

Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears

Oslo, 15 November 1973

The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America,

Recognizing 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;

Recognizing that the polar bear is a significant resource of the Arctic Region which requires additional protection;

Having decided that such protection should be achieved through co-ordinated national measures taken by the States of the Arctic Region;

Desiring to take immediate action to bring further conservation and management measures into effect;

Having agreed as follows:

Article I

1. The taking of polar bears shall be prohibited except as provided in Article III.
2. For the purposes of this Agreement, the term "taking" includes hunting, killing and capturing.

Article II

Each Contracting Party shall take appropriate action to protect the ecosystems of which polar bears are a part, with special attention to habitat components such as denning and feeding sites and migration patterns, and shall manage polar bear populations in accordance with sound conservation practices based on the best available scientific data.

Article III

1. Subject to the provisions of Articles II and IV any Contracting Party may allow the taking of polar bears when such taking is carried out:
 - a) for bona fide scientific purposes; or
 - b) by that Party for conservation purposes; or

c) to prevent serious disturbance of the management of other living resources, subject to forfeiture to that Party of the skins and other items of value resulting from such taking; or

d) by local people using traditional methods in the exercise of their traditional rights and in accordance with the laws of that Party; or

e) wherever polar bears have or might have been subject to taking by traditional means by its nationals.

2. The skins and other items of value resulting from taking under sub-paragraph (b) and (c) of paragraph 1 of this Article shall not be available for commercial purposes.

Article IV

The use of aircraft and large motorized vessels for the purpose of taking polar bears shall be prohibited, except where the application of such prohibition would be inconsistent with domestic laws.

Article VI

1. Each Contracting Party shall enact and enforce such legislation and other measures as may be necessary for the purpose of giving effect to this Agreement.

2. Nothing in this Agreement shall prevent a Contracting Party from maintaining or amending existing legislation or other measures or establishing new measures on the taking of polar bears so as to provide more stringent controls than those required under the provisions of this Agreement.

Article VII

The Contracting Parties shall conduct national research programmes on polar bears, particularly research relating to the conservation and management of the species. They shall as appropriate co-ordinate such research with research carried out by other Parties, consult with other Parties on the management of migrating polar bear populations, and exchange information on research and management programmes, research results and data on bears taken.

Article VIII

Each Contracting Party shall take action as appropriate to promote compliance with the provisions of this Agreement by nationals of States not party to this Agreement.

Article IX

The Contracting Parties shall continue to consult with one another with the object of giving further protection to polar bears.

Article X

1. This Agreement shall be open for signature at Oslo by the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America until 31st March 1974.
2. This Agreement shall be subject to ratification or approval by the signatory Governments. Instruments of ratification or approval shall be deposited with the Government of Norway as soon as possible.
3. This Agreement shall be open for accession by the Governments referred to in paragraph I of this Article. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Depositary Government.
4. This Agreement shall enter into force ninety days after the deposit of the third instrument of ratification, approval or accession. Thereafter, it shall enter into force for a signatory or acceding Government on the date of deposit of its instrument of ratification, approval or accession.
5. This Agreement shall remain in force initially for a period of five years from its date of entry into force, and unless any Contracting Party during that period requests the termination of the Agreement at the end of that period, it shall continue in force thereafter.
6. On the request addressed to the Depositary Government by any of the Governments referred to in paragraph I of this Article, consultations shall be conducted with a view to convening a meeting of representatives of the five Governments to consider the revision or amendment of this Agreement.
7. Any Party may denounce this Agreement by written notification to the Depositary Government at any time after five years from the date of entry into force of this Agreement. The denunciation shall take effect twelve months after the Depositary Government has received the notification.
8. The Depositary Government shall notify the Governments referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article of the deposit of instruments of ratification, approval or accession, of the entry into force of this Agreement and of the receipt of notifications of denunciation and any other communications from a Contracting Part specifically provided for in this Agreement.

9. The original of this Agreement shall be deposited with the Government of Norway which shall deliver certified copies thereof to each of the Governments referred to in paragraph I of this Article. The Depositary Government shall transmit certified copies of this Agreement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration and publication in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

In Witness Whereof the undersigned, being duly authorized by their Governments, have signed this Agreement.

Done at Oslo, in the English and Russian languages, each text being equally authentic, this fifteenth day of November, 1973.