

Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

International Union for Conservation of Nature

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

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.

IUCN has participated in most of the Arctic Council Ministerial meetings, and in some of the SAO and Arctic Council Working Groups meetings. IUCN held an Arctic Council-IUCN meeting on the Circumpolar Marine Workshop on November 28 – December 2, 1999 in Montreal, Canada with a view to engage the key players and gain their co-operation aiming to achieve a unified approach to conservation, protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment and its resources. This Workshop was instrumental in beginning an important dialogue on the conservation and protection of the circumpolar marine environment and the sustainable use of its resources.

IUCN has been contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups (primarily to CAFF, ACAP and PAME). The Projects undertaken by IUCN in the arctic environmental protection area are as follows:

IUCN on the arctic legal regime for environmental protection

In 2001 *The Arctic Legal Regime for Environmental Protection* by Linda Nowlan was published by IUCN. That publication laid foundation for the informed discussion of the arctic governance.

IUCN Arctic Strategy

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) developed its *Arctic Strategy* and was presented to the Arctic Council (Presentation to the Senior Arctic Officials in Oulu, Finland, 15-16 May 2002).

Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Arctic Marine Environment

In 2010 IUCN and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) launched a thorough process of identification of EBSAs in the arctic marine environment in order to advance implementation of ecosystem based management. A central element of ecosystem-based management is the identification of ecologically significant or vulnerable areas that should be considered for protection due to their role in maintaining valued ecosystem functions and resilience. Two scientific workshops were held to examine the issue, and were attended by many arctic stakeholders. The results of this process were published in two detailed scientific reports:

- IUCN/NRDC Workshop Report on Ecosystem-based Management in the Arctic Marine Environment Workshop Report (June 16-18, 2010).
- IUCN/NRDC Workshop Report to Identify Areas of Ecological and Biological Significance or Vulnerability in the Arctic Marine Environment (November 2-4, 2010).

Protection of the Bering Strait region

The EBSAs in the Arctic Marine Environment Project (see above) identified the Bering Strait region as perhaps the single most productive and diverse marine area in the Arctic – a “super-EBSA”.

IUCN followed the Arctic EBSA identification project by undertaking another cooperative project with NRDC and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) to identify measures that could be adopted to protect the EBSAs of the Bering Strait region, and to explore ways in which such measures might be implemented.

The project involved two workshops, held in 2012, and included local, governmental, scientific, indigenous and environmental experts. The results of this process were published in two detailed scientific reports:

- Workshop Report to identify several viable options for the protection of Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) from the possible negative effects of shipping and other maritime activities in the Bering Strait Region (IUCN/NRDC/UAF) (June 26-28, 2012).
- Workshop II Report on Expanded Shipping and Other Marine Activities and the Ecology of the Bering Strait Region (IUCN/NRDC/UAF) (October 31 - November 2, 2012).

This document has 7 pages. This is page 4.

Conservation of the Arctic/Bering Strait

Under the Conservation of the Arctic/Bering Strait Project WWF, IUCN and other partners facilitated a multi-stakeholder and bi-lateral (US-Russia) process to develop voluntary measures for shippers that may be used by government agencies within the two Bering Strait States to ensure safety and stewardship within this region. The long-term goal of this project is to encourage the U.S. and Russia to use voluntary measures as a foundation for possible mandatory measures for shippers developed through the IMO. This includes possible designation of part of the region as special area (SA) or particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA). Two multi-shareholder workshops were held in the framework of this project:

- Workshop on Oil Spill Prevention and Response: Working across Boundaries for Arctic Stewardship (10-14 November 2014, Anchorage, USA).
- Workshop on Ways to Reduce Oil Spill Risks and Their Impacts on Arctic Marine Ecosystems (lessons learned from the tanker Nadezhda incident on Sakhalin in December 2015) (18-19 April 2016, Moscow, Russia). The full Project Report and recommendations will be prepared shortly. IUCN and WWF will implement the recommendations through a pilot project in cooperation with oil and gas industry.

CBD Arctic Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of EBSAs

IUCN actively participated in the CBD Arctic Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically of EBSAs (3-7 March 2014, Helsinki, Finland).

North Slope Science Initiative Scenarios Project

In 2014-2016, IUCN partnered with the North Slope Science Initiative, UAF and GeoAdaptive, to host three workshops designed to explore the plausible future of energy and resource development on Alaska's North Slope and adjacent Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The objective was to develop a checklist of research and monitoring requirements for various possible development scenarios that will help managers make informed decisions for sustainable resource development and adequate protection of the environment. The Final Report of this project is due to be released soon (2016).

Microplastics in the Arctic

Microplastics pollution in the Arctic is the subject of a newly launched IUCN research project. It aims to assess the origins of microplastics and the effects of its ingestion on marine life as well as food safety consequences for humans. This project will also analyze the physical and chemical impacts of microplastic presence in sea ice, including how it may affect its formation and melting. IUCN is teaming up with the Korean Government and Korea Polar Research Institute (KOPRI) to conduct a full-scale scientific study of this issue. KOPRI provided the world's best arctic research icebreaker, the *Araon*, for this purposes. The *Araon* will collect microplastic samples, and a team of leading scientists supported by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP, a UN advisory body) will analyze them. After the assessment of all acquired data, IUCN will provide recommendations to governments, industries, local communities and civil society on how to design mitigation solutions.

Identifying World Heritage in the Arctic

Building on IUCN's past work (International Expert Meeting on World Heritage and the Arctic, 30 November - 01 December 2007, Narvik, Norway) IUCN, UNESCO, NRDC and WWF launched a new Project Identifying World Heritage in the Arctic. IUCN brought scientific experts from around the world to Paris (25-26 February 2016) to explore possible new marine World Heritage sites in the Arctic. They reviewed the most unique and exceptional of Arctic features that could potentially merit inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Participants debated the Arctic regions' most unique marine features that are currently underrepresented on the List, including distinctive geological processes, iconic species and high densities of endemic biodiversity found nowhere else. They also studied potential new sites that could meet the World Heritage criteria and compared them with sites that are currently listed on the tentative World Heritage List. A Report that will be issued by IUCN and UNESCO on the basis of the findings of this Workshop is intended to lay the thorough scientific groundwork to assist State Parties in identifying Arctic marine sites of potential Outstanding Universal Value.

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.

IUCN is in the process of developing a new IUCN Arctic Conservation Policy. IUCN has extensive experience and necessary expertise to contribute to the Arctic Council's work in the future. IUCN would be particularly helpful in the areas of arctic marine environmental protection and arctic governance.

IUCN's Polar Programme seeks to advance the following issues of the arctic marine conservation:

- further development of the Polar Code and its implementation
- introduction of alien invasive species
- climate changes in the Arctic
- ocean acidification (since the Arctic sea is an area that will be more affected than other parts of the ocean).
- mitigation of microplastic pollution in the Arctic Ocean
- development of new World Heritage Sites.

IUCN is in contact with Arctic Council's Working Groups and would like to further contribute to the CAFF and PAME Working Groups' work and engage with other Working Groups.

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.