

Summary report, SAO Plenary meeting, Juneau, Alaska, March 2017

2017

Arctic Council Secretariat

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Report: SAO plenary meeting

Juneau, Alaska | March 2017

Fourth SAO plenary meeting during the U.S. Chairmanship

Acronyms and abbreviations commonly found in Arctic Council reports

AAC	Arctic Athabaskan Council
AACA	Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic (AMAP project)
AACHC	Alaska Arctic Council Host Committee
ABA	Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (CAFF, 2013)
ACAP	Arctic Contaminants Action Program (1 of 6 Working Groups)
ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
ACIA	Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (AMAP, 2005)
ACS	Arctic Council Secretariat
AEC	Arctic Economic Council
AIA	Aleut International Association
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (1 of 6 Working Groups)
AMATII	Arctic Maritime and Aviation Transportation Infrastructure Initiative
AMBI	Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (CAFF initiative)
AMSA	Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (PAME, 2009)
AMSP	Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2025 (PAME, 2015)
AORF	Arctic Offshore Regulators' Forum
ARA	Arctic Resilience Assessment
ARAF	Arctic Resilience Action Framework
ARIAS	Arctic Invasive Alien Species project (CAFF initiative)
ARR	Arctic Resilience Report
ARAF	Arctic Resilience Action Framework
ASTD	Arctic Ship Traffic Data project (PAME)
BCM	Black carbon and methane
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (1 of 6 Working Groups)
CBMP	Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CAFF Program)
CCAC	Climate and Clean Air Coalition
CLEO	Circumpolar Local Environmental Observers (network) (ACAP initiative)

EA	Ecosystem Approach to Management
EG	Expert Group
EGBCM	Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane
EPPR	Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (1 of 6 Working Groups)
ERMA	Environmental Response Management Application (EPPR initiative)
GCI	Gwich'in Council International
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPS	Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOSPA	Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine protected area
O&G	Oil and gas
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (1 of 6 Working Groups)
PP	Permanent Participant
PSI	Project Support Instrument
RAIPON	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
RRFP	(Arctic) Regional Reception Facilities Plan (PAME project)
SAMBR	State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (CAFF project)
SAO	Senior Arctic Official
SAOC	SAO Chair (Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials)
SAON	Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks
SAR	Search and rescue
SC	Saami Council
SCTF	Task Force on Enhancing Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic
SWIPA	Snow, Water, Ice, and Permafrost in the Arctic (AMAP initiative)

SDI	(Arctic) Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDG	[UN] Sustainable Development Goals
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group (1 of 6 Working Groups)
SWIPA	Snow, Water, Ice, and Permafrost in the Arctic (AMAP project)
TF	Task Force
TFAMC	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation
TFOPP	Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention
TFTIA	Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic
TLK	Traditional and local knowledge
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
WG	Working Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

1. Introduction

1.1. Welcome remarks

A traditional welcome was provided by Mr. David “Kingeisti” Katzeek, a clan leader for the Eagle Moiety, Shangukeidí Clan of Klukwan. Following the traditional welcome, Lieutenant Governor of Alaska Byron Mallott welcomed delegates to Juneau.

1.2. Approval of agenda

Background and discussion

The U.S. asked for time under "other business" to provide a quick report on the status of implementation of Arctic Council decisions at the end of the provisional agenda. The SAOC also offered Observers the opportunity to make three representational statements at the conclusion of the meeting.

Summary / Conclusion

With the changes noted above, the agenda was approved.

2. Reports from other meetings and bodies

2.1. UNFCCC COP 22

Background and discussion

Iceland provided a brief report on Arctic issues, and the Arctic Council, as they appeared at the COP 22 event in Marrakech. Iceland also noted historical examples of the Arctic Council’s presence at COP meetings, including the presentation of the ACIA in 2004 and others. The Saami Council noted their own participation in the meeting as well, and expressed the belief that more could be done to highlight the Council’s work on climate change at UNFCCC conferences.

Summary / Conclusion

This item was for information.

3. Working Groups: review and approval of proposed deliverables of the 2017 Fairbanks Ministerial and proposed work plans for 2017-2019

3.1. SDWG proposed deliverables for the Fairbanks Ministerial and work plan for 2017-2019

3.1.1. The SDWG strategic framework

Background and discussion

The SDWG Chair presented two components of its strategic framework: (1) the strategic vision, and (2) the implementation plan. The SDWG Chair noted that this iteration of strategic planning was an intensive, year-long process that included extensive intersessional work and in-person drafting meetings. Many delegations spoke in support of the vision and the implementation plan.

Summary / Conclusion

The strategic vision and implementation plan were approved.

3.1.2. One Health Report: policy recommendations

Background and discussion

The SDWG Chair presented policy recommendations that have emerged from the *One Health* project. The recommendations were developed in part from the results of a survey on *One Health* in the Arctic that produced the most comprehensive data set on this subject to date. The U.S. noted the presence of a disclaimer on page 5; the SDWG Chair said that the disclaimer could be removed if all States agreed to do so.

Summary / Conclusion

The policy recommendations from the *One Health* project were adopted. The disclaimer noted in the discussion above shall be removed.

3.1.3. EALLU: cookbook of indigenous foods and short film on indigenous food culture with policy recommendations

Background and discussion

The SDWG Chair presented the EALLU cookbook, and the policy recommendations that accompany it. She highlighted the product's recommendations for bolstering indigenous food culture, culturally-relevant food production, indigenous enterprise, expanded

distribution of indigenous foods, broad engagement in indigenous food production, and branding of indigenous peoples' products.

Many State and PP delegations expressed thanks and enthusiasm for the project. Canada, Norway, and the U.S. expressed some concern with the recommendations as a package. Norway and AIA suggested that the recommendations might be re-titled to "opportunities," "options," or something along those lines, but that proposal was not immediately accepted.

Summary / Conclusion

The SDWG was asked to work with those delegations that presented concerns to make adjustments to the EALLU policy recommendations, including their title. The cookbook and policy recommendations will be considered again by correspondence or at the upcoming SAO executive meeting.

3.1.4. SDWG proposed work plan for 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The SDWG Chair summarized the SDWG work plan for 2017-2019, which contains many initiatives both ongoing and new.

Summary / Conclusion

The SDWG work plan for 2017-2019 was approved, with the understanding that the final version of the work plan will be part of the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers, which is still not finalized.

3.2 PAME proposed deliverables for the Fairbanks Ministerial and work plan for 2017-2019

3.2.1. Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of MPAs: (1) PAME MPA-network toolbox: Area-based conservation measures and ecological connectivity and (2) indicator report on Arctic protected areas

Background and discussion

The PAME Chair presented (1) the MPA network toolbox, and (2) the indicator report on Arctic protected areas. The indicator report a product of PAME and CAFF contains no recommendations, but its findings reveal that additional efforts are needed to reach global targets by 2020. Regarding the MPA network toolbox, she noted that a couple of small "technical edits" need to be made, but asked that SAOs endorse the document with the recognition that such edits would be made prior to finalizing the toolbox.

Summary / Conclusion

The two items were approved, with the understanding that minor technical edits will be made, as described by the PAME Chair.

3.2.1.bis. Ecosystem-based Approach to Management: Implementation plan

Background and discussion

The PAME Chair presented the implementation plan for the ecosystem-based approach to management. The Kingdom of Denmark noted the late circulation of the report, and expressed a wish to see a closer link to the CBMP, the AACA, and other ongoing monitoring and assessment initiatives. The PAME Chair expressed readiness to accommodate these types of revisions.

Summary / Conclusion

PAME and the Kingdom of Denmark were asked to work together to make any necessary revisions. SAOs agreed to consider the implementation plan again for approval by correspondence, and – failing that – to take this up at the April SAO executive meeting.

3.2.2. Arctic Ship Traffic Data (ASTD) project

Background and discussion

The PAME Chair presented the *Arctic Ship Traffic Data* project, which will provide information on many elements of ship traffic in the Arctic, and which could – in the future – accommodate additional information on shipping conditions. The Norwegian Coastal Administration (Kystverket) has agreed to house and run the database. The launch of the database is currently set up to occur after an MOU among the Arctic States is signed.

Many States and PPs expressed support and enthusiasm for this initiative. Russia expressed legal concerns, in particular regarding an MOU as the “trigger” for the project launch, and doubts as to whether a special arrangement for ship traffic data is necessary when there is enough relevant data already accessible. Some other States expressed readiness to reconsider an MOU as the mechanism.

Summary / Conclusion

There was not consensus to launch the ASTD. The SAOC asked Russia to work to identify a way forward and to consider if it might be possible to change the format of the “MOU” so that there are no signatures, making it a less formal document that still achieved the same basic result. If possible, the SAOC asked that the group return to this via correspondence and – failing that – at the April SAO executive meeting.

3.2.3. Arctic Regional Reception Facilities Plan (RRFP)

Background and discussion

The PAME Chair presented the Arctic RRFP, which lays out a strategy for waste management. She pointed out that it represents an important step in following up on earlier Council recommendations.

Summary / Conclusion

The Arctic RRFP was approved and the SAOC noted that it includes this concept of moving forward together here and at the IMO.

3.2.4. PAME proposed work plan for 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The PAME Chair presented the group's work plan for 2017-2019. In addition to many ongoing initiatives, the work plan included a new project on marine litter: *Desktop Study on Marine Litter including Microplastics in the Arctic* (led by Sweden, Norway, and AIA).

Summary / Conclusion

The work plan was provisionally approved, with the understanding that the final version of the work plan will be part of the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers, which is still not finalized.

3.3. EPPR proposed deliverables for the Fairbanks Ministerial and work plan for 2017-2019

3.3.1. Status report on implementation of the "Framework Plan for Cooperation on prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic"

Background and discussion

The EPPR Chair presented the status report for approval by SAOs.

Summary / Conclusion

The status report was approved.

3.3.2. (withdrawn)

3.3.3. Database of Arctic Response Assets

Background and discussion

The EPPR Chair presented (1) the database and (2) the associated user manual for approval by SAOs. She pointed out that it is linked to the web-mapping application Arctic ERMA (Environmental Response Management Application).

Summary / Conclusion

Both items were approved.

3.3.4. "Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response" (MOSPA) after-action report

Background and discussion

The EPPR Chair presented the after-action report from the tabletop exercise of the MOSPA agreement held in Montreal in June of 2016. The report will help with preparations for the upcoming 2018 exercise that will be led by Finland.

Summary / Conclusion

The after-action report was approved.

3.3.5. Standardization as a tool for prevention of oil spills in the Arctic

Background and discussion

The EPPR Chair presented (1) the report “Standardization as a tool for prevention of oil spills in the Arctic,” and (2) an associated summary report, for approval by SAOs.

Summary / Conclusion

Both reports were approved.

3.3.5.bis. (1) report on prevention, preparedness, and response in small communities, and (2) analysis “Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis”¹

Background and discussion

The EPPR Chair notified SAOs of two additional deliverables coming to them for approval in the near future. First, a report on prevention, preparedness, and response in small communities, and – second – a “Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis.” The first is a brief pamphlet, and the second is a lengthier analysis of response assets in the Arctic.

Summary / Conclusion

The documents will be considered by SAOs for approval, either by correspondence or at an upcoming SAO executive meeting.

3.3.6. EPPR proposed work plan for 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The EPPR Chair presented the work plan for 2017-2019, highlighting two new Expert Groups, one focused on the MOSPA agreement and one on the SAR agreement.

Summary / Conclusion

The work plan was provisionally approved, with the understanding that the final version of the work plan will be part of the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers, which is still not finalized.

¹ This item did not appear in the agenda as printed prior to the meeting.

3.4. CAFF proposed deliverables for the Fairbanks Ministerial and work plan for 2017-2019

3.4.1. “State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report”

Background and discussion

The CAFF Chair presented the SAMBR report. The SAMBR is part of CAFF’s flagship initiative, the CBMP. The full scientific report will be presented for SAOs’ information either via correspondence or at the April SAO executive meeting. The summary report with key findings was presented in Juneau for adoption.

Summary / Conclusion

The summary report was adopted, and the SAOC looked forward to receiving the full scientific report when available.

3.4.2. (withdrawn)

3.4.3. CAFF proposed work plan for 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The CAFF Chair presented the Working Group’s work plan for the 2017-2019 period, noting that it refers to several key strategic documents and ongoing, long-term initiatives.

The U.S. presented concerns about a couple of elements; the CAFF Chair was able to satisfactorily assuage those concerns. The head of delegation for ICC then noted his sense that the ICC is having difficulty getting its ideas regarding traditional knowledge across as part of the ARIAS initiative (on invasive species) and the SAMBR report (noted above).

Summary / Conclusion

The work plan was provisionally approved, with the understanding that the final version of the work plan will be part of the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers, which is still not finalized.

3.4.4. Preview of other CAFF items that will require guidance or future approval

Background and discussion

For delegates’ information, the CAFF Chair presented several other elements of CAFF’s work that will require guidance or future approval from SAOs. This included a report on the status of the “Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013–2021: implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment,” ongoing work on the AMBI, the ARIAS invasive species strategy and action plan, an initiative on scoping for resilience and management of Arctic wetlands, and others. The CAFF reporting opened a broader discussion on the use of “traditional knowledge,” “local knowledge,” “indigenous knowledge,” and other terminology in the Arctic Council.

Cross cutting discussion on the use of the term Traditional Knowledge in the Arctic Council

The SAOC noted that different types and systems of knowledge are important to the work of the Council, and that the Council has on several occasions expressed the importance of including TLK² in the Council's work. The discussion addressed the different understandings of the meaning of "traditional knowledge," "indigenous knowledge," "local knowledge," and other related variations of the terms that have been used in Council products. Several PPs expressed a preference for the term "indigenous knowledge," (vs. "traditional knowledge") and a strong belief that "indigenous knowledge" and "local knowledge" are distinct concepts that ought not to be conflated in a single overarching term. Several States noted the importance of including the concept of local knowledge. ICC noted that even if local knowledge is defined we may need to do a better job of obtaining and using it. ICC pointed out that "local knowledge" is sometimes not explicitly part of a given project or initiative but is nonetheless captured when the "TLK" label is used. GCI made two proposals: one would be that all agree to use "indigenous knowledge" in place of traditional knowledge, and the other proposal was to define "local knowledge." The group did not reach a decision on the GCI proposals during this discussion.

Summary / Conclusion

Though no consensus was reached during this discussion, several central elements emerged, including: a reaffirmation of the Council's commitment to include traditional and local knowledge wherever possible and appropriate in the Council's work, the possibility of using the term "indigenous knowledge" to replace "traditional knowledge," the desirability of reaching agreement on consistent terminology balanced against the need for flexibility, and the need to retain local knowledge as a component of the Council's work.

The SAOC asked GCI, with the support of IPS, to consult among the PPs to see if there is agreement to use indigenous knowledge. If proposals come forward, these could potentially be considered at an upcoming SAO executive meeting.

3.5. AMAP proposed deliverables for the Fairbanks Ministerial and work plan for 2017-2019

3.5.1. Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic

Background and discussion

The AMAP Chair noted that AMAP is seeking not approval, but instead "acknowledgement or appreciation" of these reports,³ while seeking approval from SAOs for any

² Traditional knowledge, local knowledge, and similar/adjacent concepts have been addressed under a number of different monikers by the Council, at various times and in various different documents and contexts. For the purpose of these meeting notes, the abbreviation "TLK" (traditional and local knowledge), which the Council has previously agree to use, will be used.

³ The agenda "Final provisional agenda – 16 February" says "For approval"

recommendations that the reports may contain. He presented three regional reports on the AACA, and highlighted the key messages emerging from them. ICC asked whether there would be a synthesis report; the Kingdom of Denmark supported the production of a synthesis report. The AMAP Chair explained that a synthesis report was planned but that it would not be done by the Ministerial. AIA noted the importance of representing the complexity of Arctic economies, and SDWG noted the opportunity for joint follow-up work between AMAP and SDWG, in particular on issues of food and water security.

Summary / Conclusion

The three regional reports were acknowledged and welcomed.

3.5.2. SWIPA update assessment: Summary for policy-makers

Background and discussion

Several States were vocal about the importance and value of the SWIPA report and this line of AMAP's work in general. The AIA asked whether AMAP planned to produce a variety of reports at different levels that would be useful (for example) for communicating this information to communities, and the AMAP Chair responded that the production of such reports is indeed planned.

Summary / Conclusion

The SWIPA update assessment and summary for policy makers was acknowledged and welcomed.

3.5.3. Chemicals of emerging Arctic concern assessment: Summary for policy-makers

Background and discussion

The Chair of AMAP presented this report, noting that many "traditional" pollutants are being effectively combatted by existing international work, while new chemicals are becoming increasingly problematic in the Arctic environment. The report contains recommendations for delegates' consideration.

Summary / Conclusion

The assessment, and its recommendations, were acknowledged and welcomed.

3.5.4. AMAP proposed work plan for 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The AMAP Chair presented the group's work plan for 2017-2019. The U.S. raised several specific issues, including: (1) the need to clarify the WMO's role in AMAP's work on ocean acidification, (2) the need to remove the U.S. as a lead for an AACA synthesis report, and (3) the need to clarify an offer of funding from the EU to AMAP for a project on black carbon as within or outside of Arctic Council work. The AMAP Chair responded to each point, noting that: (1) the WMO is in possession of a great deal of important data that could contribute to

AMAP's work on ocean acidification, and is interested in increasing its work in the Arctic, (2) AMAP understands the need to remove the U.S. as a lead and financial sponsor for an AACA synthesis report, and (3) regarding the black carbon project, AMAP views this as "other" work in partnership with the EU, and outside AMAP's scope of work with the Arctic Council. There will of course be some synergies with the Council's work and that the Council would receive benefit from the science generated from the project, but this is not directly an Arctic Council project.

Summary / Conclusion

The work plan was approved (with the one change described in (2) above) with the understanding that the final version of the work plan will be part of the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers, which is still not finalized.

3.5.5. Arctic Resilience Report (ARR): Synthesis for Arctic Leaders (SfAL)

Background and discussion

Marcus Carson of the Stockholm Environment Institute presented this synthesis report for approval by SAOs. He highlighted three recommendations contained in the synthesis report. The U.S. pointed out that this synthesis report also contains a disclaimer, which should be removed upon approval by States. The Kingdom of Denmark added that, while it is comfortable with both the full report and the synthesis, it was unable to approve removal of the disclaimer without further consultation with its experts. Russia asked if the document could be welcomed, rather than approved, by SAOs. The U.S. asked if it would help to re-title the recommendations "opportunities," "principles," or something similar, as was considered regarding the EALLU report.

Summary / Conclusion

The synthesis report and the recommendations it contains were welcomed. The ARR team of authors agreed to change the heading of the "recommendations" to "principles" or something similar, although such a change would not affect the decision to welcome the synthesis report and its recommendations. The decision to remove the disclaimer awaits confirmation from the Kingdom of Denmark.

3.6. ACAP proposed deliverables for the Fairbanks Ministerial and work plan for 2017-2019

3.6.1. Framework for CLEO

Background and discussion

The ACAP Chair presented the framework for a Circumpolar Local Environmental Observers (CLEO) network, noting that: two hubs have been launched in Canada, a mobile app was

launched in February 2016, and the expansion of the network in the Nordic region is on track and moving forward.

Summary / Conclusion

The framework for the expansion of CLEO was approved and SAOs noted the launch of the two hubs in Canada.

3.6.2. Reduction of black carbon from diesel sources in the Russian Arctic – TUNDRA reindeer farm

Background and discussion

The ACAP Chair presented this PSI-funded initiative, noting the project's successful overall reduction in black carbon emissions, which is an example of renewable energy deployment in the Arctic. Several States spoke of this as an excellent example of concrete benefit accruing to Arctic communities from the Council's work.

Summary / Conclusion

The report was approved, with the understanding that the layout is not final.

3.6.3. Report "Assessment potential air emissions of dioxins/furans, particular matter, and heavy metals from Vorkuta Cement Plant when using conventional and complementary fuels" and report "Feasibility study for dioxin mitigation and other environmental pilot measures at the Vorkuta Cement Plant in the Komi Republic"

Background and discussion

The ACAP Chair presented two reports that look at reductions of emissions from the Vorkuta cement plant in Russia's Komi Republic.

Summary / Conclusion

Both reports were approved.

3.6.4. ACAP proposed work plan for 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The ACAP Chair presented the Working Group's work plan for 2017-2019, noting the group's structure with four expert groups. He presented each of 14 projects currently in the pipeline and underlined that ACAP is considering more active outreach on projects plus a video presentation. Several States noted linkages with other subsidiary bodies in the work plan, including the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane. AIA pointed out to other PPs the possibility to apply for PSI funding for projects, including those outside of Russia, and encouraged them to increase their engagement with ACAP's work.

Summary / Conclusion

The work plan was approved, with the understanding that the final version of the work plan will be part of the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers, which is still not finalized.

3.7 Working Group progress reports

Background and discussion

The Working Groups' progress reports, containing updates on all ongoing work, were presented for information. SAOs and PPs were invited to pose any additional questions, and offer any comments, regarding the ongoing or planned work in the WGs. As part of this discussion, ICC and the Saami Council both encouraged all the WGs to continue to strive to create products that communicate their work more effectively at the community level, including indigenous communities specifically.

Summary / Conclusion

All six progress reports were taken note of, and the SAOC thanked the Working Groups for submitting them.

4. Update on the Polar Code

Background and discussion

Secretary-General of the IMO Mr. Kitack Lim spoke about the implementation of the IMO's Polar Code, and the links between the IMO's work and the work of the Arctic Council, both now and in the future. Pointing out the inevitability of increased traffic in Arctic waters in the form of, inter alia, increased shipping activity and tourism, he highlighted the Polar Code's role in protection of ships, crew, and passengers traveling in Arctic waters. He also alluded to the Polar Code's hoped-for impacts on the protection of the Arctic environment. He celebrated the recent entry-into-force of the Polar Code in January of 2017.

In response to the remarks of Secretary-General Lim, the SAOC pointed to the ongoing work on Arctic shipping that takes place in Working Groups PAME and EPPR, and Finland pointed to the upcoming first meeting of the Arctic shipping best-practices forum, scheduled for June 2017. Several other delegations thanked the Secretary-General for his time and effort in joining the SAO meeting, and noted the potential for the Arctic Council to play a role in harmonized implementation of the Polar Code.

All parties expressed an eagerness to strengthen ongoing cooperation and information-sharing between the IMO and the Arctic Council on issues of Arctic shipping.

Summary / Conclusion

This item was for information. However, based on the discussion, the SAOC encouraged PAME, Finland, and the ACS to think about further next steps in the collaboration between the Arctic Council and the IMO.

5. Task Force and other subsidiary bodies: Review and approval of proposed deliverables for the 2017 Fairbanks Ministerial

5.1. Black Carbon and Methane Expert Group (EGBCM)

Background and discussion

The SAOC presented the report – a summary of progress and recommendations from the EGBCM – for comments and discussion. Several States noted with pleasure the establishment of a concrete, aspirational and quantitative collective black carbon reduction goal; Norway, Sweden and the U.S. noted that it is the first such goal worldwide. Russia expressed satisfaction with the content of the report, but noted the challenge of adopting recommendations that are phrased in such a way that they instruct the States to undertake particular actions. The SAO from Russia asked the EGBCM to adjust the language, and offered to return to the document at an upcoming SAO executive meeting. The Kingdom of Denmark also pointed out the importance of ensuring that any recommendations do not hinder economic growth in Arctic communities and underlined that some countries had already reduced their BC emissions substantially. AIA pointed to the health threat caused by BC emissions and stressed the engagement of local communities in enhancing mitigation efforts. Several States noted the work of the EGBCM as a positive example of Observer engagement in the Council's work, and Finland noted its readiness to chair the EGBCM during the Finnish Chairmanship.

Summary / Conclusion

The SAOC noted that all seemed happy with the content of the report, and encouraged those States with concerns about the report's language to work together to see if some minor changes, in particular to the recommendations, can be agreed upon, such that the report can be approved via correspondence or, if necessary, at the April SAO executive meeting. Finland will chair the EGBCM during the 2017-2019 period.

5.2. The Task Force for Enhancing Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic (SCTF)

Background and discussion

The SAO from Russia, who served as one of the Co-chairs of the SCTF, presented an update on the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation. He noted that it has been approved by the Task Force, and is presently undergoing national review in each of the eight Arctic States. Though he had not received word from any State that the national review process had been completed, neither had he heard of any issues with the Agreement, and he expected to be able to provide an update at an upcoming SAO executive meeting.

The Kingdom of Denmark will be the depositary for the Agreement.

Summary / Conclusion

The SAOC encouraged all those who are working to get final approval to be able to provide an update on their progress at an upcoming SAO executive meeting. The Agreement is expected to be signed at the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting.

5.3. The Task Force for Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC)

Background and discussion

The SAO from Iceland presented the TFAMC's final report on behalf of the Task Force. The report considers future needs for strengthened cooperation on Arctic marine areas, as well as possible mechanisms to meet these needs, including the nature and scope of any such mechanism. The report recommends that the Council extend the Task Force into the upcoming Chairmanship (with a new mandate, which should include the consideration of terms of reference for a possible new subsidiary body focused on marine cooperation), and that no new subsidiary body be established at the Fairbanks Ministerial in 2017.

Summary / Conclusion

The report and its recommendations were adopted. In addition, a draft of a new mandate for the TFAMC's next iteration was approved for inclusion in the SAOs Report to Ministers, with the understanding that the Fairbanks SAO Report to Ministers is not yet finalized.

5.4. The Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic (TFTIA)

Background and discussion

The Danish Co-chair of the TFTIA presented the Task Force's completed assessment for the approval of SAOs, and highlighted in particular the report's findings and recommendations. The discussion of the report included a conversation among SAOs on the preferred next phase of the Arctic Council's work on this issue. Several delegations pointed to: the importance of engagement with the private sector (in part through engagement with the AEC), the need for the Arctic Council to focus on identifying pan-Arctic solutions in this area,

and the great importance of this work to indigenous communities in the Arctic. Regarding the next phase of this work, many delegations pointed to a new Task Force as the natural next step, though some suggested that embedding this line of work within a WG could, in the long run, be preferable.

Summary / Conclusion

The report, including its findings and recommendations, was approved. All agreed to push this work forward through the mechanism of a new Task Force, and to work out the details of that Task Force through discussion and comment on that section of the “Senior Arctic Officials report to Ministers” for the Fairbanks 2017 Ministerial meeting.

5.5. Arctic Resilience Action Framework

Background and discussion

Joel Clement of the U.S. Department of the Interior presented the Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF) for SAOs review and approval as a Ministerial deliverable. He pointed to the ARAF as a framework for action to – in part – showcase the Arctic Council’s work on resilience to the rest of the world, and reviewed the process through which it had been developed. He addressed the voluntary nature of the ARAF, emphasizing that: it creates no binding requirements on any State for new reporting, it avoids duplication with other procedures ongoing in the Working Groups, and it can be fulfilled in some measure by existing information being collected by States, Working Groups, and PPs.

During the discussion, several States and PPs spoke about the ARAF with enthusiasm. Others, however, did raise some of the concerns cited by Mr. Clement during his opening remarks. In particular, there were concerns about creating an additional structure to serve this line of the Council’s work. KoD suggested finding a way to use the existing “Amarok” (the Arctic Council project-tracking tool) to collect this information. KoD also suggested undertaking implementation of the ARAF over the next two years as a pilot project. Several countries viewed the ideas contained within the ARAF as a “menu of options” for each State to adopt as appropriate. Canada said that they supported a role for the ACS in the implementation of the ARAF, and Russia asked whether any one of the Working Groups feels ownership of resilience as an issue area. Both AMAP and SDWG said they could take the idea back to their Working Groups if so requested by SAOS. Others asked who would be responsible for the proposed “resilience forum.” (Finland has committed to hosting the first forum, and several other States have expressed interest in hosting future forums.)

Mr. Clement endeavored to address each of these questions and concerns. The Kingdom of Denmark, Iceland, and Norway asked for the opportunity for further review and to return to this at the next SAO executive meeting.

Summary / Conclusion

Though there was strong support for moving the ARAF forward in some way, there were some minor concerns and lingering questions related to process and administration. The SAOC asked those with concerns to be in touch with those who strongly support the ARAF to work together so that a slightly adjusted proposal comes forward at the upcoming SAO executive meeting.

6. Presentation of Finnish Chairmanship program 2017-2019

Background and discussion

The SAO from Finland presented an update of the Finnish Chairmanship program, noting that the main content and form had not changed since the October 2016 SAO meeting in Portland, Maine. The program includes four priority areas: (1) environmental protection, (2) connectivity, (3) meteorological cooperation, and (4) education. The areas of work will be clustered into four groups: (1) environment and climate, (2) the seas (3) the people and (4) strengthening Arctic cooperation. He drew attention to many proposed and planned activities, including the hosting of: the second Arctic Biodiversity Congress, the first Arctic Resilience Forum, a meeting of Arctic environment Ministers, a model Arctic Council, and the fourth Arctic Energy Summit. He also noted plans for cooperation with the AEC, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, The Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure, the Arctic Offshore Regulators' Forum, and UArctic.

During the discussion, Iceland and the U.S. asked for more specifics on the plans for meteorological cooperation, and the U.S. also asked for greater detail on plans to support the implementation of the Polar Code, and on the study of satellite navigation in the Arctic. Several PPs thanked the Finnish Chairmanship for their efforts to consult thoroughly with them in the development of their Chairmanship program, and inquired about PP representation at the planned meeting of environment Ministers. The Finnish SAO responded to each of these questions, and invited any additional comments in writing no later than 24 March.

Iceland noted its plans to work with the Finnish Chairmanship in preparation for the ensuing Icelandic Chairmanship.

Summary / Conclusion

This item was for information. SAOs and PPs were asked to submit any comments in writing to the Finnish Chairmanship team by 24 March 2017.

7. Strengthening the Arctic Council

7.1. Arctic Council Secretariat annual report from 2016

Background and discussion

The director of the ACS presented the 2016 annual report of the ACS, and walked through each section of the report, highlighting elements for delegates' attention. In particular, he drew attention to the integration of IPS, the recruitment of a new technical officer, and the surplus (due largely to currency exchange rate fluctuations) in the ACS budget.

Summary / Conclusion

SAOs took note of the ACS annual report, and approved the 2016 ACS accounts and external auditor's report.

8. Other business

8.1. The Arctic Council in conference of parties

Background and discussion

The SAO from Finland raised the issue of preparing common representations, presentations, or side events for two particular events during the fall of 2017: (1) the conference of parties of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and (2) the conference of parties of the UNFCCC. As options, he offered the possibilities of (1) joint statements, (2) jointly-held side events, or (3) complementary ways, led by the States, of promoting the Arctic agenda.

During the discussion, the U.S. cautioned that joint statements may be more effort than impact, but seemed open to the idea of side events. Others, however, expressed a desire to try to craft joint statements (either for written or oral delivery), and to identify ways to highlight the pertinent work of the Working Groups at these events. Chairman's statements were also offered as a possible tool to convey Arctic Council messages.

Summary / Conclusion

This item was for discussion, not for decision. In his summary, the SAOC noted a desire by all to do forward planning, and the belief by many that a joint statement might be worth developing.

8.2. U.S. implementation report⁴

Background and discussion

The U.S. mentioned the audit of the Arctic Council, led by Norway and Russia (with participation by several other States) from 2015, and informed delegates that it was preparing a report on how the United States has contributed nationally to implementing decisions from all nine Arctic Council Ministerial meetings. The U.S. intends to share the document when it is final, hopefully prior to the upcoming SAO executive meeting in April. This is an effort to promote transparency and follow-up.

Summary / Conclusion

The SAOC took note of, and commended, the U.S. effort in this regard.

8.3. Updates from Norway

Background and discussion

Norway, as the depositary for the MOSPA agreement, notified all delegates that the first meeting of the parties will take place 22-23 March.

The Norwegian SAO also notified delegates of an upcoming meeting of Ministers for culture, which will take place in Harstad, Norway in June 2017.

Summary / Conclusion

This item was for information.

8.4. Observer statements

8.4.1. Observer states

The delegate from the Netherlands presented on behalf of Observer states. He congratulated the U.S. on a successful Chairmanship – in particular, on its efforts to raise awareness of the Arctic. He asked the incoming Finnish Chairmanship to help identify any and all opportunities for Observers to take part in Arctic Council events, as well as in the work of the Working Groups. He informed delegates that the Observer states have decided to establish informal coordination mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of their contributions to the Council.

8.4.2. Observer non-governmental organizations

The delegate from WWF presented on behalf of Observer NGOs. He noted the challenge of grouping NGOs together, as they are so diverse. He asked the Council to consider expanding

⁴ This point was added at the beginning of the meeting.

opportunities for Observer input during SAO meetings, and praised particularly: the agreement on scientific cooperation, the Council's work towards a long-term strategy, and the establishment of the Álgu fund. In closing, he reaffirmed the Observer NGOs' commitment to provide expertise, both at the level of Working Groups and elsewhere within the Council.

8.4.3. Observer intergovernmental organizations

The delegate from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) presented on behalf of Observer intergovernmental organizations. Like the previous speaker, he noted the diversity within this group that makes presenting a single statement challenging. He reminded delegates of the many contributions that the NCM has made to the work of the Council. He informed delegates about the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region's support for the idea to hold an Arctic Summit in the near-term future, something that also the NCM thought would be valuable. He then invited input from the Council on the NCM's Arctic program that will be relaunched in 2018, and congratulated the U.S. on a successful Chairmanship.

Summary / Conclusion (8.4.1, 8.4.2, and 8.4.3)

This item was for information. The SAOC thanked the three Observers who made statements and also thanked all Observers who participate in the SAO meetings and for their contributions to the Council's subsidiary bodies.

9. Conclusion

Recognizing that this was likely to be the last SAO plenary meeting attended by Magnus Johannesson, the Director of the ACS, the SAOC, the U.S., and Norway all thanked him specifically for his service.

Similarly, the SAOC also took the opportunity to thank Lars-Otto Reiersen for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Arctic Council in his capacity as executive secretary for AMAP.

The SAOC thanked everyone for their hard work and reminded all that we still have work to do. He noted that based on the progress we have made and what we did not come to final conclusion on that we will likely need three days for the April SAO executive meeting in New York (4-6 April).