

Guidelines on the Release of Records Held by the Arctic Council Secretariat

1. Effective Date

These guidelines have been approved by the Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) and take effect on October 22, 2014.

2. Scope

These guidelines apply to Arctic Council (AC) records held by the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS), as defined under article 1 (h) of the Host Country Agreement, signed between the ACS and the Kingdom of Norway on 21 January 2013: “Archives means all correspondence, documents, manuscripts, photographs, computer data storage, films, recordings and any other records, in paper, electronic or other form, belonging to or held by the Secretariat.”

These guidelines apply equally to all ACS records (archives) that were created before the guidelines took effect, as well as those created subsequently.

AC records held in the repositories of Arctic States, Permanent Participants, Observers and the secretariats of AC subsidiary bodies are excluded from the scope of these guidelines. However, these bodies are encouraged to submit to the ACS documents that contribute to the collective memory of the AC.

3. Purpose

These guidelines establish the rules under which the ACS may release its records to the public. The expected result is a consistent approach to the public release of ACS records. The guidelines are to be applied in conjunction with the *Policy on Records Management for the Arctic Council Secretariat*, approved by SAOs and Permanent Participants on 25 July 2014, and the *Integrated Records Management Tool* (IRMT).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- a) **Senior Arctic Officials** with the active participation of **Permanent Participants**, shall:
 - i. review and approve these guidelines, as well as any subsequent versions;
 - ii. ensure that these guidelines are upheld, by reviewing biennial reports on compliance that are to be submitted by the Director of the ACS, in accordance with section 8.4 of the *Policy on Records Management for the Arctic Council Secretariat*.

- b) The **Director of the Arctic Council Secretariat** shall ensure that:
 - i. these guidelines are implemented and adhered to by the ACS;
 - ii. appropriate remedial action is taken to address any deficiencies within the ACS related to the implementation of these guidelines;
 - iii. information on compliance with these guidelines is contained within the Director’s biennial report, to be completed in accordance with section 8.4 of the *Policy on Records Management for the Arctic Council Secretariat*. The report

shall also indicate any exception to the release of records according to these guidelines, and any other specific issues related to the public release of records.

5. Release of Records

5.1 Meeting Minutes, Communications and Documents

In accordance with article 45 of the *Arctic Council Rules of Procedure*, “the Chairmanship may release minutes, if any, communications and documents of the meeting after obtaining approval from the relevant officials of each Arctic State. The Chairmanship is responsible for preparing a report of the meeting which will be formally released after it has been approved by the relevant officials of each Arctic State.”

5.2 All Other Records

The release of all other records held by the ACS shall be authorized according to the “release” column in the current version of the IRMT, as approved by SAOs.

ACS records that have not reached their release date in accordance with the “release” column of the IRMT shall be considered “Confidential” records.

Any changes to the “release” column of the IRMT must be approved by SAOs or as delegated by SAOs.

5.3 Conditions of Release

ACS records shall be considered declassified and made available to the public once the time period, identified in the release column of the IRMT, has elapsed.

In the event that a record is requested that is not listed in the IRMT, the ACS shall bring the request to the attention of the Chair of the SAOs.

The ACS shall not redact or edit records in order that portions of them may be released.

5.4 Exceptions to Release

a) Protection of Sensitive Information

At any time, SAOs and Permanent Participant Heads of Delegation may request an extension to the release date of specific ACS records and/or that the release of specific ACS records be withheld, if the release of the records would:

- i. negatively affect the physical security of the personnel or buildings associated with the AC or ACS;
- ii. cause significant harm to the AC, ACS, a national government or Permanent Participant organization;
- iii. divulge sensitive commercial or scientific data;

- iv. negatively impact a state's national defence and security, including the ability to prevent crime; or
- v. divulge information provided in confidence by a third party.

Such requests shall be addressed in writing to the Chair of the SAOs, who shall submit it to SAOs for decision.

b) Protection of Personal Information

The ACS shall not release personal information about individuals, whether they are employed by the ACS or not, where disclosure of said information would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, or could injure the individual's professional reputation or their physical security.

6. Language of Records

The working language of the AC and the ACS is English. At the same time, some records are translated into Russian and into other languages to facilitate AC work and to promote the achievements of the AC more globally. Important correspondence also takes place in languages other than English.

The ACS will base its decision about the release of any record on the official English version. Once the official English-language version has been released, all translations produced by the ACS shall also be considered to be open.

8. Requests for Public Release of Records

There is no restriction on who can submit a request for the public release of records held by the ACS. Requests must be submitted in writing to the ACS, normally in the form of an e-mail.

9. Guidelines Review

These guidelines shall be reviewed by the SAOs every five years, from the date of implementation.

10. Enquiries

Enquiries about these guidelines should be directed to the Director of the ACS.