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Mr. Lawrence Cannon
Minister of Foreign Affairs
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Dear Minister,

Greenpeace is writing to express its concern and disappointment at the holding of a closed meeting of the foreign ministers of the five Arctic coastal states on March 29th in Canada, to privately discuss Arctic environmental and natural resource exploitation issues.

Such a closed meeting breaches the spirit of transparency and openness that has developed among Arctic stakeholders including indigenous and civil society groups. It excludes those who have a recognised and legitimate 'place at the table' through the Arctic Council, as well as others whose interests must be considered in the sustainable development of the Arctic region. Civil society organisations, including Greenpeace, have played a constructive role in 'decision shaping' in the Arctic for many years. We consider this meeting to be a significant step backwards, indeed a step towards exclusion and increased tension.

The Arctic region is an extraordinarily fragile and important part of the Earth. It provides sustainable livelihoods for the peoples of the Arctic and feeds hundreds of millions more. It plays a critical role in maintaining life on Earth by regulating biogeochemical cycles. It is culturally significant to many, many people around the world as an icon of nature. Finally and most importantly, it is undergoing dramatic change as a direct result of the impacts of human-induced climate change. To plan for its future behind closed doors is not acceptable.

There are alternate pathways that provide for environmental protection and the sustainable development of the Arctic. We encourage you to consider such alternatives, and would be happy to provide input.

In particular it is important that you promote open and transparent governance of the Arctic Ocean, as it now opens up. Such an approach will lessen tension and provide opportunities for legitimate input from stakeholders who may otherwise react differently. There is an almost unique opportunity right now to show how an enormous part of the world, a new sea, can be governed peacefully and sustainably.

We therefore request that the planned foreign ministers' meeting be open to indigenous and civil society organisations and other interested parties, and that in future all such meetings be held under the auspices of the Arctic Council, the UN or other transparent and participatory body.

Yours Sincerely,

Kumi Naidoo, Greenpeace International