



UArctic

With Shared Voices

REPORT

5th Korea Arctic Academy

Held In Busan In July 2019



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5th Korea Arctic Academy

In the period July 3-13 the 5th Korea Arctic Academy was arranged in Busan, Korea. This summer school has developed into a very important meeting point between students from the 8 Arctic countries and Korean students.

This year's KAA had a very diverse program, spanning from lectures on Arctic policy, climate change and educational challenges in the Arctic.

KAA followed up the tradition of inviting high-ranking representatives from the Arctic 8 countries. The ambassadors to Korea, from Norway and Denmark, the Arctic ambassadors from Korea and Russia, representatives from the Finnish and Canadian embassies, presented their respective countries' Arctic policies. To the students, this was a very useful introduction to the main issues on the Arctic agenda, as seen from the different capitals.

In addition to this, the fact that these presumably very busy persons find it important to be present at the KAA, is a symbolic gesture to the students and also points to the importance attributed to KAA as a gathering of future experts and policy-makers in the Arctic.

One of the main goals of KAA is to present and explain Korea's interest in the Arctic. One of Korea's leading policy experts on the Arctic, dr. Jong Deog Kim from KMI gave a presentation where he explained this interest within the framework of two important factors.



Firstly, that Korea in economic terms is totally dependent on international trade. Foreign trade represents 90% of Korea's GDP. This includes raw materials to Korea's industries, and manufactured goods to the world markets.

Secondly, that Korea in effect is an island, as long as communication lines through North Korea is closed. This means that Korea is totally dependent on the seaways for their imports and exports. 99.7% of the trade volume is transported on ships. The importance of shipping in Korea was also demonstrated by excursions to the DSME shipyard and Busan New port. The dimensions of these two industrial and logistical sites were quite breathtaking for the students. Transport of goods through the Northern Sea Route (NSR) will reduce the sailing time between Korea and Europe with 30%. Understandably, Korea watches very closely both the climatic, technological and political developments related to this corridor. Dr Kim concluded by referring to Korea's latest Arctic Master Plan and the three pillars that this plan builds on: Responsible Arctic participation, Sustainable business in the Arctic, and International contribution.

These pillars include exploring and utilizing the economic potentials of a changing Arctic, engaging in international fora on Arctic issues, and contributing with research efforts and capacity building on Arctic issues.

Climate change opens up new economic opportunities, but the focus is not only on the commercial aspects. There is a deep understanding in the Korean scientific community that climate change in the Arctic has implications for global weather patterns, which in turn has severe effects on civil society as well as the general ecological situation globally. This was a recurring theme during KAA. Several Korean scientists presented the latest data on climate change in the Arctic. Director, Dr Shin from the Korean Polar Research Institute (KOPRI), presented Korea's extensive research infrastructure in the Arctic and Antarctica as well as the ice going research vessel Araon. Different projects related to climate change, including the basics of climate research and the dynamics of climate formation through the Polar Vortex, melting sea ice, albedo effects and precipitation patterns were explained.



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The Arctic has been associated with the concept of “a zone of peace”. One important instrument to discuss Arctic issues in a peaceful manner between the Arctic states and stakeholders, is the Arctic Council. Former director of the Arctic Council Secretariat, now advisor to the Icelandic government in connection with their chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Mr Magnus Johannesson presented the workings of the Arctic Council.

In his presentation, he outlined some of the future challenges of the Arctic, especially related to the balancing of the needs of the people living in the Arctic, commercial activities, and ecological sustainable development. Mr Johannesson concluded that the arena that the Arctic Council, with all its subsidiaries represents, is crucial to foster a sound and sustainable development in the Arctic.

The indigenous peoples of the Arctic are important, as inhabitants of the Arctic region and because they are squeezed between traditional lifestyles and modernity caused by globalization. Dr Andrei Isakov of the Northern forum presented the diversity of indigenous peoples in the Arctic and the challenges they face. Indigenous culture, economic adaptations and lifestyles are under pressure from climate change and from being integrated into a globalized world.

In addition to all the dilemmas posed by globalization, there are many issues related to health, social security, education and access to general services that need to be addressed.

Development of scientific knowledge, capacity building and development of human capital are key factors in addressing many of the challenges of the Arctic. The University of the Arctic is a network organizing some 200 institutions of higher education and research in and outside the Arctic countries. Long distances, low population density, lacking technological infrastructure are among factors making access to higher as well as lower and middle-level education challenging in many Arctic communities. Vice president Paul Markusson of UArctic presented how UArctic tries to meet these challenges.

All the students had been selected to participate in this program based on their educational or scientific focus on Arctic issues. One sequence of the program had the students giving a short presentation of a specific project that they were working on. This presentation showed a wide variety of themes and issues and gave a demonstration of how different disciplines and approaches are needed to understand the complexity of Arctic issues.

For most of Arctic students, Korea is a distant and unfamiliar country. The program included a crash course in Korean culture, and in the free time, the Korean students took the roles of guides and buddies to the rest of the group. An introduction to Tae Kwon Do self-defense techniques, tours around Busan city, including Korean barbecue and karaoke were all part of glimpses into Korean culture. Also, an excursion to the DMZ at the border with North Korea gave an insight into a regional tension which has global implications. The grand finale of the KAA was a tour to Seoul, with visits to a few of the more touristic sites of the capital.

To conclude, during this 5th Korea Arctic Academy the team at KMI had succeeded in putting together a very interesting program, focusing on present and future challenges in the Arctic. This is a group of students that is extremely important for the development in the Arctic. Bringing them together in a context like this, enables questions about what kind of development do we want in the Arctic, and what kind of common responsibility do we have to make it happen. Creating networks, sharing experiences and participating in discussions at the Korea Arctic Academy is one good example of how to give life to UArctic's vision "empowerment of the north – with shared voices".





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