

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3991  
ANSWERED ON:06.08.2014  
ARCTIC COUNCIL  
Panda Shri Baijayant "Jay"

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) the details of objectives and functions of the Arctic Council along with the names of member countries therein;
- (b) the position of India vis-à-vis other member countries in this council;
- (c) the details of challenges confronting the Arctic Council along with the number of discussions held and outcome thereof during the last three years; and
- (d) the benefits likely to be accrued to India in this regard?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

- (a) The objectives of the Arctic Council is to provide a platform for political discussions on Arctic issues and practical cooperation among the Arctic States and permanent participants with the involvement of relevant stakeholders on issues of common concern, in particular those related to scientific research, sustainable development and environmental protection. The Arctic Council aims to promote the conservation of Arctic flora and fauna; protection of Arctic marine environment; biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; emergency prevention, preparedness and response as well as living conditions of Arctic residents etc. The Arctic Council is composed of 8 member states (USA, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Finland), 6 Permanent Participants, 12 Observer states (France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, UK, China, Italy, Japan, Korea, Singapore and India). In addition, 9 inter-governmental and inter-Parliamentary organizations and 11 non-governmental organisations have been accorded Observer Status.
- (b) India, along-with 11 other countries, has Observer status in the Arctic Council. There are 8 member-states of Arctic Council.
- (c) The melting of the Arctic ice cap due to global warming presents several challenges to the region, its peoples and economies. These common concerns including those impacting natural habitats, biodiversity, local communities, disaster risk reduction and prudent resource management require international collaboration. Regular meetings of the designated Arctic Senior Officials, the various Working Groups and Task Forces of the Arctic Council are organized. Observers are also invited to many of these meetings. Discussions during these meetings focus on the sustainable development and environment protection in the Arctic region, issues of common concern as listed above and as applicable to the Arctic Council member states. The member states of the Arctic Council concluded the 'Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement' in 2011 and an agreement on 'Cooperation on Marine Oil Spill Preparedness and Response in the Arctic' in 2013. In addition, the Arctic Council Task Forces work on specific issues like marine oil pollution prevention, black carbon and methane, scientific cooperation and facilitation of the circumpolar business forum.
- (d) Scientific and expert-level exchanges about the ongoing changes in the Arctic region, its implications and experiences and best practices to manage these will help India better understand the climate processes of its own region and its environmental and economic impact in this region.