



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Europe**

## **Act for the Arctic**

**Friends of the Earth Europe statement**

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# Act for the Arctic

*Statement by the Friends of the Earth Europe*

The Arctic is melting. Increased global temperatures and melting sea ice pose a great threat to people and planet. In the High North, where the temperature is rising twice as fast in comparison, local communities, ecosystems and the natural environment are struggling to cope with a rapidly changing climate. Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) calls upon world leaders to act for the Arctic and to ensure that the area does not become another victim of, and potential contributor to, the climate crisis. If we are to conserve the ecosystems of the Arctic for future generations, appropriate measures must be taken immediately. FoEE calls upon world leaders to act now:

- Emission cuts of at least 40% by 2020 compared to 1990-levels by the richest nations;
- Establishment of a precautionary approach to regional development and all economic activities in the Arctic;
- A moratorium on all oil and gas extraction in the Arctic;
- Acknowledgement and respect for the rights and welfare of indigenous communities in the ongoing debate on how and by whom the Arctic should be governed.

## **Reduce carbon emissions**

The Arctic is already suffering from increasing temperatures. If carbon emissions continue to increase, this will cause further damage to our northernmost areas. The most important step to save the Arctic is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from developed countries. FoEE calls for emission cuts of at least 40% by 2020 compared to 1990-levels by the richest nations.

## **Reduce the increasing pressure upon Arctic nature**

Mitigation measures for reduced greenhouse gas emissions have top priority, however, we must prepare for inevitable changes in the Arctic climate. Fish stocks, seabird populations and onshore species are already experiencing changes in their environment. The combined threats of a changing climate and increasing pressure from activities such as overfishing, shipping and destruction of onshore habitats make animals and plants in the region more vulnerable than ever before. FoEE calls upon the establishment of a precautionary approach to regional development and all economic activities in the Arctic, to enable ecosystems and species to adapt to a changing environment.

## **Stop the Arctic from becoming a contributor to climate change**

The Arctic ecosystem is regarded as a victim of climate change. However, potential feedback mechanisms in the Arctic might become an environmental threat and a significant contributor to climate change. Reduced sea ice and loss of ice from the Greenland Ice Sheet, as well as a shift from the Arctic Ocean and terrestrial ecosystems from storing carbon to releasing CO<sub>2</sub>, could have devastating effects, and are dramatic warnings of the need to stop climate change now.

It is widely agreed that the Arctic region contains large oil and gas reserves, although volume estimates are uncertain. More fossil fuels have been found globally than we can allow to be extracted if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Factoring in the Arctic's fragile ecosystem and some of the toughest weather conditions on earth –drilling poses a great risk to the environment, locally, and globally. Therefore, FoEE demands a moratorium on all oil and gas extraction in the Arctic.

## **Respect for Arctic inhabitants**

Unlike the unpopulated Antarctic, the Arctic is inhabited by people of various nations and several indigenous peoples groups. It is the duty of the global community to acknowledge and respect the rights of these people in the ongoing debate on how and by whom the Arctic should be governed.

Within the Arctic countries both indigenous peoples' organizations and environmental organizations are being ignored and in some cases pressured. FoEE calls upon leaders within these countries as well, as the global community, to pay attention to the needs and rights of Arctic inhabitants, both in the present and in the future.

To keep the Arctic as an area of peace and sustainability, it is crucial to establish high environmental standards, a just management regime and appropriate adaptation measures. If we are to conserve the regional biodiversity and halt climate change we need the global community, and world leaders to act for the Arctic, now.

*May 2011*





**Friends of  
the Earth  
Europe**

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**Friends of the Earth Europe** campaigns for sustainable and just societies and for the protection of the environment, unites 30 national organisations with thousands of local groups and is part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International.