

All presentations from the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Official's meeting in Luleå, Sweden, November 8-9 2011.

2011

Arctic Council

Arctic Council Secretariat

<http://hdl.handle.net/11374/1543>

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In a Finnish study from 2001, called "Review of the Arctic Council Structures", it was concluded that "a secretariat would help the Arctic Council to strengthen its role as an Arctic cooperation fora, and its capacity to deal with the new challenges of the Arctic". Today, exactly 10 years later, the Task Force for Institutional Issues is deeply involved in realizing this historical call.

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At its first meeting in September the eight Arctic state and three permanent participant Task Force representatives obtained a clear understanding of its mandate and the process forward. The objective of the TFII is to develop recommendations to SAOs how to implement the Nuuk decisions to strengthen the Arctic Council, including any necessary arrangements to establish the Secretariat. The TFII will deliver on the seven tasks defined for it in the SAO report to Ministers.

The Delegation of Norway described the preparations so far and relevant national legislation to establish the Secretariat. The Fram Centre in Tromsø has been chosen as its location. When the second building of the Center has been finished in 2014, it will have 500 employees from 19 institutions. Norway has requested 10 offices, one meeting room and one storage room for the new Secretariat. The entity will be somewhat separated from other institutions, but it is not possible to provide any more details now, as the process with drawing the building itself has not come far enough.

The TFII also heard lessons learned from the present Secretariat on its tasks and functions today.

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There was general agreement that the suggested legal documents to establish the Secretariat were necessary and sufficient. All proposals were discussed “para by para”. Some clarifications and further discussions were needed on a number of issues. Revised drafts have therefore been circulated

to delegations. Here are my general remarks from each of the five draft documents:

1) Consequential revisions of the Rules of Procedure

Revisions of and new texts have been suggested in the parts dealing with the Secretariat, as well as on criteria and roles for Observers. The meeting agreed that the TFII should stick to its mandate and not be tempted to open other parts of the Rules of Procedure to "modernize".

2) Terms of Reference for the Secretariat.

The meeting held the view that the Nuuk and the future Kiruna declarations probably will be sufficient basis to establish the Secretariat. This question was subject to final confirmation from a few states. The meeting also recommended that the Secretariat does not need a separate Steering Group or Board. The SAOs should be able to take the role as "Board". I would also like to draw your attention to a few general conclusions:

- There is a need to clarify the roles and relationship between the SAO Chair, SAOs, the Secretariat and its Director.

- Language referring to the Terms of Reference may be helpful in the Kiruna declaration.
- The sequencing of adopting the necessary documents to establish the Secretariat must be cleared by the Task Force.
- The TFII needs to get the result from the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS) review as soon as possible to be able to integrate the IPS/PP question in the Secretariat from the start.

3) Host Country Agreement

The Nuuk declaration and a Host Country agreement will be sufficient legal basis to establish the Secretariat from a Norwegian point of view. Privileges and immunities will be according to international standards. The Secretariat will be an international body, not a Norwegian legal body. The Host Country agreement will be signed between the Norwegian Government and the Arctic Council Secretariat.

4) Indicative budget for the Secretariat

Rough estimates were presented by Norway. A more

detailed budget will be developed during the first half of 2012. Then the TFII will be in a position to define more clearly what the new Secretariat will do. Also, the Fram Centre process will have developed so that the rent and overhead costs will be clarified.

5) Financial and Staff rules for the Secretariat

The review showed that there are many parts of this document that need further development. In this context it was the view of the Task Force that the criteria and process to recruit a Director needs to be clarified and started very soon.

Iceland has kindly offered to host the next meeting of the TFII in Reykjavik in December this year. Added to the outstanding issues mentioned in my presentation, the Task Force will then have a first discussion on a work plan and try to define the tasks of the Secretariat staff in more detail. Also, I would like to add that the Task Force was given the task to develop an observer manual by SAOs yesterday.

I am very much looking forward to continue working with my colleagues in the Task Force. We had a good start and I am cautiously optimistic that we will be able to deliver on the important tasks that were given to us.

Thank you for your attention.