

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Russia-United States Agreement on the Conservation and Management of the Alaska-Chukotka Polar Bear Population

July 11, 2002

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Conservation and Management of the Alaska-Chukotka Polar Bear Population done at Washington on October 16, 2000 (the "U.S.-Russia Agreement"). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to that Agreement.

The U.S.-Russia Agreement provides legal protections for this population of polar bears in addition to those found in the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears done at Oslo, November 13, 1973 (the "1973 Agreement"), which was a significant, early step in the international conservation of polar bears. The 1973 Agreement is a multilateral treaty to which the United States and Russia are parties. (The other parties are Norway, Canada, and Denmark.) The 1973 Agreement provides authority for the maintenance of a subsistence harvest of polar bears and provides for habitat conservation.

The proposed U.S.-Russia Agreement, which would operate as a free-standing treaty separate from the 1973 Agreement, is the culmination of an 8-year effort. The U.S.-Russia Agreement builds on the 1973 Agreement to establish a common legal,

scientific, and administrative frame work for the conservation and management of the Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population, which is shared by the United States and the Russian Federation. For example, the U.S.-Russia Agreement provides a definition of "sustainable harvest" that will help the United States and Russia to implement polar bear conservation measures while safeguarding the interests of native people. In addition, the U.S.-Russia Agreement establishes the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission, which would function as the bilateral managing authority to make scientific determinations, establish taking limits, and carry out other responsibilities under the terms of the U.S.-Russia Agreement. The proposed U.S.-Russia Agreement would strengthen the conservation of our shared polar bear population through a coordinated sustainable harvest management program.

Early ratification of the U.S.-Russia Agreement by the United States will reinforce our leadership role in international conservation of marine mammals and will encourage similar conservation action by other countries. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Agreement and give its advice and consent to ratification.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
July 11, 2002.