

Young Researcher Report – Special Polar Law Session: Legal Perspectives in the Arctic; a Dialogue in Time of Change.

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Special Polar Law session titled “Legal Perspectives in the Arctic: a Dialogue in Times of Change” was moderated by Dr. Natalia Loukacheva. The session hosted over 20 participants, including polar law students from Iceland, Italy, Canada, Cameroon, China, Germany, Russia and the USA, and other NRF guests and participants. Four presentations were made under the auspices of the NRF’s Theme Project Group on Legal Issues in the Arctic and included reports by students of the Polar Law Program, University of Akureyri.

Hajalti Ómar Ágústsson (Iceland) introduced the audience to **“Iceland’s Policy on Arctic Matters and Possible Oil Drilling on the Jan Mayen Ridge.”** The legal regime of oil pollution prevention and combat was addressed with the view to the Jan Mayen Ridge area. The speaker assumed that oil spill may take place at any stage of oil activity due to severe weather condition.

By the presenter, Arctic search and rescue agreement (2011) shall be regarded as a model for future cooperation on pollution combat in the Arctic. The response infrastructure should be in place and extensive cooperation will be needed as no single state can handle monitoring on its own. The Iceland shall be active in Arctic environment protection issues, and Jan Mayen Ridge shall be treated as a part of the Arctic. Profit principles shall not overshadow environmental concerns.

Tiantian Zhang (China) presented on **“The Awakening of the Snow Dragon: Non-Arctic Countries’ Participation and Cooperation in Arctic Issues.”** Rapidly changing Arctic environment suggests the participation of non-Arctic states in the Arctic-related matters. An overview of Chinese concerns, capacities and interests in the region was presented. The major areas of interest for China are emerging new shipping routes and oil/gas resources. China has also its own vision of the Arctic sea routes. The importance of the issue is also determined by China’s GDP dependence on shipping.

Environmental concerns are associated with the Arctic changes influence in, e.g. the Himalayas, potentially affecting millions of people in China. Therefore China is developing its Arctic research capacity. Statistical data on the perception of non-Arctic states involvement in the Arctic issues by the Arctic states were presented.

Stefan Heinz Holitschke (Germany) and Irina Zhilina (Russia) gave a talk on **“The Russian-Norwegian Treaty on Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean: Some Perspectives”**. The historical background, keypoints of the Treaty and results of their assessment were. Since 1950s both Norway and Russia have demonstrated their willingness to cooperate on border and fisheries issues and this culminated in the

settlement of their disagreements and conclusion of this historic final agreement in September of 2010.

The Treaty was assumed to be a model for Arctic cooperation as an example of settling a dispute in a peaceful manner. The speakers expressed their views on different perceptions of the Treaty in both countries and concluded that it can serve as a model for future dispute-settlement in the Arctic.

Tina Ann Price (Nunavut/Canada) spoke about **“Creating Change for Inuit: How can we incorporate Inuit knowledge to Current Arctic Issues?”** The focus was on traditional knowledge and ways of incorporating it into Arctic policies. Examples of transferring indigenous knowledge into regional policies in Canada - in areas of mental wellness (National Inuit Policy), territorial governance (Territorial Inuit Policy), and local policy/practice (The Iceberg Healing Manual www.ccsa.ca) - were presented. The speaker admitted that the issue is difficult to deal with, yet, she maintained there is growing understanding that indigenous – non-indigenous peoples’ dialogue should be enhanced. Ways to enhance traditional knowledge incorporation into Arctic policies were presented.