was a great experience getting to hear from leaders within this field! While it was challenging to select specific panels to attend given the variety of topics, all of the sessions I attended were incredibly helpful and informative covering a range of issues such as:

- The Central Arctic Ocean: An Opportunity for Cooperation & Conservation
- The EU in the Arctic: Perceptions of Non-Arctic & Southern Member States
- Establishing ArcNet: Opportunities for Implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework
- From the Arctic to the Moon, Mars, & Back Again: Space Research & Innovation
- Arctic Marine Biodiversity and Conservation Measures
- Beyond Polar Bears and Penguins – Why the Ice Crisis Matters to All of Us
- Arctic Science Diplomacy: The Next Generation
- Arctic Coastal Infrastructure: Mitigating Environmental Impacts
- Arctic Shipping 2030
- Climate Justice, Permafrost Thaw, and Community-Based Observations

The sessions included several speakers from countries in the Arctic as well as from places across the globe including New Zealand, Colombia, Italy, and Singapore. It was great to hear a variety of perspectives, such as when the Deputy Prime Minister from the Faroe Islands spoke about their interest in renewable fishing vessels to limit emissions or when the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greenland emphasized the importance of data exchange and scientific research. One of my goals for attending the conference was to gain a greater understanding of environmental issues



currently facing the Arctic and the type of cooperation involved in effective management and protection of critical habitats. It was beneficial to hear about these topics in more depth throughout the conference, and especially getting to hear from scientists and policymakers through the Arctic Science Diplomacy sessions.

The panel on Implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework was interesting since it included panelists from the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment working group of the Arctic Council, the ArcNet initiative from WWF, and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. It covered goals and objectives of each organization working towards conservation and sustainable management of the marine environment. I've studied marine protected areas in the Antarctic region, and it was helpful to learn about the consideration that goes into the designation and monitoring of MPAs in the Arctic. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge was an important piece of the discussion and finding the necessary balance between overall objectives.



I really enjoyed the variety of sessions and having the opportunity to meet with speakers throughout the conference. During my first semester at Fletcher, I completed a research project on the impacts of underwater noise pollution on beluga whales in the Canadian Arctic and Alaska. One of the sessions I attended was focused on shipping, and I was able to speak with a panelist that had covered potential strategies for limiting underwater noise pollution throughout her presentation. It was a great experience getting to speak with those working on these specific issues and seeing their ideas for solutions after having researched these topics throughout different classes.

Overall, this was a great personal and professional experience, especially following my summer internship with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in Tasmania, as this conference provided an opportunity to focus on Arctic issues in addition to the Antarctic. There were speakers and attendees that had worked with CCAMLR on the US delegation at the conference, and it was great to hear about their experiences within both polar regions.

While we tend to hear about the effects of climate change on a high-level scale, it was helpful to learn about the direct impacts of climate change on communities across the Arctic region. In particular, we heard from representatives from multiple indigenous groups, such as the Inuit and Gwich'in, on ideas for management of certain protected areas. There were also separate events, such as a celebration for Dr. Sylvia Earle, who has accomplished an incredible amount throughout her career and is an inspiration through her dedication to protecting the marine environment.



Following the conference, we visited Fridheimar Greenhouse, Gullfoss Waterfall, Geysir, and Thingvellir National Park. Having the opportunity to explore these natural parks and see all the distinct landscapes was a great way to get further immersed into the Icelandic culture. We also visited the Iceland Ocean Cluster, Reykjavik Maritime Museum, and the Icelandic National Energy Authority, where we heard more about the role of geothermal energy in Iceland.

I'm grateful for the Center for International Environment & Resource Policy and the Fletcher Educational Enrichment Fund for their support in attending the Arctic Circle Assembly. This was an invaluable experience, especially getting to attend while working on my capstone, as it is focused on the management and governance of fisheries processes within the Antarctic, Arctic, and the High Seas. I'm glad I was able to listen to those directly involved in important international negotiations like the discussions that led to the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement. I'm looking forward to continuing to research environmental policy considerations for the Arctic marine environment and staying up to date on the topics covered throughout the conference.

