



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Biodiversity / Ecosystems

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Multilateral

FORM:

Legally-binding treaty

STATUS:

- Signed by Canada: November 15, 1973
- Ratified by Canada: December 14, 1974

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Lead: Environment and Climate Change Canada

Partners:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**Web Links:**

- [Conservation of Polar Bears in Canada](#)
- [Text of the 1973 Agreement](#)
- [Circumpolar Action Plan](#)

Contacts:

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

February 2017

REFERENCE #:

M-BD-1/EN

OBJECTIVE

The Agreement was signed by the five polar bear Range States: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (now Russia), Norway, Greenland (Denmark), the United States, Canada.

The Parties to the Agreement:

- Recognize the special responsibilities and special interests of the States of the Arctic Region in relation to the protection of the fauna and flora of the Arctic Region;
- Recognize that the polar bear is a significant resource of the Arctic Region which requires additional protection;
- Decided that such protection should be achieved through co-ordinated national measures taken by the States of the Arctic Region;
- Desire to take immediate action to bring further conservation and management measures into effect.

KEY ELEMENTS

The Agreement requires that the Range States take polar bears only when permitted (as outlined in the Agreement), protect the polar bear ecosystems and habitat as well as undertake research and monitoring efforts to ensure the persistence of the species in their range.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The five parties to the 1973 Agreement recognize that polar bears are important for people in northern communities, the Range States and the world. The nature and pace of change in the Arctic requires action locally, nationally and internationally. The five Range State countries will continue to work collaboratively on both new and ongoing conservation initiatives.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This agreement is important to Canada because Canada is home to two-thirds of the world's polar bear population. Indigenous groups in the North continue to hunt polar bears for subsistence and traditional purposes. Canada must also comply with international agreements (e.g. Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)). Canada must maintain a healthy polar bear



population for the harvest to continue. The 1973 Agreement engages Canada in the conversations about the species and its population status and trends in other areas of its range.

This agreement is implemented in Canada in a combined effort by Indigenous Hunting and Trapping organisations and Wildlife Management Boards, provincial and territorial governments, and the federal government (as per the Land Claims Agreements).

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

In September 2015 the Parties to the Agreement released a Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bears. The Plan is divided into two parts. The first outlines species information, key threats and the existing domestic management regimes of the Range States. The second focuses on the individual actions that will be undertaken to mitigate threats. The actions are divided into two-year work plans and focus on work most appropriately handled at the international level. Progress reports are made publicly available on a biennial basis following a Meeting of the Parties (next scheduled meeting: winter 2018).