Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

The International Union for Circumpolar Health

Date of submission:

May 30, 2016

Observer’s website, if appropriate:

http://iuch.net

Information for appropriate contact person

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Is your state or organization still interested in continuing as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

X Yes □ No
Observer Report

Please describe in no more than 2 pages your state or organization’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council’s Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. If applicable, please include mention of collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

The International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH) is an international non-governmental organization, formally established in 1981, with members, adhering bodies and affiliates throughout the circumpolar regions. The IUCH is a multilateral scientific union, which strives to contribute to the growing body of scientific medical and public health research data for the circumpolar regions and globally.

The health and wellness of northern peoples are the focus of the IUCH.

The IUCH is the only organization of its kind dedicated to health in the Arctic and Antarctic and brings together several health organizations from the entire circumpolar region.

The objectives of the IUCH are to:

1. Promote international cooperation in circumpolar health.
2. Encourage and support research and exchange of scientific information in the circumpolar health sciences.
4. Provide a means of communication with other scientific organizations.
5. Promote and encourage the participation of indigenous peoples in circumpolar health affairs.

The five adhering bodies include the scientific societies for circumpolar health in the USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Nordic countries, and Russian Federation.

In the period since the last report and prior to that, the IUCH has performed many functions that are relevant to the Arctic Council, Arctic Council member states, and the permanent participants. As the lead organization within circumpolar health, the IUCH works together with the SWDG, the AMAP and the Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG), a subsidiary of the SWDG, and their members. We have also worked closely with many of the other circumpolar organizations mainly the International Network of Circumpolar Health Researchers (INCHR) and the International Association of Circumpolar Health Publishers (IACHP).
The IUCH has in the past period worked with the Arctic Human Health Initiative (AHHI) that advanced the joint research agenda of the Arctic Council, to plan, conduct, and disseminate results of human health studies under the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008. Second, The IUCH has been involved in the Arctic Human Health Expert Group CircHSR proposal (Proposal for a Comparative Review of Circumpolar Health Systems). CircHSR is managed jointly by the Institute for Circumpolar Health Research [ICHR], in Yellowknife, Canada [www.ichr.ca] and the Greenland Institute for Health Research [GIHR] in Nuuk [www.gihr.gl]. Third, the IUCH has been involved in the Arctic Council Proposal for the development of a Circumpolar Health Observatory [CircHOB].

A main task for the IUCH is to facilitate sharing of knowledge of circumpolar health and well-being through organizing the tri-annual International Congresses on Circumpolar Health (ICCH). These congresses are the main venue for such information sharing in the circumpolar world and attracts hundreds of researchers, health professionals and indigenous representatives from Canada, Greenland, Denmark, USA, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and other countries interested in circumpolar health. These persons come together to share health related research findings and program successes that will improve the quality of life for those living in circumpolar regions.

In recent years the 13th ICCH was held in 2006 in Novosibirsk, Russian Federation; the 14th ICCH in 2009 in Yellowknife, NWT, Canada; the 15th in 2012 in Fairbanks, Alaska, USA; and the 16th in 2015 in Oulu, Finland. The 17th ICCH conference will be held in August 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Of particular relevance to the Arctic Council, the ICCH congresses in 2006, 2009 and 2012 were devoted to presentation, discussion and presentation of IPY projects and their results, respectively.

A very important element supported by the IUCH is the International Circumpolar Surveillance (ICS) collaboration, an international network with members from all Arctic countries whose purpose is to carry out circumpolar surveillance and research within infectious diseases. A similarly important element within the IUCH is the presence of a number of scientific working groups within the IUCH. Members of the IUCH are encouraged to sign up and participate in working groups. Examples of a few active IUCH working groups are: 1) The Infectious Disease Working Group with a membership of >100 individuals comprised of many topic-specific subgroups that meet regularly and are engaged in multi-center studies across the Arctic, 2) The Indigenous People’s Working Group, 3) The Maternal and Child Health Working Group, 4) The Food Security Working Group, 5) The Birth Defects and Birth Outcomes Working Group, and 6) The Suicide Prevention Working Group.

The Working Groups share the general goals and objectives of the IUCH. By focusing on specific fields of interest within circumpolar health, the Working Groups promote and encourage closer collaboration between individuals and institutions involved in improving the health of circumpolar populations. Thus, the work of the working groups is relevant to the Arctic Council.

Both the ICS collaboration and the scientific working groups are Arctic Council endorsed projects that are being reported to the Council through the AHHEG.
If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state or organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

The IUCH intends to continue its activities as described above in relation to the Arctic Council, mainly within collaboration, sharing and dissemination of health information through the ICCH congresses and the Working groups.

The IUCH will support the Arctic Council-endorsed project, “Improving Health through Safe and Affordable Access to Household Running Water and Sewer (WASH)” that is co-sponsored by the US and Greenland.

IUCH will contribute to the work of the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR). Members of IUCH have expertise in the field of telehealth and in rural and remote medicine. Telehealth and rural/remote medicine themes are included in the triennial ICCH conferences. We have members who are experts in the field of contaminants in the Arctic who can contribute to the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP).

Finally, the IUCH will continue to support the Arctic Council by having its members serve the Arctic Council as AHHEG and AMAP/HHAG representatives. Many of the AHHEG country and permanent participant representatives are IUCH members. Essentially, the entire group is IUCH members. This provides important cross-linkages between the larger community of Arctic health providers and researchers and the Arctic Council. Thereby the Arctic Council is served by making sure that recognized regional health leaders are engaged in advising AC activities.
If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state or organization’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.

The IUCH is interested in remaining an observer to the Arctic Council. The IUCH is the only organization of its kind with **elected representatives** from across the Arctic and because of this, we work from a “bottom up” perspective. Members of the adhering bodies participate in Work Groups of their choosing (created by them) on issues important to them in the circumpolar world. Through IUCH’s observer status, important findings from these Working Groups can then brought to the attention of the SDWG, the Senior Arctic Officials and the Arctic Council (AC). Observer status on the AC is a very important mechanism for moving information from the grassroots IUCH working groups to higher levels in order to convert research into action and policy. We realize that institutions such as the AHHEG report to the SDWG; however, the mandate of IUCH is broader than that of the AHHEG and we feel that our two organizations will complement each other and we at the IUCH plan to work with the AHHEG at every opportunity to promote improved health throughout the Arctic.

We have and will continue to contribute expertise to the Arctic Council through the findings of our working groups. Groundbreaking work of the IUCH Infectious Disease Working Group has resulted in circumpolar surveillance of infectious disease across all the Arctic countries (except Russia), introduction of Hepatitis B vaccine in Greenland, the formation of a tuberculosis surveillance network across the Arctic, and plans for the USA (Alaska), Northern Canada and Greenland to develop a multi-center study looking at gastric cancer in the north.

The IUCH works with all of the permanent participants of the AC (Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich’in Council International, ICC etc.) in preparation for sessions at the International Congress on Circumpolar Health which occurs every 3 years. The permanent participants are well represented in scientific sessions and also sessions at the Congress specific to Indigenous peoples. In addition, one of the IUCH Working Groups is the Indigenous People’s Working Group which works with and closely interacts with permanent participants on the AC.