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Summary Report from the Seventh Meeting of the SCTF

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SCTF Co-Chairs

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Summary Report



Arctic Council
Task Force on Scientific Cooperation
VII meeting, Reykjavik
December 1-2, 2015
Summary submitted by the Co-chairs

Vladimir Barbin (Russia) and Evan Bloom (US) co-chaired the seventh meeting of the Task Force on Scientific Cooperation (SCTF). The meeting was held at the Hilton Nordica Hotel, in Iceland. 46 delegates participated in the meeting, including all the Arctic States, the Aleut International Association (AIA), the Saami Council (SC), the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program Working Group (AMAP) and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF). Six Observers were in attendance: France, Germany, South Korea, United Kingdom, the European Union and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). The Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS) provided secretarial support at the meeting.

The goal for the 7th SCTF meeting was to continue the good progress that was made in Copenhagen in August in developing the Draft Agreement. The Arctic States had been encouraged to participate at the meeting with appropriate experts and lawyers to discuss relevant issues such as; use and terms of definitions; description of the forms and scope of cooperation; description of geographic scope, whether to include a provision on intellectual property rights; provisions for review and meetings of parties; and provisions for cooperation with non-parties, including Arctic Council Observers. One delegation had not yet received a mandate to negotiate a legally binding agreement, but provided an update on this issue.

Three of the accredited Arctic Council Observers; France, Germany and the United Kingdom had asked that a Joint Statement be circulated a few days prior to this meeting. These observers presented this statement on the first day of the meeting. Apart from expressing general concerns about how the agreement would allow non-Arctic States and Observers to take part in the agreement as non-parties, the Joint Statement offered textual recommendations for consideration. Several Member States underlined the importance of already existing partnerships with non-Arctic States and organizations on Arctic research. It was agreed that further discussions on the subject would be needed, and Denmark indicated that it would circulate draft language, working with other delegations intersessionally.

As promised at the Copenhagen meeting, the Permanent Participants (represented by AIA and SC at the Reykjavik meeting) provided a more detailed description of the integration of traditional and scientific knowledge in the form of a non-legally-binding Appendix. It was decided that States would need more time to discuss this issue in their respective capitals.

Prior to the Reykjavik meeting, the Arctic States had been asked to circulate their respective proposals to what geographic area they thought should be covered by the agreement (in effect, the southern limit of the “Arctic” for each State). These proposals were discussed and progress was made on how to express the matter of geographic scope in the agreement via an annex.

The co-chairs expressed the group’s appreciation to Iceland for the excellent efforts in hosting the seventh meeting of the Task Force and all related hospitality.

The United States of America indicated that it hoped to be able to host the 8th meeting of the SCTF which would be held at the National Science Foundation Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, Washington in March 2016. Practical and logistical information will be sent out in due time.