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PRESS RELEASE

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Polar Conservation Organisation calls for strategic action plan on Arctic Treaty

The Polar Conservation Organisation (PCO) is calling for real progress to be made on how to govern the Arctic region. The call follows the PCO's recent participation in an expedition to study the effects of climatic change on Polar Bears in the Canadian High Arctic (near Bathurst Island).

PCO's Founder Brendon Grunewald who spent 14 days in the region says, "This has been an extremely valuable experience. It has underlined the need to balance the needs and rights of indigenous peoples in the region with broad global conservation trends. PCO intends to lead and stimulate that debate. For example, Polar Bear conservation vs. the indigenous peoples' right to hunt seems very academic in Brussels, but becomes a very real issue when one sees these magnificent animals live and contrasts that with the sight of bear skins out to dry in villages like Resolute."

Living conditions in a melting environment

The expedition's main task was to carry out a survey of polar bears in the Canadian High Arctic (Bathurst Island) as part of a polar bear programme run by the Norwegian Polar Institute. Polar bear habitat has been particularly affected by melting ice throughout the Arctic. During the survey 12 live polar bears were sighted and this data will be added to similar surveys in other Arctic regions.

The expedition was led by Jim McNeill (Ice-Warrior) who was accompanied by Ian McCarthy (BAFTA award winning BBC cameraman).

The PCO used the opportunity to gather first-hand information from the field, including the opportunity to understand first hand indigenous peoples' lives and views in the area, to better understand their concerns related to changes in their living conditions in the Canadian polar environment. The highly sensitive Polar Regions and its inhabitants are the first to suffer the effects of climate change and global warming.

Treaty for sustainable Arctic

The main goal of the PCO is the establishment, maintenance and monitoring of an international framework agreement for a sustainable future of both Polar Regions. Thus, the PCO efforts go beyond climate change and include issues like sovereignty, mineral and other resource exploitation, indigenous peoples' rights and the conservation of the fauna and flora.

Brendon's blog of the trip and associated images of the exploration of this white wilderness are available via the PCO website (www.polarconservation.org).

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Polar Conservation Organisation (PCO)

The Polar Conservation Organisation (PCO) is committed to helping establish and maintain an international policy for a sustainable future of the Polar Regions. The regions of the North and South Pole have an immense impact on all living things on this planet. The Polar Regions are essential for our planet as a life force and life creating system. As such, the Polar Regions are of immense importance to our global environment and our personal lives.

This is why PCO is so strongly committed to a sustainable policy and management scheme, that includes all stakeholders.

Mission statement:

The Polar Conservation Organisation (PCO) is committed to the establishment, maintenance and monitoring of relevant international framework agreements for a sustainable future of both Polar Regions.

Objectives:

- To support the establishment of an Arctic agreement by the international community.
- To support efforts to ensure that the existing Antarctic Treaty remains consistent and sustainable.
- To aim for a global exchange of knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the Polar Regions.
- To create awareness, inform and educate the public about the Polar Regions.

Knowledge Centre:

For any policy to work well, or to establish treaties and agreements that will stand the test of time; it is important for governing bodies to be aware of and informed about all possible opinions and alternatives.

Access to unbiased objective information is crucial for any interested party who would like to join the debate or make informed decisions. Such information is key to those active in politics or businesses; for those who would like to transfer knowledge - in education, the media or in a private situation; for everybody.

One of the Polar Conservation Organisation's (PCO) aims is to improve the availability of knowledge on Polar Regions, and to stimulate debate by including as many scientists, teachers, experts from all related fields, politicians, entrepreneurs and captains of industries as possible.

- Therefore, the Polar Conservation Organisation is developing a dynamic and interactive website where politicians, scientists, students, businesses, media and educators, can publish the latest developments and insights, connect with each other, or verify and check research: www.polarconservation.org
- The Polar Conservation Organisation will organise a meeting of experts every two years.

Sustainable Future:

The Polar Conservation Organisation is a non-profit organisation headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. Those heading up the PCO are dedicated people with years of experience in research, education, industry and communications related to both Polar Regions and beyond.

PCO is convinced that a sustainable policy is feasible - that sustainable, peaceful international management schemes for both Polar Regions are possible.

With the headquarters of the EU only a stone's throw away, PCO is challenging the EU to recognise and acknowledge the importance of both Polar Regions for our whole planet, and to adapt its policies accordingly.

- One of the main challenges for Europe is the establishment of a common EU policy towards both Polar Regions.
- A second challenge is the appointment of an EU Commissioner responsible for this Polar policy.