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U.S. denies climate-change effect on Arctic; Dismays allies, including Canada, and Inuit leaders at Arctic Council event

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MONTREAL-Canada is disappointed the United States has blocked the Arctic Council from issuing a unanimous declaration acknowledging climate change but has no choice but to keep working with a key ally, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland says.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declined to utter the words "climate change" throughout the eight-country summit of Arctic nations that wrapped Tuesday in Finland, including in a meeting with Freeland.

Foreign Minister Timo Soini of Finland, which ended its two-year chairmanship of the council on Tuesday, said no joint declaration was possible because the U.S. would not agree to language about climate change.

"I think Canada feels, as do many members of the Arctic Council, that it's a disappointment we weren't able to reach a shared communique that we all agreed with," Freeland told reporters Tuesday from Latvia on a whirlwind European trip.

The failure to agree on a shared statement also drew condemnation from the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents people in Canada, Greenland, Alaska and Russia.

"While the U.S. government concerns itself with semantics, playing games with words, our people are witnessing the adverse impacts of climate change. What about us and our reality?" said the group's international chair, Dalee Sambo Dorrough, an Inuk from Alaska.

Freeland said Canada recognizes "with sadness" that the U.S. has decided to withdraw from the Paris climate-change accord.

"We continue to express our disappointment with that decision.

"Having said that, we have to move on ... with all the other countries of the world that want to co-operate with us on climate change."

The U.S. opposition to acting on climate change was not total, though, because the Trump administration views melting Arctic ice to be an opportunity.

"Arctic sea lanes could become the 21st century's Suez and Panama canals," Pompeo said.

The summit wrapped with a brief statement reaffirming the council's "commitment to maintain peace, stability and constructive co-operation in the Arctic."

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