# TOWARDS AN ITALIAN STRATEGY FOR THE ARCTIC

# NATIONAL GUIDELINES

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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the activity of various Italian companies, like Eni and Finmeccanica. Italy may be considered one of the most active non-Arctic States in this area. To the historical reasons for the Italian presence in the Arctic can be added new, urgent challenges largely dependent on global warming, whose

National sovereignty of Arctic States is a given, completed and integrated by customary international sea law and by a number of Treaties, the most important being the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). As a State party to UNCLOS, Italy abides by its clauses, including those related to a responsible management of the Arctic Ocean. Italy also abides by the rules of other legal instruments that indirectly concern the Arctic region: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). Italy, moreover, is one of the original signatories to the Svalbard Treaty.

The Arctic area includes large portions subject to individual national sovereignties. Italy fully respects those sovereign rights. It stands ready to play its part to confront global challenges through its scientific and technological expertise and through cutting-edge businesses, thus contributing to a sustainable Arctic development while respecting the ecosystem and indigenous peoples. Given the primary relevance of the human dimension, Italy considers that raising awareness of such issues is of capital importance. This should be done through an incremental, internationally coordinated effort, working in concert with the Arctic States.

Against this backdrop the European Union, that in practice participates in Arctic Council activities as an observer, <sup>17</sup> has been playing an increasingly important role as far as policies aimed Bata expolarations along the European Commission adopted a which highlights the consequences of

of Resources in the Arctic Region, hosted by the MFAIC itself and organized by Diplomacy, as a part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Diplomacy Festival.

From March 7 to September 30 the (SIOI), in partnership with the MFAIC and the Ministry of the Environment, will be offering the first Italian Master course dedicated to Arctic issues (Master in Sustainable Development, Resource Geopolitics and Arctic Studies). The course is designed to develop capabilities and competences pertaining to the green economy, energy geopolitics and responsible use of natural resources. <sup>25</sup>

An informal, open-ended consultation group, called Table) has been recently re-activated. Its mandate concerns the exchange of information and the coordination of activities among the main Italian entities active in the Arctic (more than two dozen), under the aegis of the MFAIC. Outreach and dissemination activities by various actors are also encouraged and supported by the Italian institutions, with the aim of fostering a more widespread interest in Arctic issues on a national scale.

#### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN DIMENSION

The Italian approach to Arctic issues is based on the selection of actions and key instruments to be developed in the relevant contexts. These include and the exchange and sharing of knowledge on specific aspects of environmental questions. They also encompass a keen awareness of the decisive role played by targeted actions and awareness raising among the main stakeholders in the relevant discussion fora: notably, international negotiations and political processes involving environmental issues. A major role is also played by activities aimed at securing suitable financing flows from EU and international sources. Such activities, if properly managed, will be instrumental in improving and strengthening the bilateral ties already existing with Arctic States and in fostering new collaboration opportunities. They will enable positive returns for the cooperating parties and for the Arctic as a whole, with beneficial repercussions on a global level.

Cooperation and exchange of experiences with Arctic States can (and must) represent also a development opportunity for Italy. Specific subjects of national interest include sustainable urban environment, which is one of the Italian Ministry of Environment. To this end, a major role is to be played by scientific and technological research, a sector where Italy can count on various high-level actors, notably in the context of the Arctic Council working groups.

Actions and key instruments will concentrate on environmental issues which appear as crucial in the Arctic environment, such as: biodiversity protection, air pollution prevention, climate

## 3a. ENVIRONMENT

Italy shares a number of similarities with the Arctic region. First of all, the maritime and mountainous features of the Alpine areas, which

### 3b. HUMAN DIMENSION

#### **Urban Areas**

In view of the distinctive features of Arctic areas, including their vulnerability, the role of urban development is of remarkable importance. Some Arctic States are pioneering in this field:

### Italian Polar Research ship OGS Explora

The OGS Explora, owned since 1989 by the National Institute for Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS), is an ocean-going multipurpose research vessel certified as capable of navigating and collecting data also in a polar environment.

As a multidisciplinary ship, it is equipped both with oceanography and biology laboratories and geophysical data acquisition systems. OGS Explora has conducted ten research cruises in Antarctica and four around the Svalbard Island; it has also been employed in providing support activities to companies with offshore activities in the Arctic area (Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Fær Øer Islands).

The OGS Explora is 73 meters long with a gross tonnage of over 1400 tons, and can reach a cruising speed of 11 knots. The ship is integrated into the EUROFLEETS <sup>39</sup> research infrastructure

take an active part in international Arctic initiatives. The CNR is a member of IASC and EPB; it also participates in ECRA initiatives, in particular in the Arctic Climate Stability and Change Collaborative Programme promoted by AWI (Germany) and Bjerknes Centre (Norway). The sharing of major oceanographic infrastructures (such as research vessels, perforation systems, ROVs) will contribute to the further internationalization of the Italian oceanographic research in the Arctic. Under the IASC —, CNR and OGS will continue to make an active contribution to two of the Arctic Council Working Groups on sea and atmosphere-related matters (in particular, to AMAP). OGS was part of the Italian delegation to the Arctic Circle 2014 event in Reykjavik. CNRr of

Universities). CNR, OGS and INGV are engaged in a 2012 project called ARCA - ARctic: present Climate change and pAst extreme events, involving nine Italian Universities. The wide synergies emerging in the ESFRI framework between SIOS, with CNR participation, and EMSO and EPOS, both coordinated by INGV, will be fur5.18 Tm036 Tc[1]

Italy s considerable experience in the field of renewable energies is also noteworthy. The first geothermal power plant was built in Italy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, Italy remains one of the European leaders in geothermics and is willing to develop possible synergies with the Arctic countries, some of which have a comparably strong tradition in this field.

Italy s ability to embark on pioneering endeavors and to combine advanced technology with the preservation of the environmental and cultural heritage provides the added value that it can bring to the of the economic growth and sustainable development of the Arctic region.

According to central scenario drawn up by the International Energy Agency (IEA) World Energy Outlook 2014, global energy demand is set to grow by 37% by 2040. <sup>54</sup> Along with renewable sources, Arctic resources could play a significant role in satisfying this thirst for energy, an issue that does not concern a single State but all global actors. Related investments, anyway, will have to comply with a wide range of criteria: the need for sustainable development, taking into account the fragility of the Arctic ecosystem; the human dimension; financial constraints; compliance with relevant regulations; peculiar, hostile weather. Environmentally sensitive and remote areas such as these call for a heightened commitment to safety as well as for careful risk analysis, the use of advanced technology use and the selection of highly skilled personnel, coupled with constant cooperation with indigenous peoples. The last-named are the real experts on the Arctic environment, as they safeguard a unique heritage of traditions and culture that date back millennia and which should be protected and enhanced by any business operating in the region.

Every Arctic stakeholder has an interest in respecting such a peculiar and sensitive ecosystem. Italy supports an eco-sustainable management of Arctic fisheries stock 1 448.42 744.58 Tm[w)TmBT1F1

The climate change challenge is a global one that requires shared solutions. Italy therefore believes that GHG reduction programs encompassing the products and production process of a company should be integrated with a strong commitment to initiatives aimed at fostering synergies with public and private actors, with a

- operations are to be conducted only during periods of the year when repercussions on the marine environment (in particular, on mammals) are minimal, while guaranteeing site-specific biodiversity conservation techniques;
- the best drilling technologies to be employed; well diameter to be kept at minimum; pressure management; use of blow out preventers and robotic oil spill prevention/ containment systems;
- local inhabitants have to be involved and informed; their activities have to be protected; their know-how is to be employed, especially in the area of emergency management is concerned (fishing vessels, for instance, may help in detecting/ containing oil spills);
- technologies to be used and criteria to be adopted for the evaluation and management of the environmental and social impact, based on lessons learned through the current joint venture operations in the region.

To understand the Arctic environment and adjust to its sensitivity, Eni has also engaged in discussions with a number of NGOs. As a result, new engineering solutions have been identified for the cultivation of the Goliat field (located in the Norwegian Barents Sea). <sup>58</sup> In this way, operations can be adapted to the area a particularly cold climate, long periods of

synergetic relationship between economic growth, the protection of the environment and the specific needs of the indigenous peoples.