

# SDWG Progress Report to SAO meeting Fairbanks, March 2016.

2016

## Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)

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## **Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG): March 2016 Update**

### **Recent Activities:**

Through an intersessional process in November 2015, the SDWG fully endorsed two initiatives: the Economy of the North 2015 (ECONOR III) project and the Arctic Remote Energy Network Academy (ARENA).

Norway, Canada, the United States, and the Saami Council lead the ECONOR III initiative, providing an updated overview of the socioeconomic living conditions and environmental issues facing the circumpolar Arctic, as impacted by the global economy and climate change. ECONOR II, following ECONOR (2006) and ECONOR II (2008), aims to harmonize socioeconomic statistical data across national and regional borders.

The SDWG also approved the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA), led by the United States, Canada, Finland, and the Gwich'in Council International. The project promotes leadership focused on the development, operation, and management of remote-energy microgrids that incorporate renewable resources. The first ARENA pilot initiative, beginning in April 2016, will include an extensive public webinar series followed by a residential program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks for community leaders from around the Arctic. Participants will bring back to their home communities innovative ways to integrate clean energy technologies and improve the management of fossil fuel resources and other local energy needs. The project has secured significant financing from Canada and in-kind contributions from the Alaska Center for Energy and Power, but is seeking additional support.

The SDWG met intersessionally in January 2016 to prepare for its upcoming meeting. Heads of delegation heard updates on ongoing initiatives and selected ARENA as its showcase project for the March 2016 meeting of the Senior Arctic Officials. Denmark announced that it will co-lead with the United States the “Improving Health through Safe and Affordable Access to Household Running Water and Sewer” (WASH), a project that will soon seek full SDWG endorsement. WASH focuses on water-related health challenges in Arctic and sub-Arctic communities. The core scientific activity of this project is an Arctic Human Health Expert Group survey of regional water and sewer infrastructure and the diseases related to insufficient household access to clean water. A key project deliverable will be a two-day circumpolar conference that will occur in Anchorage, Alaska in fall 2016. The conference will convene researchers, engineers, manufacturers and vendors, and health experts to discuss challenges and solutions associated with making access to potable water in small Arctic and sub-Arctic communities safe, affordable, and sustainable.

### **Upcoming Meeting:**

The SDWG will meet March 11-12, 2016, in Barrow, Alaska. The working group will submit a full two-page meeting report to Senior Arctic Officials after the conclusion of this meeting.