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Analysis of Other Organizations' Relationships to External Bodies

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Summary

Analysis of Other Organizations' Relationships to External Bodies

As tasked by the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs), the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS) has compiled a list of pertinent external bodies and identified several examples of how other international fora have chosen to shape their relationships with external bodies.

Methodology:

The ACS contacted six outside organizations to inquire about common practices regarding their relations to external bodies: the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the OSPAR Commission, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). The organizations contacted were chosen based on their function as a regional body, focus area, geographical scope and relatively small number of members. All organizations responded either by providing information orally or in writing.

Summary of Responses:

Based on the response information, although there were some variations, the most commonly used tool to structure relationships with external bodies was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoUs shared as examples by the organizations included many similar elements, namely: (a) definition of the Parties, (b) definitions of scope and objectives of the cooperation, (c) responsibilities, (d) financing, (e) general administrative arrangements, and (f) duration and termination of the MoU. Regarding non-administrative, "working" elements of cooperation, some of the MoUs included paragraphs on data handling and sharing, knowledge management, and/or scientific information and advice.

Other arrangements with external bodies were governed by alternate models such as: official guidelines adopted by the governing body of the organization; a "Letter of Agreement"; a "Partnership Arrangement"; a "Letter of Cooperation"; and/or "bilateral arrangement". Alternatively, as one organization reported, cooperation with external bodies at the working group-level has been carried out by ad-hoc arrangements. This means that the working group chairs have decided individually on a case-by-case basis whether they would like to invite external experts/bodies to take part in their meetings in different ways.

Regarding policies relating to the broad concept of relationships to external bodies, CBSS, for example, has developed principles and guidelines which note that: the focus of cooperative relationships should be on quality rather than on quantity; potential new strategic partnerships should be evaluated with an eye to whether the partnership will enhance the Council's capacity for practical action and its overall ability to advance regional cooperation; strategic partners are an important source of expert information; and that partners can also contribute financially.