



Canada

REPORT

The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security 19th meeting Co-organized & Hosted by the Embassy of Canada in The Hague



The 19th meeting of The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security was held on 18 June 2026, co-organized and supported by the Embassy of Canada to the Netherlands. Participants from embassies, NGOs, ministries, research-education institutes, civil society, and the private sector convened over ***“Recognizing Security, Stability, Indigenous Voices, and the Environment in the Arctic as an Increasingly Strategic Region.”*** This special meeting was held at the Official Residence of Canada in Wassenaar, and tackled issues from emerging security threats due to changing climate and geopolitics; communities, transportation and trade; and first-hand experiences with future views based in Indigenous Knowledge.

This report features commentary from expert Discussion Leaders and Special Guests including:

- **Daan Blok**, Coordinator of the Netherlands Polar Programme
- **Sean Desjardins**, Associate Professor, Arctic Centre, University of Groningen
- **Samuel Pallaq Huyer**, Netsilik Inuk NAADSN Research Fellow
- **H.E. Wampie Libon**, Arctic Ambassador & Director Incl. Green Growth, Min. of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
- **Lt. Colonel Kim MacLachlan Vetting (Denmark)**, NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence (CCASCOE) Strategic Analysis and Partnerships Branch



See the [VIDEO recap](#) of the ARCTIC Hague Roundtable

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Organizations and Governments represented

adelphi global	NL Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Inclusive Green Growth
Arctic Reflections	North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN)
Association of Polar Early Career scientists (APECS)	Netherlands Polar Programme (NPP)
Birdwatcher Group	PAL Aerospace
Clingendael Institute	Risk Challenger
Dutch Research Council (NWO)	Soup-Tech Holding
Earth Resilience Institute	Systemiq
Fanack Water	TU Delft
Institute for Environmental Security	University of Groningen Arctic Centre
The Green Branch	Wageningen University & Research
The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS)	Embassy of Canada
Leiden University – The Hague Student Climate Summit	Embassy of Denmark
NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence	Embassy of Finland
NATO Headquarters Brussels	Embassy of Norway
Netherlands Ministry of Defense	Embassy of Sweden

Agenda of the meeting

Welcome remarks by **H.E. Hugh Adsett, Ambassador of Canada to the Netherlands**

Roundtable opening with **Matt Luna, Organizer and Founder of The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security**

The importance of the nexus climate-security in Arctic policy: **H.E. Wampie Libon, Arctic Ambassador and Director Inclusive Green Growth, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**

Security and stability in the Arctic – preparedness, adaptation, and environmental considerations, with NATO military operations in the region: **Paul Rushton, Senior Policy Officer, Defense Policy and Planning, NATO HQ Brussels ***



Select findings from the recent Arctic Assessment report, including the Arctic Climate Paradox, from the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence (CCASCOE): **Lt. Colonel Kim MacLachlan Vetting (Denmark)**

Emerging complexities in thawing of permafrost and Russia: **Vikki Perijainen, NATO International Military Staff ***

Open discussion

Coffee break

Brief on activities and opportunities for Arctic communities and science from the Netherlands Polar Programme perspective: **Daan Blok, Coordinator of the NL Polar Programme**

Connecting Arctic Indigenous communities in security, climate adaptation, and sovereignty: **Samuel (Sam) Pallaq Huyer, Netsilik Inuk Research Fellow from North American Arctic and Defense and Security Network (NAADSN)**

Arctic communities' adaptation, resilience and environment, including food security/safety, ice dynamics and mining: **Sean Desjardins, Associate Professor of Anthropological Archaeology, Arctic Centre, University of Groningen**

Open discussion

Closing remarks by **Chloé Baudry, First Secretary, Embassy of Canada**

Networking reception

*Note that commentaries from Vikki Perijainen and Paul Rushton, from NATO at this Roundtable, do not appear in this report. Their discussions on NATO operational readiness and permafrost thaw considerations were delivered under Chatham House Rule, and remain so due to topic sensitivities and organizational communication guidelines.

Links to Roundtable presentations (PDF)

- [Select findings from the recent Arctic Assessment report, from the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence \(CCASCOE\)](#)
- [Connecting Arctic Indigenous communities in security, climate adaptation, and sovereignty](#)
- [Arctic communities' adaptation, resilience and environment, including food security/safety, ice dynamics and mining](#)
- Featured business/project: [Risk Challenger](#)
- Featured business/project: [Arctic Reflections](#)



Excerpts from welcome remarks by H.E. Hugh Adsett, Ambassador of Canada to the Netherlands

Thank you for joining us at the Official Residence of Canada for this roundtable on climate and security. My thanks to Matt Luna from The Hague Roundtable on Climate and Security for convening this discussion.

I would also like to warmly acknowledge H.E. Wampie Libon, Arctic Ambassador of the Netherlands and Director for Inclusive Green Growth. Your leadership in both areas reflects exactly the kind of integrated approach this moment requires.

It is a pleasure as well to welcome Mr. Samuel Pallak Huyer, who has travelled from Canada to be with us. Sam, a Netsilik Inuk from Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, brings together academic research, military experience, and community engagement. He offers an essential Indigenous perspective on Arctic security and climate grounded in lived experience.



Thank you to all our speakers and guests for being here. It is opportune for me to open this conversation at a time when the Arctic is increasingly central to global security, environmental stability, and international cooperation.

Canada is an Arctic nation: 40% of our landmass and 70% of our coastline lie north of 60. The region is home to vibrant Indigenous and northern communities and globally significant ecosystems.

For many years, geography and international norms helped safeguard the Arctic. That context has changed.

Today, we face accelerating climate change, evolving security threats, new economic pressures and opportunities, and intensifying geopolitical competition.

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has put a spotlight on these challenges, while growing international attention on Greenland and the broader region underscores the Arctic's rising strategic importance.

Decisions taken now—by Arctic states and by those who live there—will shape not only the future of the region, but the global geopolitical landscape.

For Canada, the Arctic is central to our foreign policy.

Our Arctic Foreign Policy rests on four pillars: asserting sovereignty; advancing Canada's interests through pragmatic diplomacy with Arctic and non-Arctic partners, including the Netherlands; strengthening regional governance, notably through the Arctic Council; and pursuing an inclusive approach to diplomacy.

At the core is partnership—particularly with Indigenous Peoples and northern communities as equal partners in shaping policy and action. This reflects our commitment to reconciliation and to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Security without partnership is not genuine security.

Canada is also investing significantly in Arctic security as part of our generational uplift in defense spending — over CAD\$80 billion to strengthen defense capabilities, including in the North. These investments include operational support hubs, advanced surveillance systems, ice-capable vessels, satellites, and plans for a new submarine fleet.

Importantly, we are prioritizing dual-use infrastructure that supports both security and community resilience.



As a NATO ally and partner to the Nordic countries, Canada is also advocating for a stronger northern focus in transatlantic security—recognizing that stability depends not only on defense, but also on cooperation in climate, science, sustainable development, and innovation.

We are expanding our diplomatic presence as well, with a new consulate in Nuuk, Greenland, an upcoming consulate in Anchorage, and the appointment in 2025 of Canada’s Arctic Ambassador, Virginia Mearns.

At the same time, Arctic security is inseparable from climate.

The Arctic is warming up to four times faster than the global average. Melting sea ice is opening new shipping routes, while thawing permafrost is destabilizing infrastructure and communities.

These transformations bring both risks and opportunities, and demand coordinated, forward-looking responses.

Based on what we’ve observed in Canada’s Arctic waters, it’s important to manage expectations: While there is evidence of a decrease in multi-year sea ice, rapidly changing and dynamic ice conditions persist and continue to pose unique risks to the safe passage of ships.

Today’s discussion is valuable in bringing together perspectives from diplomacy, security, defense, academia, science, business reflecting the complexity of the challenges – and the need for interdisciplinary solutions.

Executive summary

The Roundtable discussions underscored the profound transformation underway in the Arctic, where climate change is increasingly acting not only as an environmental phenomenon but also as a strategic driver shaping geopolitical dynamics, security priorities, and socio-economic realities. The region is approaching irreversible tipping points, including the “greening” of the Arctic, widespread permafrost thaw, and visible environmental changes such as discolored rivers. These developments are reducing sea ice, which has historically functioned as a natural barrier, and are thereby increasing accessibility to natural resources, maritime routes, and military activity. This growing accessibility is intensifying competition, with both Arctic and non-Arctic states expanding their presence, including China’s positioning as a “near-Arctic state” through its Polar Silk Road initiative.

The geopolitical context has shifted significantly following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which has altered the strategic balance in the Arctic and heightened concerns about security vulnerabilities, including Russia’s increasingly exposed Arctic flank. With seven Arctic states now members of NATO, there is both greater potential for coordination and a heightened risk of tension. The Arctic has thus risen in prominence on political and security agendas for actors including the United States and NATO, reflecting its growing importance as a domain of strategic competition. For the Netherlands, the Arctic is of direct relevance due to its implications for sea level rise, biodiversity, and migratory systems, as well as its importance as a maritime nation. Maintaining security and stability, upholding international law such as UNCLOS, and preventing irreversible environmental damage are key issues, while the Netherlands also continues to invest in preparedness, including training thousands of marines in northern Norway.

From a defense perspective, climate change is understood as a “force multiplier” that amplifies existing risks and complicates military operations. Operationally, the changing Arctic environment is already producing measurable effects, such as fewer snow and frost days alongside an increase in cold-related injuries, as well as highly unpredictable conditions resulting from permafrost thaw. These changes are complicating planning assumptions, as infrastructure built on permafrost becomes unstable and environmental variability increases. At the same time, declining ice cover does not make the Arctic safer; rather, it contributes to a more complex and hazardous operational environment, with increased demand for search and rescue operations in what remains the most challenging maritime domain on Earth. Awareness, adaptation, mitigation, and outreach were flagged in climate considerations which must be integrated into all exercises and planning processes.

Infrastructure vulnerability emerged as a critical concern, particularly in relation to permafrost thaw. The Norilsk diesel spill is a stark example, where over 21,000 tonnes of diesel were released due to infrastructure failure linked to thawing ground. This can illustrate the so-called “Arctic climate paradox,” whereby warming simultaneously facilitates access to the region while undermining the very infrastructure needed to operate there. Additional risks include the release of pathogens from thawing permafrost and broader human security challenges linked to environmental degradation and loss of human capital.

Economic opportunities associated with the Arctic remain significant, particularly in relation to shipping routes and resource extraction. For example, the Northern Sea Route could reduce travel time between Europe and Asia by up to 20 days. However, it was emphasized that while certain climate projections may overestimate or underestimate timelines, there is broad agreement that maritime access will expand more quickly than previously expected. This expansion carries risks alongside opportunities, reinforcing the need for careful governance and risk management.

A central theme of the discussions was the importance of Indigenous and local perspectives. The Arctic was repeatedly described not as an empty or remote frontier, but as a lived-in region where communities are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. In Nunavut and other northern regions, severe weather patterns, inadequate infrastructure, and housing challenges are contributing to health crises. Environmental changes are also affecting ecosystems and traditional ways of life, as evidenced by shifts in wildlife behavior, including polar bears increasingly scavenging in human settlements. Communication challenges, including linguistic diversity, further complicate adaptation and coordination.

Indigenous Knowledge was recognized as essential to understanding and responding to these changes. Successful examples of combining traditional knowledge with modern technology were highlighted, such as the use of drone sensing and mobile applications to support local harvesting practices. The Canadian Rangers are a particularly effective model of community-based security, with approximately 1,300 members, most of whom are Indigenous, covering vast areas as the “eyes, ears, and voices” of the Arctic. This model was suggested as a potential example for NATO allies to consider in other northern contexts.

Resource extraction projects, such as the Mary River Iron Mine, illustrate the complex trade-offs between economic development and environmental and social impacts. While such projects offer employment and economic benefits, they also raise concerns about ecosystem disruption, effects on wildlife migration, impacts on marine species, and risks to archaeological sites. Communities and stakeholders are actively examining these issues, including through ecotoxicology and environmental monitoring, but uncertainties remain significant.

Finally, the discussions highlighted important research gaps and the need for stronger interdisciplinary collaboration. Initiatives such as the Netherlands Polar Programme, which is funded by multiple ministries, aim to coordinate research and align it with policy needs. Future directions include a tripolar research agenda addressing the combined challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution across the Arctic and Antarctic, while recognizing the importance of innovation, including new research vessels, data integration, and closer collaboration between defense, scientific, and civilian actors.

In conclusion, the Arctic is entering a period of accelerated change in which climate dynamics, geopolitical competition, and human security are deeply interconnected. Addressing these challenges will require coordinated efforts across policy, defense, research, and local communities, with particular attention to Indigenous knowledge and international cooperation.

Commentary by H.E. Wampie Libon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

At the 19th Hague Roundtable on Climate and Security, the Netherlands' Arctic Ambassador Wampie Libon underlined that climate change remains a major threat to the Arctic in itself, while also forming the backdrop against which the region is turning into a strategic pressure point. Temperatures in the Arctic are rising much faster than elsewhere in the world, with the last decade being the warmest ever recorded there. The effects are felt both within and far beyond the region, and have major impacts on the lives, prosperity and future of local communities – which are hit first and hardest.

The Arctic plays a crucial role in the Earth's climate system, with several irreversible climate tipping points located in or related to the region. Melting ice caps may result in easier access to alternative shipping routes and natural resources, while melting ice, coastal erosion and changing river flows threaten critical civilian and military infrastructure. Climate change thus acts both as a threat in itself and as a driver and catalyst for geopolitical and economic developments, including rising strategic competition.

Although not an Arctic state itself, the Netherlands is directly affected by developments in the Arctic, not least through sea level rise, with 26% of its territory being below sea level. The Netherlands has recently adopted a new Dutch Polar Strategy 2026–2030, in which safeguarding stability and security in the Arctic is put central, alongside a longstanding and unwavering attention and commitment to climate and research. In this new strategy, security, climate and governance under international law are brought together in one integrated approach to Arctic policy.

The full Polar Strategy 2026-2030 (in Dutch; English translation will follow) [can be read here](#).



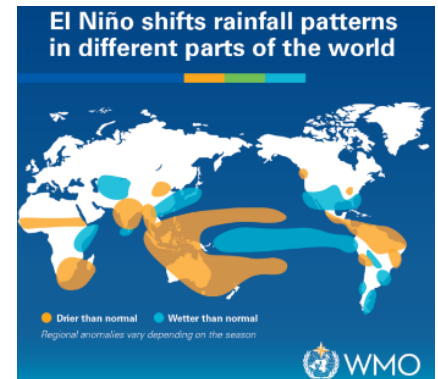


We are looking into an Arctic Climate Paradox, where the warming weather on the one hand is leading to less multi-year ice and more ice-free waters, and thereby theoretically more open for operations. On the other hand, warmer weather also leads to permafrost thawing and even more unpredictable weather, with more wind, wave height, precipitation (including snow-rain-snow icy layers and risk of over-icing) and infrastructure degrading. The Arctic Climate Paradox is important to communicate, especially as we are heading into a super El Niño, which will further strain existing challenged global waterways, and increasingly push commercial shipping interest towards the Arctic. El Niño will make the already drying Panama Canal even dryer, affecting global shipping, including 40% of the US container traffic. And the low developed Horn of Africa will on the other hand likely face a humanitarian crisis and more instability by the unusual extra precipitation, which could further affect the traffic in the Red Sea, a route which is currently under stress from the U.S. war with Iran. (See

depicted rainfall patterns from WMO, with more details from one of CCASCOEs partners, the Global Water Security Center)

With a sailing time from Taipei to Rotterdam of approx. 43 days when going south of Africa, versus approx. 24 days going via the Northern Sea Route in the early fall, there would (everything being equal) be a lot to save going north, even if it happens with somewhat smaller vessels and at a slower pace. A lot to save, only if the vessels are not running aground in the shallower and unpredictable sea, or for example aren't facing significant over-icing!

At NATO's newest Centre of Excellence (COE), the Climate Change and Security COE (CCASCOE) in Montreal, Canada, the overall focus is primarily on what the climatic changes mean for NATO's Military Operations, and not on the direct commercial or global humanitarian effects.



However, in many instances, the military will be called upon to mitigate the harsh realities of the rapidly changed climate; Military units are being deployed to fight forests fires or provide humanitarian aid to their own populations after hurricanes, increased intense precipitation, as well as emergency responses to major maritime disasters. Military units not designed for civilian emergency response are increasingly the only available tool for governments to engage in extreme events. This not only lowers the deterrence towards potential enemies, but affects planned training and deployments, and ultimately affects the combat readiness of our NATO forces.

CCASCOE's overall mission remains to support the implementation of the NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan, contributing to NATO's overall Military Readiness, Deterrence and Defense posture. The High North and Arctic Climate-Security Assessment Report is just one of the work-strands of the Centre.

Another important work-strand, when it comes to Climate Change and Security, is to serve as a Hub for professionals dedicated to navigating the complex intersection of climate change and defense and security, bringing own and others important work together with decision makers at the annual Montreal Climate Security Summit. Lastly there is of course the work to facilitate and provide training solutions for the security personnel who need it, from within the Alliance and among NATO's partners.

The Intersections of Arctic Change: Climate, Security, and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in the Kitikmeot Region



Following the recent proceedings at The Hague Roundtable, the outlook on the escalating impacts of climate change facing Inuit of Nunavut's Kitikmeot region falls upon three areas of interest: 1) adaptation to Arctic Climate Change, 2) using Indigenous Inuit Arctic Knowledge to aid in traditional Western science, and 3) addressing the security and insecurities Inuit in the region face today.

While the broader Arctic encompasses vast territories inhabited by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations, understanding this crisis requires narrowing our focus to a specific regional context: the Kitikmeot region and the original people of the region, the Netsilik Inuit. By analyzing these environmental shifts through an Indigenous-led perspective, we can understand how Arctic climate change and regional security are deeply interconnected. Resolving these challenges requires integrating localized environmental data with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)—traditional knowledge—to create sustainable pathways forward for Indigenous northern communities.

To understand the scale of current disruptions, we must first understand how traditional Arctic life aligns with the natural world. The Inuit Seasonal Calendar, developed by the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre, illustrates a cyclical approach to time that aligns human activity directly with Arctic ecosystems. Unlike fixed Western models that organize the year into four rigid, date-bound quarters, this Indigenous framework organizes the year into six distinct seasons. These seasons are fluidly defined by animal migrations, climatic indicators, and observable environmental changes rather than calendar dates. The cycle guides community survival by mapping specific activities to these shifts, such as winter land-trapping during the "Season of the Polar Bear," springtime ice-edge harvesting during the "Season of the Seal Pups," and late-summer foraging during the "Season of the Running Char." At the absolute core of this seasonal rotation are caribou, seals, and Arctic char, which serve as foundational nutritional staples hunted year-round. Ultimately, the calendar reflects an adaptable, highly resilient way of life where shifts are intertwined with the natural rhythms of the land and sea.

When climate change accelerates, it destabilizes these environmental indicators. For instance, unpredictable ice melting and shifting migration routes fracture the predictability of this six-season cycle, forcing communities to adapt rapidly to dangerous levels of environmental volatility. This is where Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Values become vital, serving as the foundational framework for traditional Inuit knowledge, ethical behaviour, community resilience, and environmental

stewardship. At the core of this worldview are eight interconnected principles that prioritize societal harmony and a deep respect for the natural world.

Social cohesion is fostered through Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respecting relationships and caring for all people), Tunnganarniq (fostering an open, welcoming, and inclusive spirit), and Pijitsirniq (serving family and community). Operational success and leadership within the culture rely on Aajiiqatigiinni (consensus-based decision-making), Ikajuqtigiinni (collaborative teamwork), and Qanuqtuurniq (innovation, resourcefulness, and finding practical solutions to complex problems). Finally, continuous personal growth is emphasized via Pilimmaksarniq or Pijariugsarniq (skill development through effort), while a holistic responsibility to the ecosystem is maintained through Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (care for the land, animals, and the environment). Together, these eight values provide a comprehensive governance model emphasizing that human well-being is inseparable from the health of the surrounding ecosystem.



The intersection of environmental degradation and regional security presents a dual crisis for the Kitikmeot region that extends far beyond local borders. Rapidly melting sea ice has the potential to create more accessibility for international commercial shipping, resource extraction, and foreign military surveillance. However, Inuit of the region and Canadian researchers debate and debunk the myth that the Arctic Ocean and seaways are becoming more accessible. This increased external interest directly impacts regional security, shifting the Arctic from an isolated zone into a contested global geopolitical arena. Simultaneously, warming temperatures destabilize infrastructure. Thawing permafrost damages runways, housing foundations, and coastal radar installations essential for northern defense.

For the Netsilik Inuit, the loss of predictable ice cover compromises travel safety along traditional marine routes, creating immediate food insecurity as access to baseline harvesting fields becomes hazardous. By applying the IQ principle of Qanuqtuurniq (innovation and resourcefulness), regional frameworks must adapt to these dual threats. Security policies can no longer focus solely on military sovereignty; they must actively incorporate human security, coastal protection, and the preservation of Indigenous hunting rights as foundational components of Arctic defense strategies.

Addressing the compounding crises in Nunavut's Kitikmeot region requires a fundamental shift from top-down Western management to an Indigenous-led, ecosystemic approach. The resilience of the Netsilik Inuit depends on the preservation of traditional knowledge networks, which have successfully navigated Arctic fluctuations for generations. Moving forward, global and national policymakers must implement strategic measures to safeguard these communities.

First, they must integrate IQ into security policy by utilizing Aajiiqatigiinni (consensus decision-making) to include Inuit rights holders in federal Arctic defense and maritime monitoring initiatives. Second, they must support localized climate adaptation by funding community-led monitoring programs that utilize the six-season Inuit Seasonal Calendar to track shifting wildlife baselines and ice safety. Finally, they must prioritize environmental stewardship by enforcing strict ecological protections grounded in Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq to mitigate the impacts of increased commercial shipping and resource development on caribou, seal, and char populations. Through collaborative, cross-cultural action, the insights shared at forums like the Hague Roundtable can be translated into actionable policies that protect the Arctic landscape and respect the sovereignty of Inuit who have called the Arctic their home since time immemorial.

Commentary by Sean Desjardins, Arctic Centre, University of Groningen

The Arctic's Indigenous communities (yet again) face an existential crisis imposed from outside. Climate change is already affecting these groups—and their livelihoods—more severely than others. This assertion is well understood to many of us, and is supported by both Western-scientific research and expert observations of Indigenous knowledge-holders. In short, the problem is well established. The question is, what do we do about it? Several years ago, I attended a Dutch Research Council (NWO) event for dozens of polar scientists working across multiple disciplines. Most of our work involved climate change, past or present, to varying degrees. During a break, the emcee asked the attendees to self-sort according to whether or not they considered themselves public and policy “ambassadors” for their research. Those who did were asked to move to one side of the room, while those who preferred practicing basic/fundamental research “science for science’s sake” were to move to the other. As I recall, the group split roughly evenly. I doubt the result would be as balanced today.

Although I disagreed with the latter group, I sympathized with them to some degree; while many excellent researchers appreciate the societal-impact potential of their work, they may lack the necessary skills and professional networks to advocate before policymakers and the general public. Most researchers aren’t formally trained to make these practical connections, nor are there many obvious opportunities for forging links with actors far afield facing similar challenges. This is what makes events such as the Hague Roundtable on Climate and Security so important. Prior to taking part in this 19th Roundtable, I was uncertain about the relevance of my work documenting the long history of Inuit subsistence harvesting (hunting) in Amittuq (northern Foxe Basin), Nunavut, Inuit Nunangat, the traditional Inuit homelands of what is now Canada. The doubt was unfounded.



In their opening remarks, both Dutch Arctic Ambassador Wampie Libon and Canadian Ambassador to the Netherlands Hugh Adsett highlighted climate change as both a catalyst and a driver for geopolitical developments. This is also true for changes to Arctic Indigenous livelihoods and wellbeing. With firsthand experience in both the community- and defense-related effects of climate change, Samuel Huyer adeptly bridged both “sub-themes” of the day. In particular, his discussion of the Canadian Rangers, a crucial unit of the Canadian Army Reserve operating in “remote” regions, such as the Arctic, allowed me to see a clear overlap between the on-the-land skills needed to operate within the program, and those necessary to successful subsistence harvesting. Indeed, many hunters I work with in the Amittuq are either current or former Rangers. Additionally, the region has long been home to the joint US/Canadian North Warning System (formerly, the Distant Early Warning Line, or DEW Line) radar station FOX-Main, which helps monitor air traffic over Arctic North America for defense purposes. The station’s two massive (ca. 27m tall) tropospheric scatter antennae—now decommissioned—are still used in clear weather as important inuksuit “landscape markers” by the region’s Inuit harvesters and other travelers.

A common thread in all of this year’s Roundtable talks and subsequent discussions on climate change was the short-term volatility it creates in land/sea/ice dynamics from year-to-year—threatening everything from Indigenous harvesting and safe travel to defense-related infrastructure and training. “Unpredictable” would seem to adequately describe both political and climate-related developments in the Arctic today. As a settler/non-Indigenous researcher working closely with Inuit rights- and knowledge-holders, I implore diplomats, policymakers and security experts engaged in Arctic affairs to center Indigenous experience and sovereignty in their decision-making and analyses. This must not be done in isolation, however. As climate change accelerates, listening to, and working hand-in-hand with, Arctic rights-holders is not only an ethical imperative, it’s also a key component of effective management of the problems.

Commentary by Daan Blok, NL Polar Programme

The Netherlands Polar Programme (NPP) is a dedicated funding instrument for polar research, both in the Arctic and the Antarctic region. The NPP is an integral part of the Polar Strategy of the Netherlands.



The NPP coordinates polar research and develops tailor-made calls-for-proposals, providing access to key infrastructure of international partners. It organizes annual events for the NL Polar community, bringing together stakeholders from research (including early-career scientists), policy makers, artists and other polar professionals.

The NPP develops bilateral collaborative research programs such as recently with calls with the British Antarctic Survey in the United Kingdom and with the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany. Also, urgent strategic opportunities for research can be supported, such as a recently-funded project on the spread of bird flu in the polar regions.

Most recently, the NPP developed a large (€10 million) impact-focused research program on the Triple Planetary Crises in the Polar regions (Tri-Polar), focusing on the interactive effects of pollution, climate change and biodiversity changes. This unique program will develop Living Labs in the Arctic and the Antarctic, in collaboration with local stakeholders.

The call is open for proposals for Living Labs until September 17, 2026.

Participant commentary by Youri Renkema, Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) Netherlands

APECS Netherlands greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the 19th The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security and, importantly, to see Early Career perspectives included in the discussion. The meeting highlighted a reality that is becoming increasingly impossible to ignore: the Arctic is no longer viewed only through the lens of climate science, but also through the lens of security.

One of the key takeaways for APECS Netherlands was the recognition that climate change, geopolitical competition, human security, and environmental governance in the Arctic are deeply interconnected. Effective responses therefore cannot emerge from a single discipline or institution. Indigenous communities, scientists, policymakers, and other important actors must work together in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary manner.

APECS Netherlands aims to help build these bridges. As the Dutch national committee of the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists, we provide a platform for networking, education, outreach, and career development for polar researchers in the Netherlands. Through workshops, symposia, outreach activities, and collaborations with institutions such as the Netherlands Polar Programme (NPP), we aim to strengthen connections across different disciplines.



A major challenge identified during the Roundtable is ensuring that Arctic governance remains equitable while responding to rapidly changing security dynamics. Indigenous knowledge should not be treated as an add-on to scientific expertise, but as an essential component of decision-making. Likewise, nature itself should be recognized as a stakeholder in governance discussions. APECS Netherlands envisions an equitable process in which Indigenous peoples and the natural environment play a central role, and we believe the Arctic should remain a region of natural prestige where environmental stewardship and human well-being are prioritized alongside strategic considerations.

International collaboration is therefore not optional, but it is fundamental. APECS Netherlands actively promotes such collaboration by connecting Early Career researchers across borders and disciplines. A recent example is our publication “Tales from the Poles,” produced together with the UK Polar Network, which brings together Early Career voices from around the world to share experiences, research, and perspectives on the polar regions. The book is available as a free e-book in the publication section of this report.

Looking ahead, APECS Netherlands hopes to continue fostering dialogue between science, policy, and society. The Arctic’s challenges are global in scale, but solutions will depend on inclusive partnerships, sustained international cooperation, and the meaningful involvement of the next generation of polar researchers and leaders.

Anyone interested in learning more about APECS Netherlands or exploring opportunities for collaboration is invited to contact: info@apecsnetherlands.nl or visit our website apecsnetherlands.nl

Participant commentary by Dorian Wevers, adelphi global

The special Arctic session of The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security underlined a central message of adelphi’s climate-fragility work: Arctic climate change is not a siloed environmental issue, but a systemic security challenge. The Climate Security Expert Network [Climate-Fragility Risk Brief](#) on the Arctic highlights that rapid warming in the region



compounds a set of overlapping challenges: governance gaps, geopolitical competition, infrastructure vulnerabilities, ecosystem disruption, and the particular vulnerabilities of communities who live in and depend on the Arctic. The discussions at the Roundtable strongly echoed this assessment.

The risk brief highlights how sea-ice loss, permafrost thaw, coastal erosion and shifting ecosystems are already reshaping human security, infrastructure, economic activity, and governance in the Arctic. As the region becomes more accessible, commercial, scientific and military activity is increasing, while response capacities and governance mechanisms remain limited. The brief also warns that climate change may intensify geopolitical competition, create unintended risks from increased military activity, and further expose Indigenous communities who are already on the front lines of climate-fragility risks. A key message is that climate change acts as an “actorless threat;” it does not originate from a hostile actor but can still destabilize security conditions and overwhelm conventional policy responses.

For adelphi, the key takeaway is that Arctic climate security policy must remain systemic, cooperative and people-centered. Adaptation of defense and infrastructure is necessary, but insufficient on its own. Policymakers should strengthen inclusive governance, protect scientific cooperation, integrate Indigenous Knowledge meaningfully, and address the climate drivers that are destabilizing the region. adelphi will continue contributing to this agenda through research, policy dialogue, and analysis on the Climate Diplomacy platform and through the Climate Security Expert Network.

Participant commentary by Sissi Knispel de Acosta, Earth Resilience Institute (ERI)

The Arctic is becoming one of the clearest examples of why resilience can no longer be treated as a purely environmental concept. At The Hague Roundtable on “Security, Stability, Indigenous Voices and the Environment in the Arctic,” the central message for the Earth Resilience Institute was clear: climate change, security, infrastructure, Indigenous rights, ecosystems and geopolitics are deeply connected.

For ERI, the Arctic is relevant because it shows what happens when climate impacts move faster than institutions can adapt. Thawing permafrost, changing snow and ice conditions, shifting rivers, biodiversity loss, coastal erosion and increasing pollution risks are not only environmental problems. They affect military planning, emergency response, food security, housing, transport, energy systems and international stability.

This is why Arctic security needs a broader resilience perspective. Security cannot only mean defense capabilities or strategic presence. In the Arctic, security also means safe communities, functioning infrastructure, access to drinking water, food systems, biodiversity, trust in institutions and the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge.

One of the strongest takeaways was that the Arctic is not simply becoming more accessible because of melting ice. It is becoming less predictable. This matters for NATO, for Arctic states, for Europe and for all actors working on climate security, disaster risk reduction, adaptation, and science diplomacy. Operational planning can no longer rely on old assumptions, climate change creates uncertainty, and resilience means being able to act under that uncertainty.

The discussion on permafrost thaw made this especially concrete. Infrastructure in the Arctic is vulnerable because it was built for environmental conditions that are disappearing. Roads, buildings, pipelines, industrial sites, military installations and settlements are all affected. The Russian Arctic shows how climate risk, energy infrastructure, geopolitical tension and reduced maintenance capacity can reinforce each other. This is a systemic risk - not only a technical problem.



For ERI, this connects directly to our wider work on resilience in different regions and social contexts. Whether we look at Arctic communities, flood-affected regions, forest landscapes, post-conflict areas or places facing food insecurity, the same question appears: how can societies remain capable of acting when climate stress, ecological degradation and political instability overlap?

The Indigenous perspective was therefore essential. Inuit Knowledge systems and community-based observations are not an additional layer to scientific or security analysis. They are central to understanding what is changing on the ground. Arctic communities already live with the consequences of climate change: unsafe travel routes, changing hunting conditions, damaged housing, water insecurity, food insecurity and pressure on local ecosystems. Any Arctic strategy that does not include Indigenous voices will remain incomplete.

This is also why ERI sees value in working with NATO, Arctic researchers, diplomatic actors and communities. Climate security requires cooperation across very different fields. Defense actors bring operational planning, crisis response and infrastructure perspectives. Scientists bring evidence and modelling. Indigenous communities bring lived knowledge, place-based observation and governance traditions. Policy actors bring the ability to translate these insights into institutional change.

The most relevant issue for ERI is therefore not only the future of the Arctic itself, but what the Arctic teaches us about resilience globally. The region shows that climate change is already reshaping security assumptions, exposing

infrastructure weaknesses and challenging governance systems. It also shows that resilience cannot be built from the top down alone.

A resilient Arctic policy must protect more than national interests. It must protect cooperation, communities, ecosystems and the conditions for long-term stability. It must take Indigenous Knowledge seriously, strengthen science-policy cooperation and help institutions plan for uncertainty instead of reacting too late.

For ERI, the Arctic is both a warning and a responsibility. It reminds us that resilience begins where climate, security, ecosystems and communities are no longer treated as separate worlds. Thanks to Matt Luna and the Canadian Embassy for hosting this wonderful event.

Participant commentary by Boris Vergote, Systemiq

There are three potential shipping corridors across the Arctic that may become commercially relevant across different timescales: the North-Eastern Passage (NEP henceforth), the North-Western Passage (NWP) and the Transpolar Route (TPR). The NEP is the only route that is already in regular operation, but transit requires approval and escort from Russia. Crucially, the three are not interchangeable: for example, general “Arctic shipping” should not be conflated with transit through the Central Arctic Ocean. (CAO)

This prompts a two-pronged question for decision makers:

1. Whether to accommodate Arctic shipping, when and how?
2. If so, which of the three routes should be (de)prioritized and why?

There is only a small economic opportunity, projected at <0.2% of global shipping by 2050. While Arctic routes between Asia and Europe/North America are shorter than existing routes, they only offer potential economic savings for commercial shipping of ~US\$100 **million** per year, and only moderately reduce reliance on existing trade chokepoints.



Unlocking this opportunity requires direct economic costs, including response infrastructure in the region, vessel costs, high insurance costs and other investment and operating costs, which explain the low economic savings of Arctic shipping. A shorter distance does not automatically translate into a cheaper voyage: on a per-trip basis Arctic transits are typically more expensive.

Greater Arctic shipping would create its own set of geopolitical risks. It would see greater traffic transiting via Russian waters through the NEP, with a series of new chokepoints potentially emerging along the route. Every Arctic route between the Pacific and Europe must pass through the Bering Strait, a single corridor barely 50 miles wide and shared by Russia and the United States.

High environmental impact uncertainties. The Arctic is one of the world's most ecologically valuable and fragile marine environments. It is uniquely vulnerable to the disruption of shipping.

- The albedo ice effect from black carbon emissions and icebreaking can compound the climate change in the Arctic, possibly creating a self-reinforcing feedback loop.
- Migratory marine species are highly sensitive to disturbance (via noise, light, etc.), with major potential consequences for marine food systems, and the communities that depend on them.

- Water pollution risks, from ballast water, fuel emissions, spill risk, and waste discharge, are much harder to remediate in the Arctic due to the lack of response infrastructure.

The Arctic routes are not equivalent commercially or environmentally. The TPR is projected at 0.02% of global trade by 2050: a rounding error economically. Yet traversing the CAO, the world's least-studied marine ecosystem, brings the risk of irreversible disturbance from industrial activity.

The balance of costs and benefits case points toward precaution: the economic gains do not immediately justify known and unknown environmental costs, and there are strategic interests in ensuring proactive governance before commercial pressure makes restrictions significantly harder to introduce. This case is clearest for the TPR and the surrounding CAO. Any further policy engagement needs to directly and closely engage Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as stakeholders, as rights holder and as knowledge holders.

Input on challenges and solutions by Roundtable participants, under Chatham House Rule

The Arctic is above all a strategic region, where great powers rub shoulders and collective interests – such as rules-based order, climate change and indigenous livelihoods – are under pressure. Over the last half decade, strengthened international security and the armament of alliances have become the primary economic and political priority for many nations in the “Western world,” many of which used to be frontrunners in pushing forward goals for sustainability and combating climate change. Short-term priorities are outbalancing those of the long-term, and the immediate gravity of conflict and war brings forward an “anything-goes” mentality.

This extends into the security opportunities currently present for Arctic-bordering nations. In the Arctic, sustainability comes twofold; climate change and concerns over ecological stability are inherent to the shifting region, especially when military-industrial powers expand their territory inwards, but stability is lost in all respects if conflicts expand further North, or if the melting ice becomes stage to power displays reminiscent of the Cold War. In times of heated geopolitical competition, the greater powers are unlikely to leave the region as cold as it used to be.

It is inevitable that the Arctic will host military initiatives and trade routes this decade, but by involving forward-thinking NGOs and private entities from diverse backgrounds, we can work to influence the general direction of these developments, while ensuring alternative considerations preserve a seat at the discussion table.

Observations on challenges:

- The biggest challenge is that the Arctic remains poorly understood by those who make the decisions impacting the region the most. Regarding its extractive potential, most commentators keep referring to the same speculative 2008 study by the US Geological Survey. There is a noticeable gap in knowledge and understanding, which can lead to unexpected outcomes. The capitals of Arctic states are far removed from their Arctic territories, which further exacerbates a lack of understanding of what is needed and what works. Consulting local and traditional knowledge should therefore be a core part of regional policy development. Initiatives like this are part of the solution, although wider participation and knowledge dissemination are key. People need to start thinking about the Arctic not just as a remote strategic space where big powers are starting to flex their muscles, but rather as a unique ecosystem and global thermometer that affects every region on earth. Regarding avenues for cooperation, more investment should be made in supporting truly circumpolar projects, encouraging regional cooperation by putting local stakeholders at the heart and also involving interested like-minded non-Arctic states.
- Concerns of “nature-based approaches” within an anthropocentric value system concerning trade and security. It is a difficult question, of how to prioritize ecology within structures that are inherently destructive (ie. extraction, weaponry).

- When two consequential Arctic states are disengaged from the Arctic Council's core work, what realistic mechanics exist to honor the Council's commitments to Indigenous communities and environmental stewardship? How should we be thinking about the Council and its future role in Arctic relations?
- Explaining how Indigenous Knowledge plays a role in climate science, as well as how adaptation toward ongoing climate change will create drastic pressures on Indigenous communities and governments.
- A changing sea ice cover and its implications for shipping routes, governance and fisheries. How can researchers help adapt to this changing environment?
- Resource scarcity, competition, displacement, migration, critical Infrastructure and cascading risks
- Balancing growing geopolitical and economic competition in the Arctic with the need to protect fragile ecosystems and support Indigenous communities
- The broader challenge is the one posed by climate change for all of society and all of its actors.
- Food security: how can regions create climate proof and autonomous supply chains to secure the food they need for their own populations? Seeking solutions to decouple from large scale supply chains of soy, fertilizer inputs using for instance new technologies in fermentation and husbandry.
- What are consequences of the ice melt for security in the Arctic?

Commentary on solutions:

- Explaining how Indigenous Knowledge plays a role in climate science, as well as how adaptation toward ongoing climate change will create drastic pressures on Indigenous communities and governments.
- Anticipatory risk and disaster management, climate resilient system, strengthening subnational institutions, international cooperation, science diplomacy cross-border resource management, disaster preparing, humanitarian response, capacity building, peace-building.
- The Arctic region has a fragile natural environment with many stakeholders. Looking at the Scandinavian part of the Arctic, institutional stability is strong, and there are high standards for human rights, Indigenous rights, and environmental laws. To prevent extreme climate change, an increasing number of specialized resources are needed. Few of these so-called critical raw materials are found in the far north, and, paradoxically, efforts to save the climate by extracting these resources might conflict with Indigenous living areas and disrupt the fragile Arctic climate.
- Strengthen Arctic cooperation through science diplomacy and shared climate-security monitoring among NATO, European, and Indigenous partners. And strengthening the collaboration on the Arctic Climate Security research field.
- A better understanding of the drivers and magnitude of climate change and their impacts is achieved through science. International collaboration is the key tool for (polar) sciences to achieve breakthroughs in science.
- Identifying possible avenues of cooperation on Arctic security between Arctic and non-Arctic countries, with increased focus on issues through a climate and peace-building lens.
- Develop climate-resilient and sustainable Arctic infrastructure through joint planning between governments, local communities, scientists, and security actors.

Publications

Climate Ready: The Netherlands Defense Strategy for Climate Change & Security; Planetary Security Init; July 2026:
The objective is to transition the military into a "climate-ready" organization that anticipates future security risks.
<https://www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/news/climate-ready-netherlands-defense-strategy-climate-change-and-security>

The Netherlands Polar Strategy 2026 – 2030; Dutch deployment in Antarctica and the Arctic; May 2026:
Strategic interests, new sailing routes and raw materials, also melting ice sheets and fragile nature. *(in Dutch)*
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/weblogs/bzers-wereldwijd/2026/nederlandse-inzet-in-antarctica-en-het-arctisch-gebied>

Joint Statement on Arctic Security from the Arctic Allies; Global Affairs Canada; May 2026:
Recognizing the security challenges and economic opportunities in the Arctic and the High North, the Arctic Allies met to discuss efforts to build a secure and prosperous region.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2026/05/joint-statement-on-arctic-security-from-the-arctic-allies-canada-the-kingdom-of-denmark-including-greenland-and-the-faroe-islands-finland-iceland-n.html>

The Effects of Climate Change on Security [Report]; NATO; January 2026:
How climate change rapidly transforms NATO's strategic environment. Four case studies are presented: the northwestern parts of Africa, the Arctic, the east flank (Dnipro watershed), and military mitigation efforts.
<https://www.sto.nato.int/document/the-effects-of-climate-change-on-security-report/>

Cold calculations: The future of Arctic security and the role of the Netherlands; Karen van Loon, Ben Bekkering, Youri Verschoor, Dick Zandee; June 2025: To remain resilient, the Netherlands must integrate Arctic security into defense and foreign policy, bolster climate-resilient infrastructure, and advocate for legal norms and multilateral engagement.
<https://www.clingendael.org/publication/cold-calculations-future-arctic-security-and-role-netherlands>

Climate, NATO and Naval Power; The CCASCOE Brief Volume 1, Issue 2; July 2026
The structural reasons climate change remains largely absent from NATO's exercise ecosystem, and how climate change is reshaping naval power, operations, and infrastructure.
<https://www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/news/climate-nato-and-naval-power-ccascoe-brief-issue-2>

"Tales from the Poles;" Editors: Nadia Frontier, Youri Renkema, Saule Akhmetkaliyeva; February 2026:
A storytelling book project connected to the Arctic and Antarctic organized by APECS Netherlands and UK Polar Network.
<https://apecsnetherlands.nl/tales-from-the-poles/>

VIDEO recap of 19th Hague Roundtable: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckzTKWUg5e4>

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Many thanks to the Embassy of Canada for the vision and support to address this quickly-changing, strategic and sensitive global topic. We are keen to carry forward the results and connections from this Roundtable meeting to further raise awareness of the environmental and community issues combined with security based in recognized international law, with NATO leadership as a cornerstone.

Thank you to Ambassador Adsett of Canada for welcoming this Roundtable at the Canadian

Residence and to the Netherlands Arctic Ambassador Wampie Libon and Staff for their key contributions to the meeting. Special gratitude goes to Chloé Baudry of the Canadian Embassy for her insights, energy, planning and coordination support on our second time working together to produce an engaging Hague Roundtable – which was also the third Roundtable supported by Canada. Thank you as well to Embassy Staff including Janine Cocker, Remon Gudde, Filip Krivanek, and Emma Trudel for their contributions to making this Roundtable a success, as well as to Samuel Pallaq Huyer for taking the long trip to share his valuable Arctic life experience at the meeting.

We are looking forward to planning our 20th meeting of The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security in the second half of 2026. Get in touch with ideas on collaboration and for more information on our initiative.

As always, a BIG thank you to ALL participants, Discussion Leaders and Special Guests for taking the time and effort to make our Roundtable meetings a success, and for their daily work on these challenging topics!

Matt Luna, Organizer and Founder, The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security

About

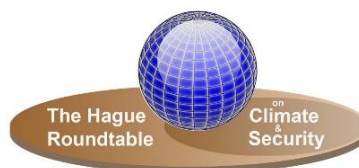
[The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security](#), founded in 2015, is an independent forum to support dialogue for international cooperation in adapting to climate risks to human well-being, sustainable development and peace. This forum's focus includes water resources, natural disasters, energy/food security, sea level rise, migration, conflict risk reduction and stability of fragile states. Roundtable participants highlight strategies along with what they offer and what they need in facing common challenges. Get in touch with inquiries on topics, events, collaboration and support.

Contact

Matt Luna, The Hague Roundtable on Climate & Security

Email: luna1matt (at) outlook.com

Website: hagueroundtable.com



Observations, recommendations and commentaries in this Roundtable report, compiled and edited by Matt Luna, are taken from discussions and participant input, and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Roundtable and host organizations.