

ACAP Strategy to Address Contamination of the Arctic Environment and its People

ACAP's MISSION

ACAP's mission is to contribute to reduce environmental risks and prevent pollution of the Arctic environment.

ACAP acts as a strengthening and supporting mechanism of the Arctic Council to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants in the Arctic and to reduce environmental, human health and socio-economic risks.

ACAP in co-operation with national authorities, develops pilot projects that build capacity and demonstrate emission reduction activities for contaminants. Exchange of information and knowledge on best practices, technologies as well as regulations and other measures among AC Member States, is a key instrument.

ACAP contributes to implementation by Arctic Council member states of international conventions and related protocols relevant to the Arctic, such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Minamata Convention on Mercury, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

ACAP projects have circumpolar relevance and contribute to the development and implementation of abatement projects that demonstrate possible actions for emission reductions for Arctic states and others to replicate.

CONTEXT

The Arctic is an environmentally sensitive area with an extreme climate characterized by low temperatures, winter-time darkness, snow, ice and permafrost. The Arctic is very vulnerable to contamination due to the simple food-chain, poor and slow chemical decomposition process, and the common fat-based diet. Increasing temperatures in air and ocean areas, melting sea ice, extreme weather events, and thawing of permafrost have effects on peoples, communities and infrastructure in the region, as well as biological life and ecosystems.

Climate change may also impact the storage of hazardous waste and other deposits, and increases environmental risks, due to increased precipitation, extreme weather events and thawing of permafrost in the Arctic.

ACAP was founded as an Arctic Council action plan to remove the Arctic pollution sources identified through the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) and was established as an Arctic Council Working Group at the Salekhard Ministerial meeting in 2006.

ACAP is one of six standing working groups. As a subsidiary body of the Arctic Council, ACAP is subject to the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure.

The Members of the Arctic Council are the eight Arctic States and six Permanent Participants (PP) organisations representing the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

The ACAP strategy is reviewed as deemed necessary by the Working Group, and then submitted to Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) for approval.

HOW ACAP WORKS TO PROTECT THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

ACAP pursues its objectives by implementing practical pilot projects that remove sources or reduce releases of pollution that impact the Arctic. Through awareness-raising ACAP aims at influencing policy-makers, public and private sector and communities in the Arctic. ACAP cooperates with relevant stakeholders including enterprises and non-governmental organizations (NGO).

ACAP receives direction from the Arctic Council Ministers and Senior Arctic Official (SAOs). ACAP addresses specific Arctic challenges related to implementation of relevant international conventions. In addition, ACAP undertakes work in areas identified as concerns by Permanent Participants and endeavors to use traditional and local knowledge (TLK), as appropriate, as a supplement to scientific knowledge.

ACAP WG identifies, develops and formally approves pilot projects for implementation. The projects are run by expert groups and implemented by contracted agencies or external consultants. ACAP strives to involve partners and stakeholders that include, inter alia Arctic Council Observers, international organizations and financial institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Since local participation, transparency and involvement in the design and implementation of activities are key factors for public and political acceptance, involvement of local and indigenous communities is essential to achieving ACAP's overall objectives.

ACAP PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

ACAP strives to support those pilot projects which contribute to reductions in emissions of:

- **Hazardous Substances** such as persistent organic pollutants (POPs), mercury, hazardous waste, and others regulated by international conventions
- **Short-Lived Climate Pollutants** such as black carbon, methane and HFCs at present covered partly under international conventions

Objective 1: Identify priorities, reduction options and measures, building on the environmental risk potential for pollution and challenges identified inter alia through the scientific work of AMAP.

Objective 2: Implement pilot projects to illustrate the potential for emission reductions, applying novel and proven technologies and best practices.

Objective 3: Raise awareness, builds capacity and encourage reduction efforts at national and local level to reduce the risks that exist.

Objective 4: Provide information and policy recommendations to Senior Arctic Officials as input to Ministerial meetings.

Objective 5: Disseminate information on the results achieved in the pilot projects.

CRITERIA

ACAP promotes projects and cooperative activities of circumpolar relevance based on Arctic Council priorities. Projects are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- shared problems where there is an existing or potential risk of Arctic pollution from sources within or outside the Arctic region;
- common issues of circumpolar relevance offering solution with a potential for replication
- severity of risk of adverse environmental, human health or socio-economic consequences
- local participation as well as support at national level
- financial and technical feasibility and availability of local resources
- cost-effectiveness
- best available technologies and practices including cleaner production approaches,
- application of traditional local knowledge and environmental impact assessments, as needed.

FINANCING AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Project proposals need to be approved by the ACAP Working Group, upon review by the relevant expert groups, before they can be considered Arctic Council projects.

ACAP strives to find synergies with the projects of other Arctic Council Working Groups and lends support to relevant work of Arctic Council Task Forces and expert groups.

Projects approved by ACAP Working Group seek funding from a variety of sources, including the Arctic Council member states, the Project Support Instrument (PSI), national donor funds as well as economic support and financing from other international organisations and financial institutions.

The PSI was established by the Arctic Council of Ministers to support the Arctic Council activities and actions that address pollution in the Arctic.

Guided by the decisions of the SAOs and ACAP Working Group, the PSI Fund Manager should coordinate with relevant ACAP expert groups and assists in developing new projects. To facilitate the process, early dialogue on project development is encouraged among expert groups, the Fund Manager and relevant consultants. The expert groups develop relevant project proposals.

ACAP WG can act as a facilitator for projects in priority areas and help to mobilize financial resources in consultation inter alia with PSI and the Fund Manager.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Final reports from ACAP projects present and analyse project results, illustrate replicability of the project, present lessons learned and provide recommendations to the Arctic Council and others on the potential for future replication. In line with the Arctic Council Communications Strategy, results are disseminated via the ACAP web page and social media. Fact sheets are developed for completed projects and shared widely, both online and in printed form. Results from projects financed by PSI may also be disseminated by the Fund Manager.

SAOs are regularly informed of decisions taken by the Working Group through the ACAP Chair's meeting summaries and any issues requiring SAO discussion and/or decisions are raised accordingly. At the end of each two-year Chairmanship cycle, ACAP provides a report to SAOs for Ministerial consideration on work accomplished and proposes an ACAP's work plan for the next Chairmanship.

Since 2014, ACAP has had a permanent Secretariat located at the Arctic Council Secretariat in Tromsø, Norway.

ACAP Chair and Secretariat

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