

22nd August 2002

Report from the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) working group to the SAO meeting in Inari 7-8 October 2002

1. Introduction

Since the Ministerial meeting in Barrow (October 2000) the EPPR working group has had two annual meetings: one in Kiruna, Sweden, on 20-22 February 2001 and one in Cordova, Alaska, USA, on 15-16 April 2002.

Mr. Olli Pakkala from Finland has served as chair for the working group during the period 2000-2002. During this period Finland has also given the working group secretariat support. Ms. Miliza Malmelin has served as the secretary.

2. Progress since Barrow Ministerial Meeting

In accordance with the tasks given in the Barrow declaration EPPR can report on the finalization of the Circumpolar Map of Resources at Risk from Oil spills in the Arctic. Under the lead of Norway the project has produced a series of GIS-based circumpolar maps showing the areas of highest risk of an oil spill and those areas with sensitive natural resources or subsistence communities. The idea has been to highlight a limited number of areas where sensitive Arctic resources overlap with potential oil spill areas, and in this way facilitate the prioritizing of mitigation actions. The Circumpolar Map is accessible to the public at the web address <http://www.akvaplan.niva.no/eppr>, as well as through the EPPR website <http://eppr.arctic-council.org>. The agency Akvaplan-niva, Tromsø, Norway, that has implemented the work has kindly offered to host the final product. A proposal on how the update and maintenance of the Circumpolar Map should best be handled, and on how the cooperation with other Arctic Council working groups on the issue should be conducted will be prepared by Norway, and decision on these aspects will be taken at the next EPPR meeting. Further development of the Circumpolar Map is included in the work plan for 2002-2004 and will be considered at the next EPPR meeting.

EPPR has further continued with activities initiated under EPPR's Strategic Plan. Under the lead of the US and Russia, EPPR has conducted a pilot project on source control management at the Apatity-vodokanal. The aim of the pilot project has been to develop and test a methodology for reducing the potential for emergencies at facilities. At its meeting in Cordova EPPR endorsed in principle the final report of the Emergency prevention/ Source control pilot project in Apatity-vodokanal and the first version of the developed methodology. The meeting further encouraged US/Russia to continue with the project in another facility as planned, and included these plans in its work plan for 2002-2004. Full endorsement to the final report and to the plan for the continuation of the project will be given through correspondence before the next EPPR meeting.

The project on developing an Arctic Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology (SCAT) manual is continuing bilaterally between US and Canada, with other countries giving possible input through correspondence. A draft report will be prepared prior to the next EPPR meeting. The final product, the Arctic SCAT manual is expected to be available by the fall of 2003.

A table top emergency exercise between Russia and USA was conducted at the Bilibino nuclear power plant (Chukotka, Russia) on August 22, 2002. Local, national and international emergency response plans and notifications were exercised with EPPR countries and the International Atomic Energy Agency. EPPR parties were able to test notification channels and other aspects of international co-operation for response to a nuclear emergency with potentially widespread consequences. The scenario involved a failure of the reactor control rods and a simulated release of radioactivity. Using planned (not real) weather, the simulated plume was detectable at very low levels in Alaska two days after the event. A report of the exercise highlighting lessons learned and actions for improvement will be available at the next SAO meeting.

Finland has on part of EPPR conducted a survey on past major accidents in the Arctic. Due to very little response the data gathered provide limited information on the issue and no conclusions can be drawn from it. A more extensive inventory of natural disasters in the Arctic is included in the EPPR work plan for 2002-2004. Possibly this inventory will be done in close cooperation with the Northern Forum.

During the period 2000-2002 EPPR has finalized its operating guidelines, which were approved by the SAOs in Rovaniemi (June 2001). EPPR has also published a brochure telling about its activities. The brochure was published in February 2001. (The brochure will be distributed at the meeting in Inari.)

Further EPPR has made a check up on the use of the Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters, which was published by EPPR in 1998. The response to the Field Guide has been excellent. It has received positive reviews in the WWF's Arctic Bulletin, the ARCUS newsletter Witness the Arctic and the Spill Science and Technology Bulletin. 1000 copies of the Field Guide has been distributed world wide to governments, oil companies, academics, libraries and spill cleanup contractors. The Field guide is available in Russian, parts of it have also been translated to Inuktitut, French, Finnish and Swedish. (For more details see Annex 1.)

3. Work plan 2002-2004

In Iqaluit on 18 August 1998 the Ministers endorsed the Strategic Plan of Action for the Arctic Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group. Chapter 2.3. of the Strategic Plan lists both ongoing and future projects and activities within EPPR. EPPR suggests that the chapter be updated according to the text in Annex 2. This would serve as the work plan for 2002-2004.

4. Request for a new mandate

The present mandate of EPPR is to deal with prevention, preparedness and response to environmental emergencies in the Arctic that are a result of human activities. By tradition the projects carried out within EPPR have focused mainly on oil pollution issues.

The role and mandate of EPPR have been discussed among SAOs during the review process of the Arctic Council. It has been proposed that EPPR in the future should give more emphasis to prevention, preparedness and response to accidents involving radiological and other hazardous materials, which fits within the present mandate of EPPR. It has further been proposed that the mandate of EPPR could be expanded to include also prevention, preparedness and response to natural disaster. The EPPR meeting in Cordova discussed these proposals and endorsed them in

principal. Some hesitation occurred, *inter alia* as it is unclear how this will affect the structure and organizing of the work of the working group.

Several actors operate within the same fields as EPPR and therefore the need for co-ordination and co-operation with sub-regional bodies, such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Northern Forum, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Council of Baltic Sea States, should be emphasized.

5. Other EPPR issues

Election of chair and vice-chair: The 2002 EPPR meeting in Cordova elected Ms. Laura Johnston from Canada as chair and Mr. Kjell Kolstad from Norway as vice-chair for the period 2002-2004. Canada will provide EPPR with the secretariat support during this period. These elections were endorsed by the SAOs in Oulu (May 2002).

Administrative and financial issues: The secretariat support for EPPR has during the period 2000-2002 been taken care of by Finland. During the years 2001 and 2002 Finland has also hosted the EPPR website. The costs for the secretariat support and the hosting of the web site are estimated to 16.800 € (~\$15.000) per year.

The costs for the source control management project are estimated to be \$75.000 (~85.000 €) over the past two years. These cost have been taken care of by the United States to pay for technical expertise, development of the methodology and travel. In addition to this smaller amounts have been paid by Russia and Finland.

The payment made for the Circumpolar Map reaches \$80.000. This sum has been shared between the member countries, with the biggest amounts paid by the United States and Norway. Norway has also contributed with \$40.000 in kind and the agency Akvaplan-Niva has contributed with \$60.000 in kind. On top of this all countries have employed their own national experts to gather and code the national data needed. These cost paid internally by the countries are not known.

Annexes:

- 1) The use of the Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters**
- 2) Work plan for 2002-2004 (Revision of Chapter 2.3 in the Strategic plan of action for EPPR)**