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Progress report

Update on ACS Activities in 2015

Submitted by the Director

SAO Anchorage 20-22 October 2015

Introduction

This report gives an update on the Arctic Council Secretariat's (ACS) activities in 2015 (through the end of September 2015). The ACS activities have 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 so far in 2015 are well within the approved budget for ACS in 2015.

1. Administrative and Organizational Support

Until 24 April 2015, the ACS worked closely with the Canadian Chairmanship in support of their leadership of the Arctic Council. Following the Iqaluit Ministerial, the ACS has worked with the United States to support their 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 (one plenary and three executive meetings so far in 2015) has been shared between the ACS and the 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

The Arctic Council tracking tool (Amarok: The Arctic Council Tracker) was developed during the Canadian Chairmanship. The ACS has now created a project-tracking database from the tracking tool to ease data-entry and reporting. Working Groups have been asked to update their project entries after each Working Group meeting by submitting updates to the ACS. The ACS will submit a full report from the project-tracking database to Senior Arctic Officials at the meeting in Anchorage, October 2015.

Russian language services

ACS has provided written translation of meeting documents and selected reports from English to Russian and vice-versa. In 2015 a number of important AC documents as well as Working Groups' deliverables were translated before and after the Ministerial Meeting in Iqaluit, including the Iqaluit Declaration; SAOs' Report to Ministers; Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic; Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions: an Arctic Council Framework for Action; Executive Summary of the Guide to Oil Spill Response in Ice and Snow Conditions in the Arctic (EPPR) and Mental Wellness Symposium Report (SDWG). Besides, three chapters of the Arctic Human Development Report-II have been translated at the request of the Canadian Chairmanship. 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 2015 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.

Coordination with WG Secretariats

As in the year before, the ACS invited the Executive Secretaries of all the WGs to a coordination meeting in Tromsø in January, during the week of the Arctic Frontiers conference. Central topics for discussion at these meetings are always how to further improve coordination and ensure even better cooperation among the secretariat support staff for the Arctic Council as a whole.

2. Website, Communications and outreach activities

The period following the Iqaluit 2015 Ministerial Meeting has marked some exciting successes and developments on the communications front. In close cooperation with the Chairmanship, the ACS has helped to do the following.

- During the summer staff at the ACS performed an update of the main Arctic Council website to the latest version of Joomla, the software that is used to run the website. This update was important in order to ensure that the AC website uses the most secure and stable software solutions available for Joomla. In addition to the technical update, a few small changes in look and feel were also made to improve the user-friendliness of the website, especially in terms of search functions, tagged news article displays, and use on mobile devices.
- Increase the volume of traffic to the Arctic Council website. From 1 May through 1 September 2014, we had a total of 42,859 visitors. In 2015, that number was 66,799, **growth of more than 50%** over the previous year.
- Increase the audience that the Arctic Council reaches through its growing social media channels. On Facebook, the Arctic Council had 2,614 likes immediately following the Ministerial meeting. As of 18 September 2015, that number had grown to 3,106 (an

increase of 19% in less than 5 months). On Twitter, the Arctic Council's account had 2,614 followers on 1 May 2015. That number stood at 3,738 (an **increase of 43%** in less than 5 months) on 18 September 2015.

- Work with the Working Groups to add a good deal of substantive material to the Arctic Council website, including more than 30 new articles. These include interviews with newly-instated Working Group Chairs, brief articles highlighting Working Group projects, and event news.
- Improve the quality of our global, multilingual media monitoring, and reinstate a daily newsletter of selected headlines from around the globe.
- Continue to produce a monthly overview of Arctic Council communications, which is delivered to all States, Permanent Participants, Working Groups and Observers.
- Expand multimedia content, e.g. with polished video from Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting, audio versions of statements from the Ministerial meeting, and great content like the Traditional Ways of Life video material from Canada.
- Expand multilingual content to reach circumpolar audiences by producing an introduction to the Arctic Council in as many State and Permanent Participant languages as possible.
- Improve our system for sending press releases and maintaining the press-release distribution list.

Some highlights:

- Our social media accounts are becoming ever more effective at building awareness of the Arctic Council. From 1 May to 1 September 2014, our tweets were clicked 298 times. During the same period in 2015, they were clicked 1,676 times, which is **more than 500% growth** in engagement year-on-year.
- Our most-read article between 1 May and 18 September was “*First meeting of SAOs during U.S. Chairmanship*”, which was **read 785 times**.
- Our most successful tweet between 1 May and 18 September was “*A new Task Force on #Arctic Marine Cooperation was established at the 2015 Ministerial Mtg. Find its work plan here: (link)*”, which was **clicked 78 times and retweeted 25 times**.
- Our most successful Facebook post between 1 May and 18 September was an announcement of the meetings of four Working Groups in Tromsø. The post **reached more than 4,000 viewers, was clicked 234 times, and was shared 24 times**.
- Our most-watched video between 1 May and 18 September was “*Promoting the Traditional Ways of Life of Arctic Indigenous Peoples*” in English, which was **watched 471 times**.

3. Archiving

Open Access Archive Project

During the summer, the Open Access Archive project has progressed and the archive now houses the vast majority of all the significant reports from all six of the Arctic Council working groups. In addition, documents from all past SAO meetings which have previously been made publicly available from the Arctic Council website are also being uploaded to the OA Archive. Each of these documents from SAO meetings have had a cover page added which makes it clear to users that they are draft documents which give a historical perspective on the work of the Council and the development of reports. This has been done so that SAO meeting documents are not mistakenly cited as final versions, which are located elsewhere in the archive.

The ACS has also agreed with the working groups on a technical method on how to inform about new, future reports which should be included in the archive or about necessary updates to previously uploaded reports.

Finally, in order to improve clarity on copyright restrictions and licenses the ACS has drafted two suggested disclaimers which could be used in connection with the OA Archive. The first disclaimer would be used for all documents published up to and including the 2015 Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting and the second for all future documents. These disclaimers will need legal approval before they can be implemented in the OA Archive.

Arctic Council Secretariat Archive Project

Following the interim approval of the Integrated Records Management Tool (IRMT) by SAOs in January 2015 the ACS has continued to implement the archiving project by using the IRMT as a tool to build the folder structure of the internal ACS archive in the archiving software eDOCS DM. While building the archive structure it became apparent that several additional categories were necessary in order to accommodate all of the types of files archived by the ACS. Therefore the ACS is submitting an updated version of the IRMT for SAO approval to the Anchorage SAO meeting.

In addition to the internal archiving project the ACS has continued the work to collect historical Arctic Council documents. A preliminary e-mail asking for contact information to staff at National Archives was sent out in May and a reminder message in June. At this stage the ACS has received contact information from most but not all Member States and Permanent Participants. During the autumn and winter the ACS will work with staff from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration to begin contacting the various archives and collecting documents.

4. Support to Working Groups and Subsidiary Bodies

The ACS continues to provide Executive Secretary support to ACAP and EPPR. The Executive Secretary supports the two working groups in the planning and execution of biannual meetings, workshops and other meetings related to the work plans. The Executive Secretary coordinates information received from ACAP and EPPR expert groups, circulating information to Heads of Delegation for comments and approval. Cooperation with the other AC working group Chairs

and Executive Secretaries continues to be a priority, and is best noted in the recent joint working group meetings held in Tromsø, September 2015.

The ACS maintains and updates the webpages of ACAP and EPPR, both of which have been updated as part of the larger AC website re-design. Thanks to a generous contribution from the U.S., ACAP and EPPR will have new visual identities, including new logos, documents template and branding elements that meet current publishing requirements.

Assistance to Task Forces (TFs) and Expert Groups

The ACS provides secretariat support to, and facilitates, the meetings of the AC task forces and expert groups. So far in 2015 the following meetings have been serviced by the ACS: Scientific Cooperation Task Force (SCTF, two meetings in 2015); Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC, first meeting to be held in September 2015) and Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic (TFTIA, first meeting to be held in September 2015). At least one ACS staff member has participated in each of these task force meetings held in 2015. In addition, ACS has been assisting in the start-up phase of, and will continue to provide support to the Expert Group in Support of Implementation of the Framework for Action on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM).

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 2015 budget for the Arctic Council Secretariat and the financial contributions from the Arctic States for 2015 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 2015 amounts to USD 1 398 937,-. In accordance with the Financial Rules (Art. 5.3), a separate call for the Host Country contribution to the administrative budget was sent to Norway primo January, followed by separate calls for contributions to the eight Arctic States on 25 February 2015. The ACS had received all contributions for 2015 by July 6, 2015.

6. Technology and Equipment

In 2014, after a generous special contribution from the US, The ACS purchased videoconference equipment from Videonor. Our experience so far is that the system is often used and in general working well, with a few firewall related problems in exception.

The ACS is in general functioning well in terms of technology and equipment, but will as stated in the 2016-2017 work plan perform a review of current agreements e.g. technological providers and solutions etc. in 2016.

7. Human Resources and Recruitment

Appraisal conversations with all employees were conducted in June. In August, the ACS concluded the recruitment of the Deputy Director for the ACS. Ms. Nina Buvang Vaaja, who was previously seconded by Norway, has accepted a four year contract starting from August 15. The Administrative officer, Ms. Johanna Hämäläinen, will be on a one year leave from November 1. A temporary replacement has been found and Ms. Solrùn Svandal has signed a 12 months contract starting from November 1, 2015. In addition, Mr. Jesper Stig Andersen who generously has been seconded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 12 months, has now been replaced by his successor Ms. Anne Meldgaard, who has a two year contract with the ACS.

As outlined in the work plan for 2014-2015, the ACS also has an intern position which is currently filled by Ms. Benedicte Hauge Johnsen (Norway). In total, the ACS now has 10 staff members from seven Arctic States. In addition, a 20% position is being filled by intern Tove Stenius (Sweden) to do follow up work on the archiving project.

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. Visits and representations are listed in annex 1 to this report.

Annex 1

ANNEX: Visitors received and representations made in March 2015-September 2015

The ACS Director represented the ACS at the following events:

- World Petroleum Council Leadership Conference in Tromsø (May)
- EC-PORS of the World Meteorological Organization in Reykjavik (September)
- Arctic Economic Council Secretariat inauguration in Tromsø (September)

The following visitors were received at the ACS offices in March 2015-September 2015. In most cases, these visits included a brief and general introduction to the Arctic Council,

including its structure, present and past work, and priorities under the Canadian and from May 2015 US Chairmanship.

- Ambassador of Japan to Norway (March)
- Representatives of Ramboll Tromsø (March)
- Norwegian delegation for Arctic Parliamentary Cooperation (March)
- President of Sametinget Aili Keskitalo and Chair of the board (March)
- Barents Council Head of Secretariat (April)
- Group of University students from Iceland (April)
- Delegation of French Senators (June)
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs study tour with ambassadors accredited to Norway (June)
- Group of students from University of Southern California (June)
- Delegation of Americans as part of the Norwegian-American Parliamentary Exchange Program (August)
- Diplomatic course from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (September)
- The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission Secretariat (September)
- Meeting with Arctic Economic Council Representatives (September)
- Group of Norwegian Defence Course participants (September)
- Group of students from Durham University (September)
- Group of journalists from China (September)
- Visit by Executive Secretary of the Antarctic Treaty (September)