**DECLARATION**
**of the Responsible Ministers**
**of the Polar Bear Range States**
**Moscow, Russian Federation, 4 of December 2013**

We, the representatives of the parties to the *1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears*, met in Moscow, Russia, 4 December 2013 at the International Forum on the Conservation of Polar Bears. We commemorated the 40th anniversary of the *Agreement* and celebrated the cooperation of the range states to further the international conservation and management of polar bears. We welcome and sincerely appreciate all the contributions made by the 2013 International Polar Bear Forum on the issue of polar bear conservation and management. Respectful of the past and looking to the future, we:

RECOGNIZE the range states are, and should be, the appropriate stewards and protectors of the polar bear in their respective territories;

ACKNOWLEDGE our shared responsibility for ensuring polar bear conservation, research and agreed-to collaborative action;

RECOGNIZE the significant cooperative polar bear conservation successes we have achieved since the signing of the 1973 Agreement, including helping increase polar bear populations from pre-1973 levels through measures taken by the range states such as the establishment of protected areas and addressing the issue of unsustainable hunting;

RECOGNIZE that polar bears, a shared resource of global importance and an indicator of biological health in the Arctic, are facing new and complex challenges resulting from a rapidly warming Arctic and subsequent changes to sea ice habitat;

ACKNOWLEDGE the 5th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and EXPRESS concern that it is very likely that the Arctic sea ice cover will continue to shrink and thin as global mean surface temperature rises, and RECOGNIZE that the long term loss of sea ice depends on future emission trajectories;

ACKNOWLEDGE that addressing climate change is important for the long term conservation of polar bears;

RECOGNIZE that there is a need to manage polar bear habitat to reduce the vulnerability of polar bear populations, and take into account the projected long-term changes in Arctic sea ice conditions and the impact of those changes on polar bears and their prey;

RECOGNIZE that increased incidence of human-polar bear interactions is of concern and will likely continue to increase;

UNDERSCORE that the conservation of polar bears requires adaptive management in

response to climate change, and that the strategy will be to manage and reduce the other stressors on polar bears and their ecosystems, such as habitat destruction, over-harvesting, pollution and other anthropogenic disturbances;

RECOGNIZE the need to proactively manage the responsible development of economic activities in the Arctic, including transportation and infrastructure, to minimize the negative impact of those activities on polar bears;

EXPRESS concern that long range transport of pollutants into the Arctic environment is shown to affect polar bears and that impacts on some polar bear populations may be significant;

RECOGNIZE the need for comprehensive and coordinated monitoring and research on the effects of contaminant loads in polar bears, and synergistic effects of contaminants and climate change, and UNDERLINE the need for effective global implementation and compliance with existing global and regional obligations with respect to the challenges posed by pollutants;

NOTE that continued international cooperation is essential for the protection of polar bears and that in accordance with the *1973 Agreement*, each range state is developing and implementing its own national-level polar bear action plans;

NOTE that the range states are developing a comprehensive Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bears that is based on, and is expected to incorporate, actions set forth in the national level plans;

AFFIRM that the polar bear range states' strategy to develop and implement the Polar Bear-Human Information Management System (PBHIMS) is the appropriate mechanism for international cooperation among the range states regarding documentation of human-bear conflicts, and that the PBHIMS will provide an information basis for the design of programs to reduce occurrences of human-caused polar bear mortality;

NOTE that while continued cooperation and coordination of the range states efforts is critical for the effective management and conservation of the polar bear, effective management and conservation also depends upon the participation of Arctic indigenous people and is enhanced by contributions from other stakeholders, including the international community, private sector, non-governmental and other organizations;

RECOGNIZE that the polar bear is a significant resource and plays an important role in the social and cultural well-being of Arctic local people and FURTHER RECOGNIZING the subsistence needs of Arctic indigenous people, such that conservation will be best achieved with the engagement of communities traditionally dependent on the polar bear in management decision making processes;

NOTE that multi-party and bilateral agreements and other cooperative arrangements among local, regional, national and international governmental entities responsible for polar bear conservation and management provide a successful framework for working cooperatively with Arctic indigenous people and other interested entities for the conservation and long-term survival of polar bears;

WELCOME the work and leadership of the Arctic Council in promoting sustainable development and environmental protection, including the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, and monitoring activities;

RECOGNIZE the importance and value of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in informing management decisions and ACKNOWLEDGE the need for the range states to develop a common understanding of what constitutes Traditional Ecological Knowledge and how it should be used in polar bear management decisions;

RECOGNIZE that having up-to-date information on the status and trend of each polar bear subpopulation is essential for effective management and conservation of the species;

APPRECIATE the historic contributions of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Polar Bear Specialist Group, and WELCOME their continued role as scientific adviser to the parties of the *1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears*;

FURTHER RECOGNIZE the need for the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group, and each range state, to regularly assess new scientific information and update the conservation status of each population in order to inform management and regulatory decision-making for polar bears.

Understanding the importance of the issues we face and their possible impacts on future generations, we, the representatives of polar bear range states declare our commitment to continue to work actively to implement the *1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears* in order to:

Use the Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bear as the appropriate mechanism for international cooperation in managing and reducing stressors on polar bears and their ecosystems, in furtherance of the 1973 Agreement;

At the next range states meeting, in 2015, seek to finalize and adopt the Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bear, accompanied by an implementation plan that evaluates human and financial resource implications;

Continue to work collaboratively to address human-polar bear conflicts through the range states Human-Polar Bear Conflicts Working Group and the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group, using the PBHIMS to provide an information basis for the design

of programs to reduce occurrences of human-polar bear conflicts;

Identify important current and future habitats for polar bears and continue to develop habitat management systems, including protected areas where appropriate, taking into consideration projected changes in climate, sea-ice distribution and changing patterns of human activity;

Advance the conservation of sufficient polar bear habitat through application of ecosystem based management to reduce the negative impact on polar bears and their habitats;

Ensure that environmental regulations and standards are in place to protect polar bears potentially affected by industrial development, and that key polar bear habitats are identified to establish a basis for land- and seascape planning in advance of development;

Engage Arctic local people in management decision-making processes and promote the collection and maintenance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge by acknowledging the important role polar bear play in the cultural heritage and subsistence of Arctic indigenous people, as well as the role that they play in the long-term conservation and survival of the polar bear.

Encourage the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group to develop a more comprehensive and updated understanding of the range-wide status and trends of polar bear populations based on the best available scientific data, taking into account results of population monitoring activities and projected changes in sea ice;

Encourage the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group to determine how to best use Traditional Ecological Knowledge together with scientific approaches and analyses of polar bear population status for more effective decision-making and consider their recommendation at the 2015 regular meeting of the range states;

Ensure that the best available information, including the biological status of the polar bear, changes to the ecosystem and current and future human activities such as economic development, is shared between range states and is taken into account during decision making;

Enhance coordinated actions by the range states through the full implementation of polar bear monitoring programs throughout the range of the species and cooperate to

establish population trends for shared populations;

Explore mechanisms to counter the threat of poaching and illegal trade in polar bears and polar bear parts, including enhanced cooperation among law enforcement agencies at the national, regional and global levels;

Strengthen international cooperation to improve the clarity of legal trade data through the adoption of more effective reporting and monitoring practices and help address illegal trade through the adoption of procedures to better identify legally traded specimens and to verify the authenticity of trade documents.

Continue, when appropriate, to look for additional financial resources for the implementation of national action plans for polar bear conservation and management, including through partnerships with business, the private sector, international financial institutions, foundations, non-governmental organizations and other sources;

Recognize the importance of the Parties continuing to meet on a regular basis to discuss progress in implementing the *1973 Agreement.* Consider future Ministerial meetings to assess progress and build on previous achievements.

We reaffirm our commitment to cooperate to achieve effective conservation and management of polar bear populations throughout their range and call on the international community to join us in the conservation of this shared and globally important species.