



# Iceland and the Arctic

Ambassador Hjálmar W. Hannesson,  
Iceland's Senior Arctic Official.  
Reykjavík, 26 November 2012



# The Arctic

- The polar region located at the northern-most part of the Earth.
- Located between three continents
- Mostly ocean
- Unique nature, but fragile and easily damaged
- Rich in natural resources (oil, gas, minerals, fresh water, fish and forest)
- The most extensive continuous wilderness areas in the world.

	Size (million km <sup>2</sup> )	Percentage of Earth's Total Surface	Greatest Depth (m)	Average Depth (m)
Pacific	155.557	30.5	10,911	4,300
Atlantic	76.762	20.8	8,605	3,300
Indian	65.556	14.4	7,258	3,900
Southern	20.327	4.0	7,235	4,000-5,000
Arctic	14.056	2.8	5,160	1,050

Table 2.1 Arctic Ocean compared to other oceans. Source: AMSA



# Iceland's position in the Arctic

- **Iceland, the only sovereign state entirely located in the High North at oceanic crossroads**
- **As a Coastal State in the Arctic, Iceland has strong economic, ecological and political connections to the Arctic region.**
- **Iceland is an active participant and contributor in Arctic cooperation and research.**
- **Policy firmly based on the principles of sustainable development.**





# Iceland's Arctic Policy

- A parliamentary resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy was approved by Althingi on March 28 2011.
- It aims at securing Icelandic interests with regard to the effects of climate change, environmental issues, natural resources, navigation and social development as well as strengthening relations and cooperation with other States and stakeholders on the issues facing the region





# Iceland's Arctic Policy

1. Promoting and strengthening the Arctic Council as the most important consultative forum on Arctic issues and working towards having international decisions on Arctic issues made there





# Arctic Council

- **Arctic Council: The main forum**
- **“Growing up” at Nuuk: Stronger policy making role**
- **Legal instruments, SAR. Oil spills almost agreed.**
- **Enhanced role in regional cooperation – environmental, economic, security, political**
- **Permanent Secretariat**
- **Open to relevant observers**
- **Stronger outreach – Nordic, BEAC, Northern Dimension**
- **Global issues**





## Iceland's Arctic Policy

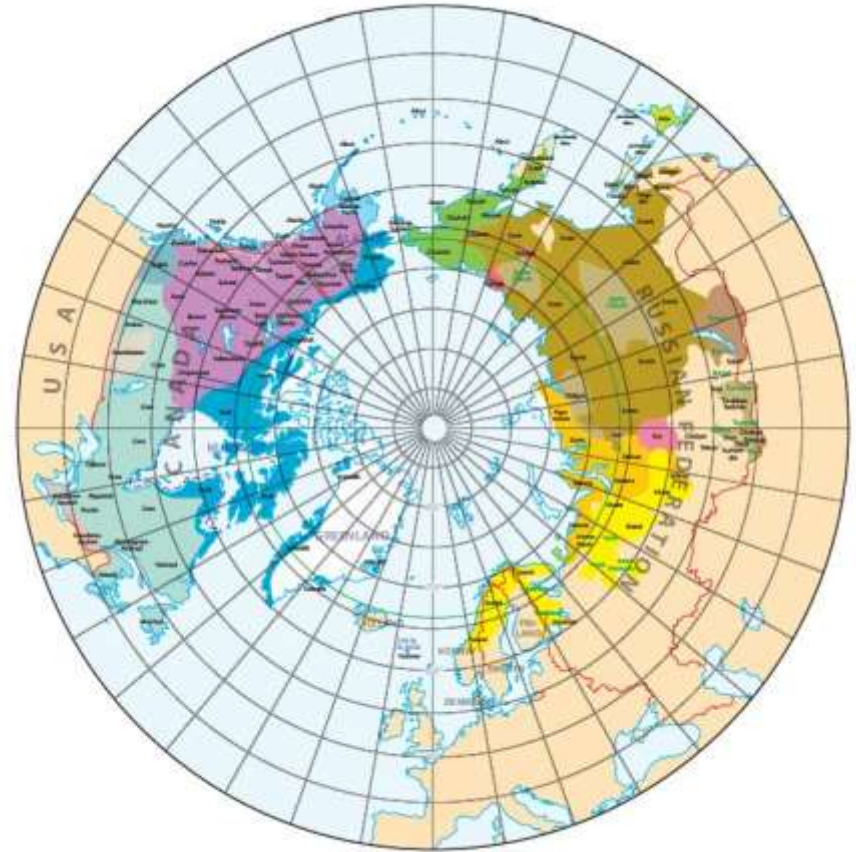
2. Securing Iceland's position as a coastal State within the Arctic region
3. Promoting understanding of the fact that the Arctic region extends both to the North Pole area proper and the part of the North Atlantic Ocean which is closely connected to it.





## Iceland's Arctic Policy

4. Ensure that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea forms the basis for the settlement of possible disputes
5. Cooperation should be strengthened with Greenland and the Faroe Islands on Arctic issues
6. Iceland should support the rights of Arctic indigenous peoples



Indigenous peoples of the Arctic countries



## Iceland's Arctic Policy

7. Building on agreements and promoting cooperation with other States and stakeholders

8. Use all available means to prevent human-induced climate change

9. Safeguarding broadly defined security interests in the Arctic region through civilian means

10. Develop further trade relations between States in the Arctic region



11. Advancing Icelanders' knowledge of Arctic issues

12. Increasing consultations and cooperation at the domestic level



# ICELAND: Arctic Coastal State

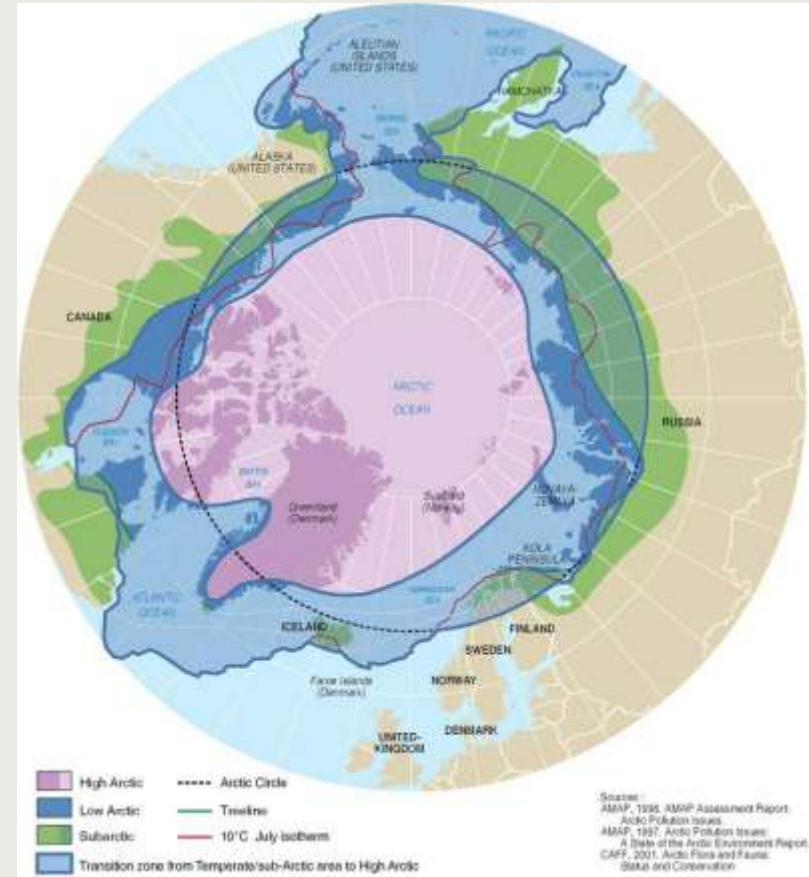


- Some land but vast marine areas within the Arctic.
- Iceland's economic livelihood interlinked with Arctic resources e.g fishing, energy and tourism.
- Important to ensure full participation in all international cooperation on the Arctic.



# Holistic view of the Arctic region

- The Arctic needs to be viewed from ecological, economic, political and security perspectives.
- Shapes both regional and international cooperation.





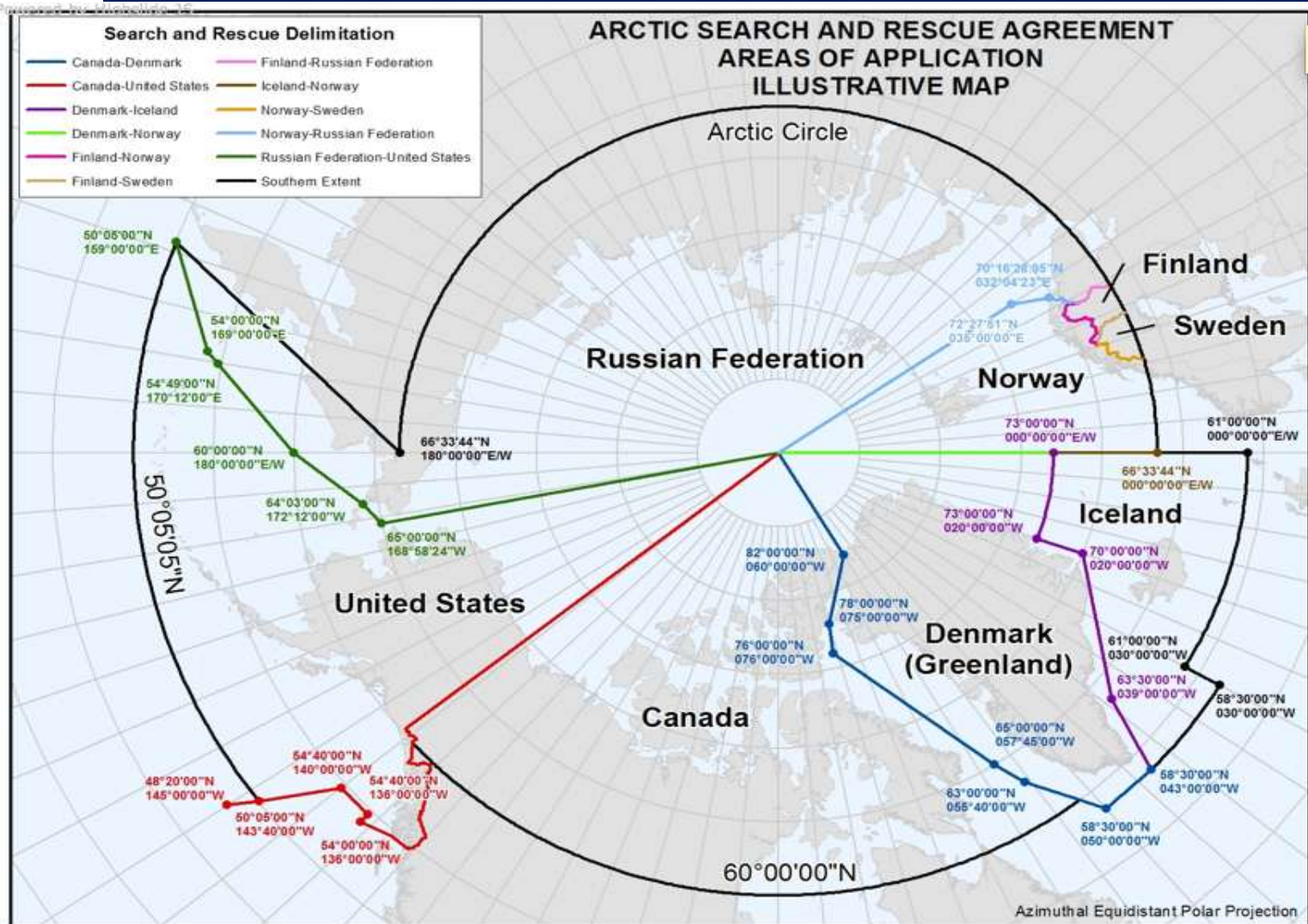
# Strong legal framework

- **UNCLOS along with international and bilateral agreements form the comprehensive framework for all uses of Arctic maritime areas.**
- **Iceland promotes closer regional cooperation in order to address emerging challenges.**





# Search and Rescue Agreement signed 2011





# Promoting agreements and cooperation



- **Building and developing partnerships and agreements with nations, stakeholders and international organisations, both in the Arctic and outside the area.**
- **Global, regional and national fora – environmental, trade, security.**





# Iceland and Norway Arctic Cooperation

**Historical relationship –  
Settlement, arctic  
research, fisheries, NATO  
Nordic Council, etc. etc.**

- **Strong partners in regional fora for example AC, BEAC, ND**
- **Bilateral relationship strong and growing – Cooperation Agreement on Arctic matters from September 2011.**
- **Areas of interest – Arctic Shipping, Civilian and Environmental Security, Energy-oil and Fisheries.**





## Iceland: Broad security interests



- **General security, mutual trust and confidence should be strengthened in the Arctic Region even further and the militarization of the area must be prevented.**
- **Civilian Prevention, Preparedness and Response mechanisms should be further promoted, based for example on the AC SAR**
- **Arctic Cooperation, bilateral agreements, NATO, Nordic cooperation and EU should be enhanced.**



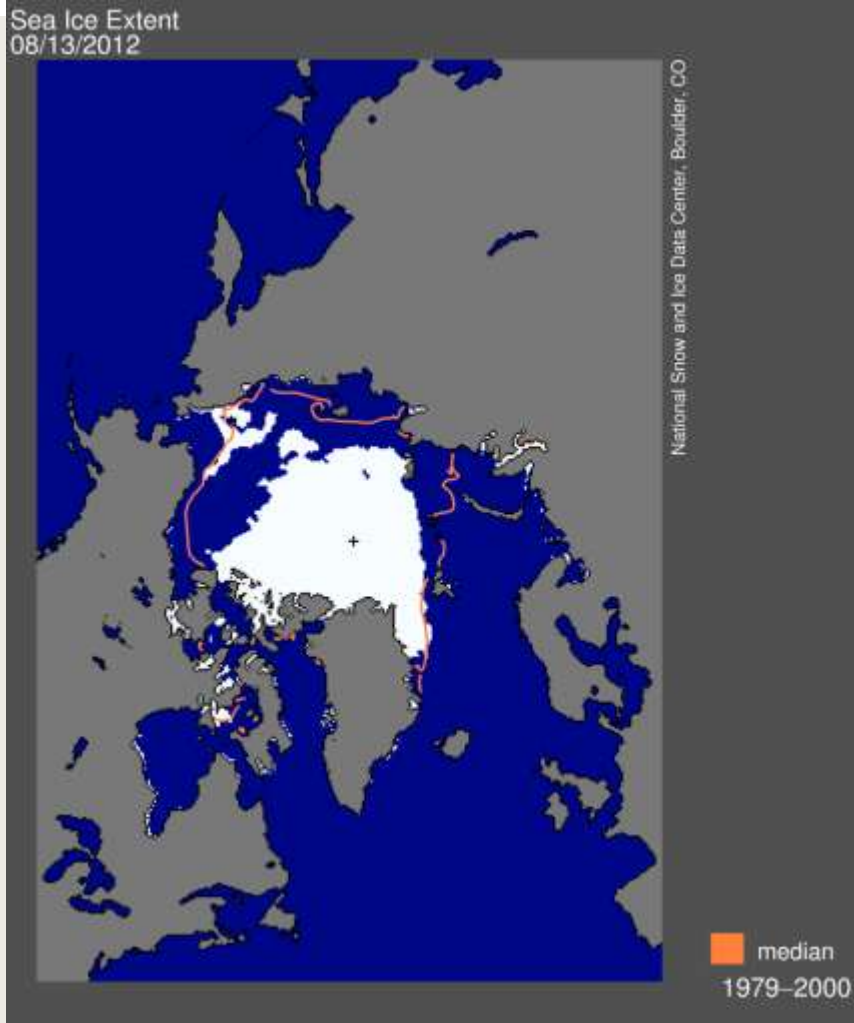
# Climate change mitigation

- **Actively support international climate change mitigation efforts.**
- **Encourage the development of renewable energy globally.**
- **Develop green technologies – fishing vessels, green energy exports.**
- **Important to monitor the social and ecological impacts of climate change.**





# Climate Change mitigation



## Key drivers – interconnected

- Climate change
- Resource developments
- Shipping
- Geopolitics

bring both challenges and opportunities !



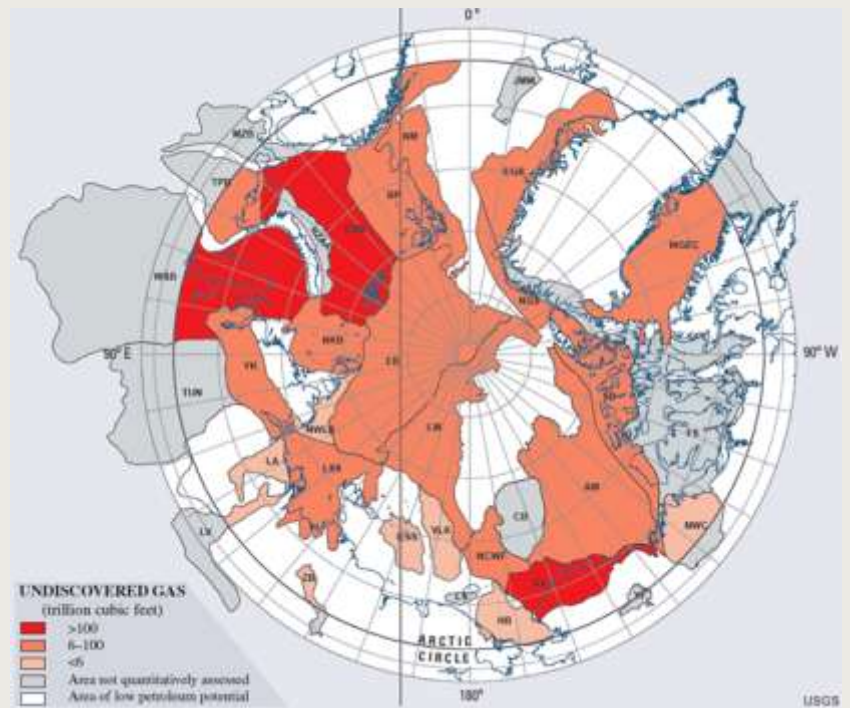
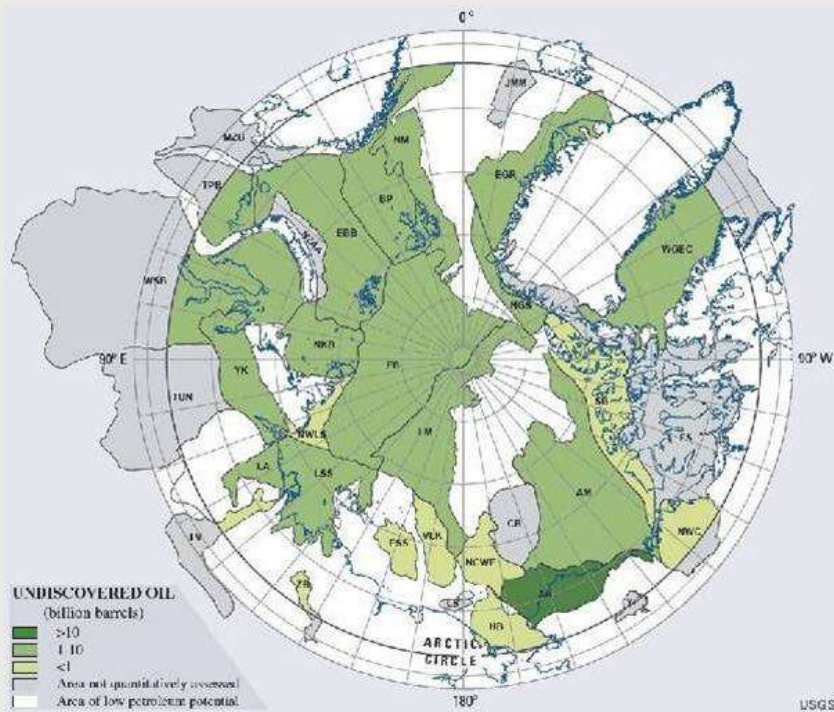
# Economic opportunities

- **Developing further trade relations between States in the Arctic region.**
- **The Icelandic economy and institutions have knowledge, technology and experience that fit well to Arctic conditions.**
- **Maritime hub –Gateway– NW and Polar Passages, Arctic and Atlantic.**
- **Energy hub – oil, gas and hydro power – Dreki Area.**
- **Arctic R&D**





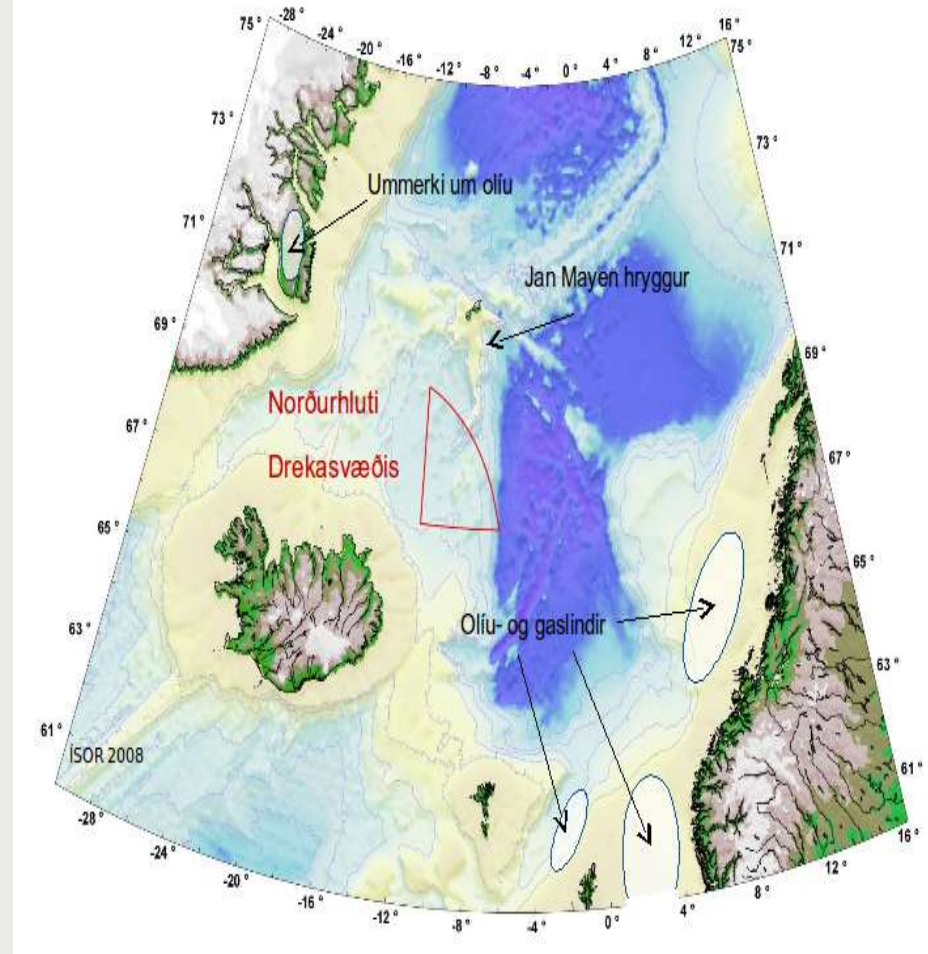
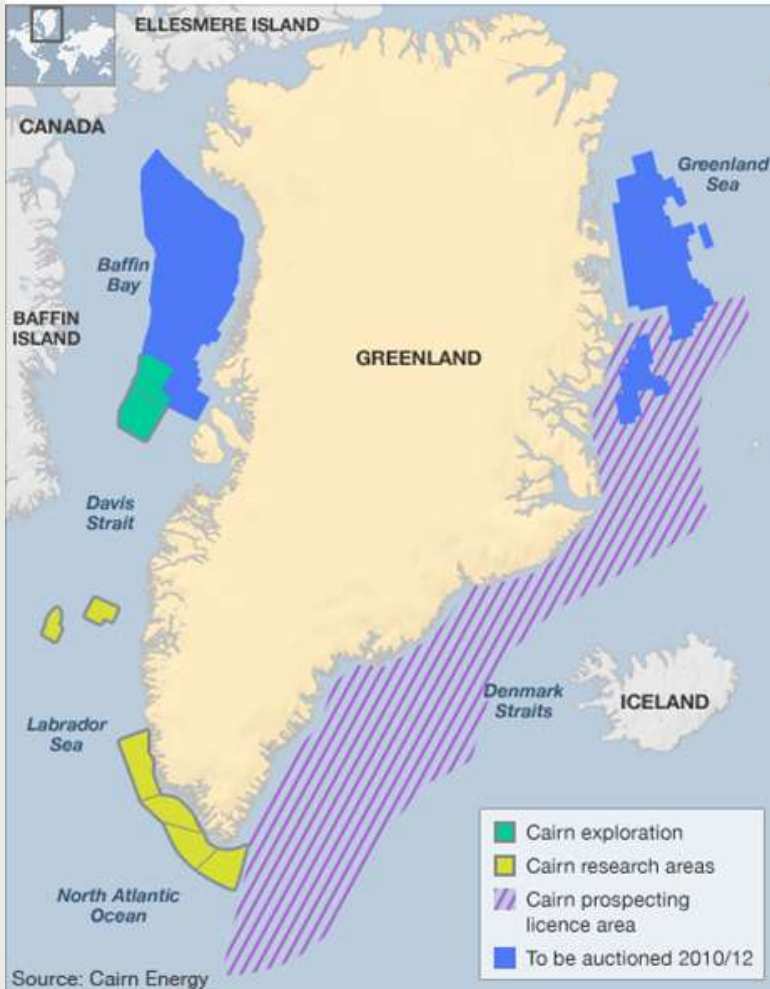
# Studies on possible Oil and Gas reserves in the Arctic





# Economic opportunities: Oil exploration

Greenland and oil exploration





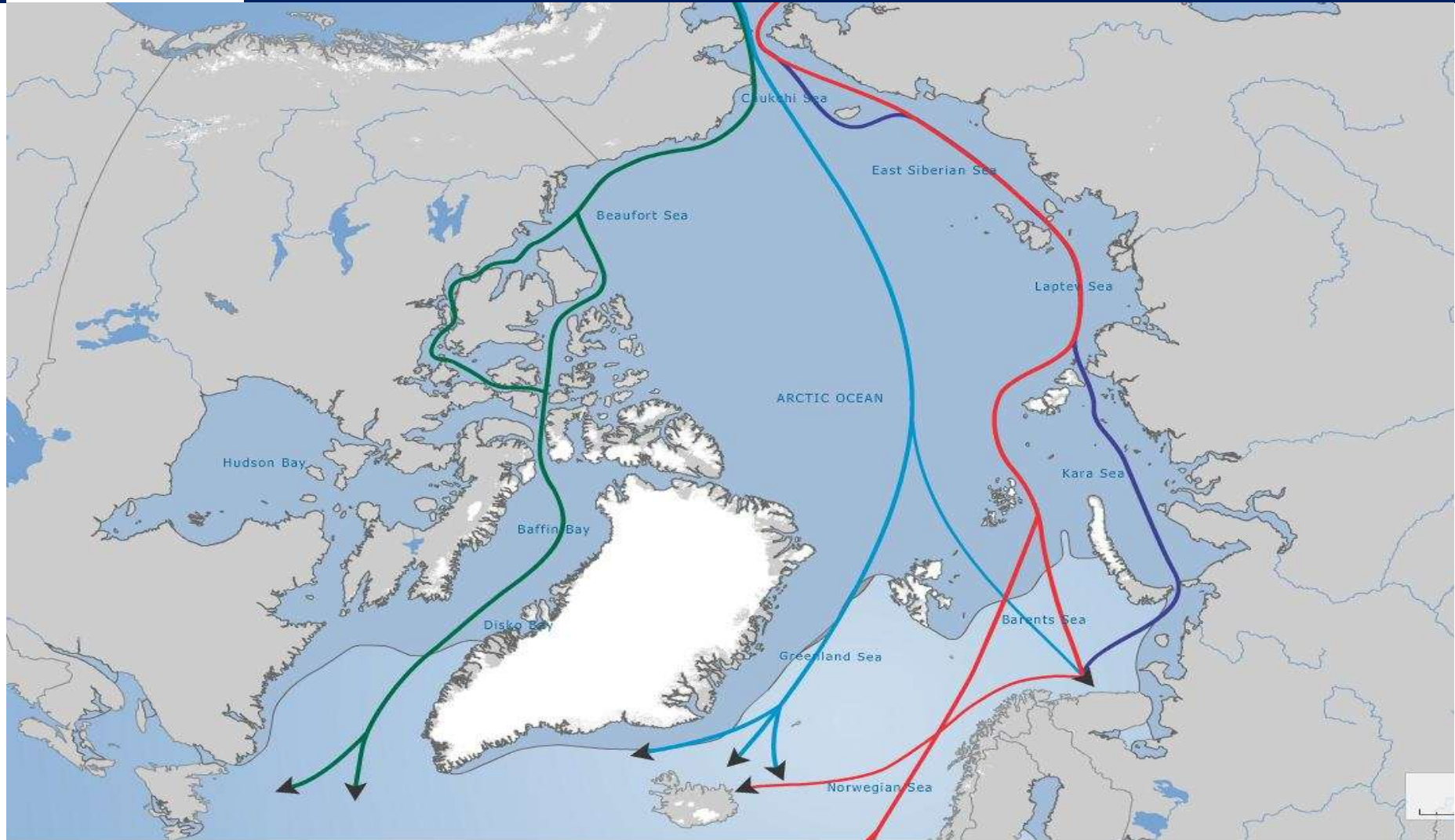
MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS | UTANRÍKISRÁÐUNEYTIÐ

# Shipping in the Arctic





# Viable sailing routes?





# Arctic Scientific Cooperation: CHINARE 5





## Challenges

- Emergency response is particularly challenging
- SAR infrastructure in the Arctic, while varying between regions, is limited
- Increased marine tourism and passenger vessels operating in the Arctic waters.
- IMO is preparing a code of safety for ships in polar waters (Polar Code)
- SAR Agreement





MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS | UTANRÍKISRÁÐUNEYTIÐ

# THANK YOU

Barr-  
ow,  
Alas-  
ka  
sum-  
mer  
2011

