

Memorandum to SAOs 21-02-2014

Arctic Biodiversity Congress

December 2-4, 2014 Trondheim, Norway

PURPOSE:

- To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Arctic Biodiversity through dialogue and action among scientists, policy-makers, government officials, industry, indigenous peoples and civil society. For background see Appendix 1.

GOALS:

- To present and discuss the main scientific findings in the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA).
- To facilitate inter-disciplinary discussion, action and status updates on ABA recommendations among scientists, government officials, policy makers, indigenous peoples and industry representatives.
- To provide scientific, policy, indigenous, NGO, academia and industry audiences the opportunity to collaborate around the themes of the ABA.
- To advise on implementation of the ABA recommendations and on development of an ABA Implementation Plan for the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2015.
- To highlight the work of CAFF and the Arctic Council in circumpolar biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- To mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services ensuring that the recommendations of the ABA are implemented by not just government, but many organizations and people across disciplines.

STATUS:

- Funding has been secured to arrange the Congress, book venues and establish a travel fund presently targeted at speakers and a limited number of PPs. Additional funding is being sought for travel support, a facilitator for the dialogue sessions, Russian-English translation and selected activities.
- Initial information provided to the CAFF community with a “save the date” email circulated. Targeted invitations for involvement and participation have been sent to relevant international organizations and multilateral environmental agreements.
- A Webpage has been launched and communications activities are being organized and implemented.
- Registration will begin in March and a small Congress Secretariat established.
- A Steering Committee has been created to guide the development of the Congress.
- A Program Advisory Committee has been created, involving a mix of individuals who can contribute and/or lead on key topics identified in the ABA recommendations. Key dimensions in program development include scientific credibility and selection of scientific papers, policy relevance, identification of policy and management related content, indigenous peoples’ perspectives, business perspectives and linkages to other CAFF and other Arctic Council efforts.
- Arctic Council observer countries are invited to participate and contribute at the congress.

DECISION:

- SAOs and PPs asked to take note of progress so far and provide input on how their countries and organisations will be involved and contribute to the Congress.

Appendix 1

BACKGROUND

- The Senior Arctic Officials agreed that the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group should organize an Arctic Biodiversity Congress in 2014, closely linked to the findings and recommendations in the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA), which was published by CAFF in May 2013.
- CAFF presented the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA) at the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Kiruna, Sweden, in May 2013. The ABA report contains the best available science informed by traditional ecological knowledge on the status and trends of Arctic biodiversity and accompanying policy recommendations for biodiversity conservation. The key findings of the ABA deal with the significance of climate change as the most serious underlying driver of overall change in biodiversity, the necessity of taking an ecosystem-based approach to management, and the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity by making it integral to other policy fields, for example, in development, plans and operations.
- The Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna welcomed the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, the first Arctic-wide comprehensive assessment of status and emerging trends in Arctic biodiversity, approved its recommendations, encouraged Arctic States to follow up on its recommendations, instructed Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) to ensure that a plan for further work under the Arctic Council to support and implement its recommendations is developed, and to ensure that a progress report is delivered to the next ministerial meeting (scheduled for 2015). CAFF will report to the SAOs on progress and deliverables related to implementation and an implementation plan. Related tasks are included in the CAFF Work Plan for 2013-15. Canada and Norway are lead countries on developing an implementation plan for the recommendations from the ABA. The Congress is an important deliverable under this implementation plan and will be an important venue for encouraging a wide range of partners who are engaged in implementation of the ABA recommendations.