Co-Chairs’ Summary: Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic

Meeting 3 | Copenhagen, Kingdom of Denmark | September 2016

The Kingdom of Denmark hosted the third meeting of the Arctic Council’s Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic (TFTIA-03) in Copenhagen on 7-8 September, 2016. The TFTIA’s mandate is to “coordinate a circumpolar assessment of telecommunications infrastructure and networks. The Task Force would deliver a completed assessment to include, among other things, recommendations for public-private partnerships to enhance telecommunications access and service in the Arctic.” The TFTIA is co-chaired by Norway (represented by Bo Andersen) and the Kingdom of Denmark (represented by Niels Andersen).

Attendees

Representatives from seven Arctic States (Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, and the United States) attended TFTIA-03, as did representatives of Permanent Participants the Aleut International Association (AIA), Inuit Circumpolar Council, and the Saami Council. Accredited Observers the Nordic Council of Ministers and UArctic also participated in the meeting.

Proceedings

The meeting was opened by the new Arctic Ambassador and Senior Arctic Official of the Kingdom of Denmark, Ms. Hanne Fugl Eskjær, who welcomed the TFTIA to Copenhagen. She reminded delegates of the crucial role that telecommunications plays in development in the Arctic. A lack of good telecommunications infrastructure affects the everyday lives of people in the Arctic. It also has global impact, in particular, in emergency situations. Ambassador Fugl Eskjær emphasized how vital it is to share knowledge among Arctic States and communities in the area of developing telecommunications infrastructure.

All delegations demonstrated great commitment to fulfilling the mandate of the Task Force, and to encouraging the Arctic Council’s continued work in this important area.

Leading up to TFTIA-03, TFTIA delegates were asked to provide their contributions for the sections addressing national gap analyses and national priorities. Prior to the meeting, the core author group for the assessment (Chairs, the Kingdom of Denmark, Norway, the United States, and the Arctic Council Secretariat) provided delegates with a discussion draft of the assessment report.

During the meeting, many delegates emphasized that further analysis of user groups’ needs is needed. Without further analysis, the Task Force (or a future group working on this issue...
within the context of the Arctic Council) cannot provide clear, targeted, and relevant recommendations for actual actions.

**Outcomes**

Finland generously offered to host the next meeting (TFTIA-04) in Helsinki on 7-8 December 2016.

During the meeting, delegates reached agreement on several important changes to the structure of the draft assessment. These included (1) a substantial revision of the gap analysis, (2) changing the chapter formerly titled “pan-Arctic solutions” into one entitled “common themes”, and (3) formulation of one new chapter to cover implementation options. The room agreed that the core author group will continue its work on drafting/editing these new chapters, and the author group agreed to a series of intersessional conference calls to continue work on the assessment.

States were asked to send contributions and comments to Chairs and the ACS not later than 23 September. These are to include:

1. any adjustments that they desire to the material on national priorities (current chapter 7), such that those sections are more tightly focused on Arctic telecommunications;
2. any common themes that they see as particularly important for inclusion in the new chapter on common themes; and
3. any additional examples/descriptions of successful PPPs.

The Chairs agreed to provide, not later than 30 November, a new draft of the assessment.

**Timeline**

23 September: Deadline for submissions
28 September: Teleconference of the core author group
31 October: Teleconference of the core author group
30 November: Co-chairs to deliver a new draft of the assessment report
7-8 December: TFTIA-04 in Helsinki