

Update on ACS Activities in 2014

Submitted by the Director

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Introduction

This report gives an update on the Arctic Council Secretariat's (ACS) activities in 2014 (through the end of September 2014). The ACS activities have largely supported the approved functions of the ACS as described in the work plan approved at the SAO meeting in Whitehorse 22-23 October, 2013, while also addressing other requests made by SAOs or by the Chairmanship. In general, the ACS is on track to accomplish its tasks as described in the approved work plan. Expenditures are in conformity with the approved budget for ACS in 2014.

1. Administrative and Organizational Support

The ACS has worked closely with the Canadian Chairmanship in support of their leadership of the Arctic Council. In addition, the ACS has begun preliminary discussions with the United States regarding preparations for their upcoming chairmanship. The ACS has also provided support to the Arctic States and Permanent Participants, as well as to Observers (in accordance with the Observer Manual). Support to subsidiary bodies is described below.

Senior Arctic Officials' Meetings

Preparatory work for SAO meetings has been shared between the ACS and the Canadian Chairmanship, working in close cooperation with one another. The ACS has provided support in logistics and practical preparations, as well as assisting the SAO Chair in daily correspondence. The ACS also coordinates the distribution of SAO meeting documents and updates the password-protected meeting website designed for the meeting delegates.

Tracking Tool

At the direction of the Chairmanship, The Arctic Council Secretariat has, in close cooperation with the working group chairs and secretaries, been developing a Tracking Tool which gives an overview of all the active projects during the Canadian Chairmanship period. The Tracking Tool was presented for the first time at the SAO meeting in Whitehorse in October 2013; since then, the tool has been regularly updated following the biannual Working Group meetings. As per requests made by the SAOs in Yellowknife in March 2014, a column for "Initiative end" has been added to the tool. In addition, different options for reporting on the inclusion of Traditional Knowledge in projects and for distinguishing between projects and ongoing programs are being explored, but these have not yet been realized in the latest version of the tool.

Project Costing

In response to earlier requests by SAOs, the Secretariat has been working with all six Working Groups to develop a “project costing tool” with which Working Groups can provide SAOs a rough estimate of the costs associated with their project work. Prior to the Yellowknife SAO meeting in March 2014, and in close consultation with the Working Groups, a “consensus form” had been developed which all Working Groups agreed to use to submit estimates of their project costs. The Working Groups also requested that a disclaimer be attached to these estimates; such a disclaimer has also been agreed upon and added. Most submissions have now been collected from the Working Groups, with only a few yet to be collected. The Secretariat is working to collate these in a coherent manner and prepare a report for submission at the March 2015 SAO meeting with a view to presenting it at the 2015 Ministerial Meeting.

EBM

In response to a request from SAOs, the Secretariat has been working with the Working Groups AMAP, CAFF, PAME and SDWG to assemble a concise overview of the ways in which their work reflects and responds to the recommendations contained in the 2013 report “Ecosystem-Based Management in the Arctic”. Responses have been received from each of the four Working Groups. The Secretariat is now working to collate these in a coherent manner and prepare a report for submission at the March 2015 SAO meeting with a view to presenting it at the 2015 Ministerial Meeting.

Russian language services

ACS has provided written translation of meeting documents and selected reports from English to Russian and vice-versa. Furthermore, the Russian version of the Arctic Council website has been regularly updated and is consistently maintained. In addition, the Russian language adviser has attended a number of task force meetings and other Arctic Council meetings during 2014 in order to provide simultaneous interpretation. Demand for interpretation services from the ACS has been growing; this demand is especially heavy from the Task Forces.

2. Website, Communications and outreach activities

The year has been active and successful on the communications front. In close cooperation with the Chairmanship, the ACS has helped to support and build the Arctic Council’s existing communications channels while, in addition, opening new channels. At all times, the ACS activities have aligned with the guidance provided by the Communications Strategy for the Arctic Council (Stockholm, 2012) and the Communications Implementation Plan for the Arctic Council Secretariat (Yellowknife, 2014).

Since the Yellowknife SAO in March, twenty-five articles have been published, including accounts of meetings, news releases regarding upcoming events, and interviews with the SAO Chair and other Arctic Council “personalities” on the Arctic Council’s current priority areas of work. The website has also hosted a series of articles developed in close collaboration with CAFF that highlight interesting data points from the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment. The greatest number of unique visitors to the Arctic Council website in a single month so far in 2014 was 10,345. This peak, which was reached in March, was associated with – and likely the result

of – the SAO meeting that took place at that time. Traffic on the Russian version of the website has also been steadily increasing, with the Russian homepage showing up as one of the top 5 pages of the website during 4 of the past 6 months.

The Arctic Council has also established a presence on both Facebook and Twitter. Our base of fans & followers is growing well on both platforms, having reached 1,300+ Facebook likes and 750+ Twitter followers by the end of September 2014. Both of these channels have already proved useful as ways to help Arctic Council content “go viral”; several items that have been shared via our social media channels have been re-shared by other popular individuals and organizations. In order to direct more users to the Facebook and Twitter profiles, clear links to both have been added on the Arctic Council homepage.

The ACS also helps to channel media requests that we receive to the correct entities, which helps to build journalists’ sense of the Arctic Council as a responsive and active entity. Finally, the ACS has been working to create more frequent opportunities for information sharing and consultation within the Communications & Outreach Group, thus helping to improve the coordination of communications activities across the Arctic Council network.

[3. Strengthening the institutional memory](#)

Open Access Archive Project

Work on the Open Access archive project has continued with a view to enhance the accessibility of all past and future official Arctic Council scientific, technical and other reports. The ACS purchased a subscription in spring 2014 for a DSpace-based cloud-hosted repository provided by the American company Longsight. Reports from ACAP, EPPR, SDWG and PAME are now being uploaded into the repository. Once the final documents have been added, and the repository has been publicly launched in autumn 2014, AC documents will be more readily available to a wider audience since the Open Access archive enables AC documents to be found both in networks of library databases and in Google Scholar searches. The ACS is grateful to the Government of Norway for its support of consultation by experts at the University of Tromsø during the development of the project.

Arctic Council Secretariat Archive Project

The ACS has in collaboration with Libraries and Archives Canada (LAC) worked on identifying the best practices for archiving the records held by the ACS. The LAC has been fully informed about what kind of records the ACS holds, and has - together with the ACS - been developing a tool called the Internal Records Management Tool (IRMT). This tool will be used by the ACS as a guide to help classify the different records held by the ACS. It also provides guidance on other important questions such as: Who should have access to different kinds of records? And for how long will different kinds of records be kept? In addition, the LAC has provided two guideline documents that support and explain the information in the IRMT.

The IRMT will be used to set up the ACS archive using the software OpenText DM which the ACS has purchased to serve the archiving system. The software was chosen based on its compatibility with other software already in use at the ACS and is provided by a Norwegian software company called Contesto. During October 2014, the ACS will have a two-day workshop with Contesto to set up the software.

The Policy for Records Management was approved by SAOs in July 2014, and - together with these three additional documents and the software solution - the ACS will shortly be able to provide truly professional records management for the Arctic Council. The ACS and LAC plan to present the draft IRMT and guidelines to SAOs and seek approval for the documents before the end of 2014.

4. Support to Working Groups and Subsidiary Bodies

Beginning in February 2014, the ACS has been providing (based on the Terms of Reference 2.2) secretariat support to ACAP and EPPR, the working groups that were “without permanent secretariat”. The working group coordinator hired in February works in close cooperation with the Chairs and Executive Secretaries of ACAP and EPPR.

The Working Group Coordinator has supported the two Working Groups in planning and execution of their annual meetings (four meetings in total). In addition to meeting preparations, the working group coordinator also provides post-meeting reports and completes the reporting required for SAO meetings.

As of 2013, the ACS runs the websites of ACAP, EPPR and SDWG. This work is included in the portfolio of the website officer and the working group coordinator.

Assistance to Task Forces (TFs)

The ACS has provided secretariat support to, and facilitated the meetings of, three task forces: The Task Force for Actions on Black Carbon and Methane (TFBCM, 3 meetings so far this year); Task Force on Oil Pollution Prevention (TFOPP, 3 meetings); and Scientific Cooperation Task Force (SCTF, 4 meetings). At least one ACS staff member has participated in each of these task force meetings held in 2014. In addition, the ACS has also provided simultaneous translation between English and Russian at several TF meetings.

The support the ACS has provided includes:

- preparing TF meetings
- meeting logistics
- distributing and archiving documents
- sending invitations and receiving registrations
- drafting meeting minutes/reports
- assisting in meetings (e.g., edit documents during negotiations and distribute meeting documents)

- maintaining distribution lists for the co-chairs and sending information on behalf of the co-chairs in accordance with their instructions

5. Status of budget and financial contributions

The 2014 budget for the Arctic Council Secretariat and the financial contributions from the Arctic States for 2014 were agreed upon by SAOs at their meeting in Whitehorse, Canada 22-23 October 2013, in conformity with the mandate given by the Ministers of the Arctic Council in Kiruna in May 2013. The budget for 2014 amounts to USD 1 344 406. In accordance with the Terms of Reference (Art. 6), calls for contributions to the administrative budget were sent out on 6 February 2014 to all the eight Arctic States. The ACS has received all contributions for 2014.

6. Technology and Equipment

In 2013, based on a needs assessment and after comparing several offers from suppliers, the ACS made agreements with suppliers providing telecommunication services, IT equipment and assistance, office supplies, furniture and online travel portal. Given the increased number of staff members, new furniture, telephones and computers have been purchased in 2014. In addition, licenses with various suppliers have been updated to correspond to the number of staff members. Following the receipt of special funding from the United States, the ACS is currently evaluating different solutions for videoconference equipment and plans to make a purchase of such in the autumn of 2014.

7. Human Resources and Recruitment

During 2013, the first year of operations for the ACS, seven people were recruited. In early 2014 two additional positions were filled:

Patti Bruns, Working Group Coordinator

Johanna Hämäläinen, Administrative Officer

In addition, Jesper Stig Andersen, who is seconded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs started as Special Adviser in September 2014.

As outlined in the work plan for 2014-2015, the ACS also has an intern position which is currently filled by Vanja Mari Sjursen, archiving intern. Currently, the ACS has 10 staff members from seven Arctic States.

8. Training and development for ACS staff members

As an initial part of a training and development plan, a round of appraisal conversations took place with all the staff members in the summer 2014. The ACS will, within the frames of the budget, strive to meet the identified needs through necessary training and development.

9. Representing the ACS

The director has been frequently called upon to represent the ACS in different meetings or events. The ACS also continues to receive delegations at its offices in Tromsø; these delegations typically wish to hear basic information about the Arctic Council, its priorities and its current activities. A list of visits and representations can be found in the annexes to this report.

Annex 1

List of visits and representations

The ACS Director represented the ACS at the following events:

- The Norwegian Oil and Gas Association: Task force meeting regarding the Arctic (Tromsø, January)
- UNEP Donor Consultation meeting (Tromsø, January)
- Arctic Frontiers (Tromsø, January)
- Working lunch organized by the Iceland Ambassador to Norway for Ambassadors from Arctic States and Observer states in Oslo (February)
- Traditional Knowledge workshop (Iceland, February)
- Working lunch on International strategy hosted by the municipality of Tromsø (June)
- Italian Day (Tromsø, June)
- Working lunch hosted by municipality of Tromsø (June)
- Presentation at a meeting «Challenges and development of Arctic cooperation» organized by Nordic Council of Ministers (Svolvær, Norway, June)
- BEAC (Barents Euro-Arctic Council) Expert Group Meeting (Helsinki, September)
- Canada-Norway Innovation Initiative Conference (Tromsø, September)

Visits to the ACS Office during 2014 (in most cases visit included short, general talk/introduction about the AC):

- Visit by the Ambassador of Japan to Norway (January)
- Visit by/meeting with US Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (January)
- Visit by State Secretary (NO) (January)
- Visit by Secretary General, Nordic Council of Ministers (January)
- Visit by Ambassador of the Netherlands to Norway (January)
- Visit by UNEP delegation (January)
- Press visit from Deutsche Welle (January)
- Meeting with Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (February)
- Meeting with the Dean of the University of Tromsø (February)
- Visit by the Ambassador of France to Norway (March)
- Group of university students from Greenland (April)
- Group of high school students from Norway, Finland and Sweden (April)
- Visit by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs (April)
- Visit by Finland's Arctic Advisory Board (May)
- Meeting with a Professor, University of California (May)
- Visit by Ambassador of Italy to Norway (June)

- Visit by a British expert group, organized by the Norwegian Embassy (June)
- Visit by a Japanese Delegation (June)
- Visit by an Icelandic Delegation (June)
- Press visit from a Korean Tv-station (July)
- Visit by Norwegian-American Parliamentary Exchange Program delegation from the USA (August)
- Visit by the Ambassador of Armenia to Norway (August)
- Meeting with Special Arctic Representative for the President of France (August)
- Visit of Norwegian trainee diplomats (September)
- Visit by Arctic Committee of the UK, House of Lords (September)
- Visit by a delegation from Singapore (September)
- Visit by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (US) (September)
- Visit by a delegation from the University of Akureyri (September)