

SARA OLSVIG

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PROFILE

Sara Olsvig, PhD, is an Inuk leader and former Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2022–2026). She is a dedicated defender of Indigenous Peoples' rights and human rights. Dr. Olsvig holds extensive experience in politics, leadership, academia and international advocacy. She has served as member of the Parliament of Denmark (2011–2015) and the Parliament of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) (2013–2018). Olsvig was Vice Premier and Minister for Social Affairs, Families, Gender Equality and Justice from 2016 to 2018. As a parliamentarian, she served as chair of The Greenland Committee and the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.

Olsvig contributed actively to the work of Kalaallit Nunaat's Constitutional Commission and Human Rights Council. In 2024, Sara Olsvig was a member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals and was a recipient of the 2023 Womenomics Inclusion Award. In 2026, Olsvig was awarded the Arctic Encounter Friend of the Far North Award.

Olsvig holds a Master of Science in Anthropology from the University of Copenhagen, and a PhD-degree in Arctic studies from Ilisimatusarfik – the University of Greenland.

SKILLS & ABILITIES

Expertise in diplomacy, human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, International Relations, leadership and Arctic governance.

EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

2026 -	Board Member and Delegate , Inuit Circumpolar Council Kalaallit Nunaat
2022 - 2026	International Chair , Inuit Circumpolar Council
2025 -	Affiliated Researcher , Ilisimatusarfik – the University of Greenland
2020 - 2025	Ph.D.-fellow , Institute of Social Science, Economics & Journalism, Department of Arctic Social Science & Economics, Ilisimatusarfik
2019 – 2020	Head of Programme , Greenland, UNICEF Denmark
2014 – 2018	Leader of political party Inuit Ataqatigiit
2016 – 2018	Vice Premier and Minister for Social Affairs, Families, Gender Equality and Justice , Naalakkersuisut - Government of Greenland

2013 – 2018	Member of Parliament , Inatsisartut - Parliament of Greenland
2011 – 2015	Member of Parliament , Folketinget - Parliament of Denmark
2009 – 2011	Coordinator of Human Rights Issues , Inuit Circumpolar Council, Greenland, from 2011 Executive Director , Inuit Circumpolar Council, Greenland
2008 – 2009	Secretary to Member of Parliament, The North Atlantic Group, Folketinget
2007 – 2008	Student Assistant , The North Atlantic Group, Folketinget
2005 – 2008	Student Assistant , Inuit Circumpolar Council Greenland
2004 – 2006	Student Assistant , the North Atlantic House, Copenhagen
2002 – 2004	Project Officer , Danish Centre for Environment and Energy, Denmark

AWARDS

2026	Friend of the Far North Award , Arctic Encounter, Anchorage, Alaska
2023	Womenomics Inclusion Award , Womenomics Above and Beyond, Copenhagen, Denmark

EDUCATION

2025	Ph.D. in Arctic Studies – Culture, Language and Social Studies
2008	Cand. Scient. Anth. (Anthropologist), University of Copenhagen
2002	BA in Cultural and Social History of Greenland , Ilisimatusarfik
1998	HF Student , Frederikshavn Gymnasium and HF
1996	Ordinary seaman , Training Ship Georg Stage

COURSES AND PROGRAMS

2016	Pre-MBA Education (Mini MBA), Probana Business School
2009	Journalism for communication officers , single course, Danish School of Media and Journalism
2005	Indigenous Peoples in the International System , International Training Center of Indigenous Peoples, Nuuk, Greenland
2000	Intensive course in English as a Second Language , School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies ESL Intensive Courses, Carleton University, Canada

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

2011 – 2015	Parliament of Denmark, Committee memberships, among others: • The Greenland Committee (Chair), • The Foreign Policy Committee,
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- The Defense Committee,
- The Environment Committee,
- Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (Vice-Chair and Chair),
- Nordic Council (alternate member),
- NATO's Parliamentary Assembly (member and later alternate member)

2013 – 2018

Parliament of Greenland, Committee memberships, among others:

- The Foreign and Security Policy Committee (Vice Chair),
- The Finance and Fiscal Affairs Committee (Vice Chair),
- The Legal Affairs Committee,
- The Conservation and Environment Committee,
- The Family and Health Committee,
- The Scrutiny and Eligibility Committee.

OTHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

2026 – currently	Board Member , The International Institute for Sustainable Development
2022 – 2026	International Chair , Inuit Circumpolar Council
2024 – currently	Member , Greenland Health Research Ethics Committee
2022 – currently	Advisory Board Member , Harvard Kennedy School Arctic Initiative
2021 – currently	Board Member , Pisiffik A/S
2021 – currently	Member and Chair since 2022, Advisory Board, Arctic Circle Assembly
2021 – 2022	Board Member , Oceans North Kalaallit Nunaat,
2020 - 2023	Appointed Member , The Constitutional Commission of Greenland, member of the Working Group on Rights and Duties
2019 – 2023	Member , the Human Rights Council of Greenland
2019 - 2021	Chairperson , the Human Rights Council of Greenland
2019 – 2023	Board Member , International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
2019 – 2022	Board Member , Pink Polar Bear Foundation
2019 – 2020	Board Member , Transparency International Greenland,
2018 – 2026	Delegate , Inuit Circumpolar Council Kalaallit Nunaat, appointed by the parliament of Greenland, Inatsisartut
2013 – 2015	Board Member , IKIU, the independent legal aid in Greenland
2013 – 2014	Board Member , Det Grønlandske Selskab

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

See full list: <https://uk.uni.gl/find-employee/affiliated/sara-olsvig/>

Peer reviewed publications

Olsvig, S. 2025. Win the hearts and minds Superpower influence on national self-determination How relations between Greenland and the United States affect Greenland's selfdetermination in times of increased international focus and tension in the Arctic. Doctoral Dissertation. Ilisimatusarfik – the University of Greenland.

Olsvig, S. and Cullen, M., 2024. Arctic indigenous peoples and international law. *Nordic Journal of International Law*, 93(1), pp.152-169.

Olsvig, S., 2024. Odd couples' win-sets: Maintaining US basing rights through new two-level game negotiations with Greenland. *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 7(1).

Jacobsen, M. and Olsvig, S. (2024). From Peary to Pompeo: The history of United States' securitizations of Greenland. In: Jacobsen, Marc; Gad, Ulrik P. and Wæver, Ole (eds.). *Greenland in Arctic security: (de)securitization dynamics under climatic thaw and geopolitical freeze*, University of Michigan Press.

Olsvig, S. (2022). 'Uagununa nunarput' ('It's our country'). Greenland's aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US–Greenlandic bilateralism. In: *Danish Foreign Policy Review 2022*, eds. Fischer, Kristian and Mouritzen, H., DIIS. pp. 74 – 106.

Olsvig, S. (2022). Greenland's ambiguous action space: Testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests. In: Depledge, Duncan (ed.) *The Polar Journal*.

Olsvig, S. & Gad, U.P. (2021). Grønland som udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitisk aktør, in *Sikkerhedspolitik i Arktis og Nordatlanten*, Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen & Camilla Sørensen, Djøf Forlag, Copenhagen.

Other publications

Olsvig, S & Poulsen, R.W., 2026. The View From Nuuk Nielsen's Choice. In í Skorini (Ed.) *Between Washington and Copenhagen: Greenland, the Farces, and the Future of the Danish Realm*. University of the Faroe Islands.

Olsvig, S., & Charron, A., 2026. Is geography destiny for small states? Kalaallit Nunaat's defence futures. In *A Research Agenda for Arctic Security and Governance* (pp. 135-154). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Olsvig, S., 2025. Arktisk Råd—et mellemfolkeligt samarbejde. *Internasjonal Politikk*, 83(1), 54-66.

Dahl, J., Holmberg, Á., Olsvig, S and Wessendorf, K. (2024). *Empowering Arctic Indigenous Peoples: Celebrating 50 Years of Indigenous*

Diplomacy. Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). Copenhagen.

Heininen, L., Olsvig, S., Barnes, J. and Exner-Pirot, H. (2023). Arctic Indigenous Peoples: Climate, Science, Knowledge and Governance, Introduction in Arctic Yearbook 2023, eds. Heininen, L., Barnes, J. and Exner-Pirot, H.

Kornhuber, K., Vinke, K., Bloom, E.T., Campbell, L., Rachold, V., Olsvig, S. and Schirwon, D. (2023). The Disruption of Arctic Exceptionalism Managing Environmental Change in Light of Russian Aggression. German Council on Foreign Relations. DGAP Report No. 2, February 8, 2023.

Olsvig, S. & Gad, U.P. (2021). "Greenland obviously has its own defense policy – but it needs anchoring to be sustainable", Danish Institute for International Studies, Policy Brief November 2021.

Olsvig, S. & Gad, U.P. (2020). "Outdated lines of communication undermine legitimacy", Danish Institute for International Studies, Policy Brief December 2020.

Olsvig, S. (2020). "We Live in the Arctic: Inside Greenland Looking Out", in Global Asia, vol. 15, East Asia Foundation, South Korea.

Olsvig, S. (2020). "Greenland's self-government and security matter implications in decision-making" pp. 63 – 66 in "Building autonomies" by Jens Dahl, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Shapiom Noningo, Shankar Limbu, Sara Olsvig and IWGIA.

Olsvig, S and Nielsen, Rasmus L. (2019). "Da Trump ville købe Grønland", pp. 74 - 84 in Udenrigs 3, 2019.

Olsvig, S. (2019). "Evolving Self-Governance, the Rights of the Child and the Future of Greenland", pp. 108 - 113 in The Arctic in World Affairs: A North Pacific Dialogue on The Arctic Moves from Periphery to Center (co-edited with Robert W. Corell, Jong Deog Kim, Yoon Hyung Kim, Arild Moe, Charles E. Morrison, David L. VanderZwaag, and Oran Young), Seoul: Korea Maritime Institute Press.

Olsvig, S. (2018). "Inclusiveness for a strong Arctic", pp. 16 – 18 in Important steps in the Arctic Parliamentary Cooperation 25 Years - 1993–2018 published by the Secretariat of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.

Olsvig, S. (2013). "Building Resilient Communities in the Arctic. Greenland perspective", pp. 252 - 264 in The Arctic in world affairs: a North Pacific dialogue on the future of the Arctic. 2013 North Pacific Arctic conference proceedings edited by Oran R. Young, Jong Deog Kim, Yoon Hyung Kim.5

Olsvig, S. (2013). "Arctic development by the peoples of the Arctic", pp. 23 - 24 in The Circle No. 1, 2013