



ITALY'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARCTIC

Italy has a long history of engagement in the Arctic, based primarily on scientific research, which continues to represent the main driver of Italy's presence in the region. The first Italian expedition dates back to 1899, when Luigi Amedeo Duke of the Abruzzi explored the region aboard the vessel *Stella Polare*, with a mixed Italian and Norwegian crew. The following missions of Umberto Nobile in 1926 and 1928 are very well known worldwide. Italy's bonds with the Arctic continued over time with the activities carried out by explorers, scientists, and research bodies. In the 1990s, the research activities at the Thule High Arctic Atmospheric Observatory in Greenland and the opening in 1997 of the Dirigibile Italia Arctic Station in the Svalbard Islands mark the onset of the current Italian scientific presence in the Arctic.

In 2013, Italy obtained the Observer status in the Arctic Councils. Our representatives for the working groups are selected from different bodies and institutions, in a collective effort to support the works of the Council with our best expertise. Italy considers the Arctic Council the cornerstone of international cooperation in the region and is determined to continue to contribute actively to its works. The Italian commitment to the Arctic Council is based on several substantial values: the respect for the international law and for the Arctic States' sovereignty; the support of bilateral and multilateral cooperation; the promotion of local and Indigenous cultures and traditions; the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development of the Arctic with the involvement of the business community, in compliance with topmost environmental protection standards. Moreover, Italy deems international cooperation and mutual dialogue essential to keep the Arctic as safe, stable, and peaceful area of low tensions.

In 2017, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies devoted a specific attention to the Italian Strategy for the Arctic, with a fact-finding investigation. As a result, the Arctic Scientific Committee (CSA) and the Arctic Research Program (PRA) were established, with the objective to improve our scientific effort in the region. The actions of the Program include open calls for research projects, support for upgrading research infrastructures and long-term monitoring activities, implementation of a data system and a contribution to a new PhD course on Polar Sciences. The results of PRA actions already proved worthwhile and will undoubtedly be even more productive in the near future for the Italian contribution to the Arctic Council.

In addition, in recent year the interest in education and dissemination activities on Arctic themes has flourished in Italy. The Ca' Foscari University of Venice has launched the mentioned PhD course in Polar sciences. The Italian Society for International Organizations (SIOI) organizes since 2016 a Master's course on *Sustainable development, resources geopolitics and Arctic studies* and became, in



12th Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council

20 May 2021 | Observer statement

[ITALY]

September 2018, the first Italian Institute member of UArctic (University of the Arctic). Finally, the city of Genoa hosted the Forum “*New Arctic, Old Mediterranean – together for an extraordinary destiny*” in 2018, and the “*The Italian Navy in the North Pole*” exhibition in 2019, organized by the Hydrographic institute of the Italian Navy.

For the future Italian engagement in the Arctic, it is of utmost relevance the acquisition by OGS of a new research vessel, named Laura Bassi (the first woman in the world to be appointed a University chair). She is expected to conduct several Polar campaigns in the Arctic, as well as in Antarctica. We are confident that Laura Bassi will play an important role in the Italian scientific research and in our contribution to the Working Groups of the Arctic Council. In the same field, it is important to mention that the Hydrographic Institute of the Italian Navy organizes, since 2017, an annual geophysics campaign in the Arctic, within the framework of a multiannual programme called “High North”.

Italy is also deeply interested in the recent development in the economic sector of the Arctic, where plays an active role through its companies. We consider of paramount importance to engage economic operators on Arctic issues. In this respect, the technological expertise of the Italian industry is a significant asset to support the sustainable development of the region, applying innovative operational standards and technology solutions, ensuring low environmental impact, and supporting the active participation of the Indigenous communities.

Italy is strongly committed to the work of the Arctic Council, which is deemed as fundamental to maintain a safe and peaceful cooperation in the region. As an Observer, Italy believes its expertise and capabilities can bring added value and a worthwhile contribution to the Working Groups and to the objectives of the Council. Moreover, Italy is strongly in favour of a more active role of the Observers in the Arctic Council and welcomes the efforts of the last Presidencies to improve the involvement of the Observers. On a broader level, Italy is interested in increasing the international coordination among research institutes. This could be achieved creating a network of observing stations to improve synergy, data sharing, and adopting common measurement practices and standardized procedures. If implemented, these actions could substantially improve the quality of the data, the information exchange among States and help to rationalize resources, instruments, and funds.

The Arctic is a hotspot for climate change, and what happens there affects the entire global community. Furthermore, what is decided and implemented in the world, particularly in terms of climate change and sustainable development, produces crucial consequences in the Arctic. Considering the importance of the interconnection and the interdependence between the Arctic and the rest of the world, it is crucial that every country should be able to share its knowledge, expertise and data, to actively cooperate in the region and to participate to international projects, in order to implement better solution and support the sustainable development of the Arctic.