



## **SDWG Submission**

### **Preparations for the Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting (AEMM) 11-12 October 2018**

#### **A. Request for Input to AEMM**

The AEMM organizers invited working groups (WGs) to provide input. This input from WGs will serve as background material for the ministers meeting.

The objective of the AEMM is to enable the Ministers to discuss topical environmental issues in the Arctic and to share and provide solutions to them.

Climate change and sustainable development form a broad framework for the Chairmanship program. As global warming is expected to have considerable impact on the Arctic, it is necessary to continue working to mitigate climate change and strengthen resilience and adaptation, and to raise awareness on Arctic issues in global climate talks. Sustainable development is at the core of the Arctic Council mandate. Accordingly, Finland proposes to explore how the Agenda 2030 framework can be used in Arctic cooperation for the benefit of humans and nature.

The environmental focus areas of the Finnish Chairmanship program are:

- 1) biodiversity conservation,
- 2) pollution prevention, and
- 3) climate change.

WGs are requested to select 1-3 of these focus areas of greatest relevance to their WG and to identify primary environmental challenges and issues that will require common solutions in the Arctic.

#### **B. Overview**

This document provides:

- the SDWG's contribution in accordance with the document "**Invitation to provide input, Guidance for the Working Groups**" dated 12 December 2017;
- a brief summary of SDWG work in the context of the three AEMM Focus Areas and the SDGs.

#### **C. Summary of SDWG Main Messages for AEMM**

- The SDWG focuses on the human dimensions of the Arctic and through its regional leadership contributes to global sustainable development goals.
- The SDWG focuses on initiatives that provide practical knowledge and contribute to capacity building of Indigenous peoples and Arctic communities to respond to local, regional and global challenges.



- Sustainable development must be based on robust, relevant and reliable knowledge, which includes knowledge derived from scientific data, Indigenous peoples' knowledge and local knowledge and supports policy and decision making .
- SDWG strives to increase awareness of the value of Indigenous and local knowledge in scientific research.

#### **D. SDWG Mandate and Main Activities**

The SDWG is mandated to propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic. This includes pursuing opportunities to protect and enhance the environment and the economies, culture and health of Indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve the environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

The ***SDWG Strategic Framework*** (2017), identifies 12 priorities and project areas that are intended to strengthen the resilience and well-being of the peoples of the Arctic and promote the three basic sustainable development pillars (social equity, economic development and environmental protection). These priority areas are: Community Vitality; Economic Assessments; Educational Opportunities; Heritage and Culture of Arctic Communities; Human Health; Infrastructure; Reduction/Elimination of Inequalities; Science and Research for Sustainable Development; Sustainable Business Involvement and Development; Sustainable Energy; Transportation Links; and Water and Sanitation Services. Currently, the SDWG has projects in 10 of 12 of these priority areas.

In addition, the SDWG encourages collaboration with other Arctic Council working groups and subsidiary bodies by contributing to the human dimension of projects and initiatives that focus on, but are not limited to: climate change; protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment; Arctic environmental monitoring and assessments; protection of Arctic flora and fauna.

Building self-sufficient, resilient, and healthy Arctic communities for present and future generations, while protecting the environment and means of subsistence and creating conditions for the preservation and development of cultural traditions, has been a primary goal of the SDWG.

Through innovative approaches, the SDWG contributes to an Arctic with expanded economic activities capable of producing wealth for the people who make the region their home now and in the future, while supporting their well-being, promoting their cultures, and safeguarding their environment. The SDWG is committed to engaging its experts and stakeholders, and to making the best use of its project resources, so as to promote sustainable development in the Arctic.

Through its regional activities, the SDWG contributes to global sustainable development efforts such as the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and to climate change mitigation and



adaptation efforts such as the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015). The adoption of Agenda 2030 in particular provides new momentum to enhance sustainable development activities relevant to the Arctic and resonates with the past, present and future work of the SDWG.

#### **E. SDWG Projects and the SDGs**

SDWG projects engage issues and develop the Arctic knowledge base in respect of most, if not all, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDWG's *Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG)*, is currently examining the relationship of the SDGs to the Arctic and the possibility of producing a regular report on the state of sustainable development in Arctic. An objective is to develop the intellectual foundation relating to sustainable development for the SDWG, within the context of the new *SDWG Strategic Framework (2017)*, the UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. This SECEG work is ongoing.

Recent and current SDWG projects have particular relevance to all of the SDGs (see Annex).

#### **F. AEMM Focus Areas of Relevance to SDWG**

Many SDWG projects, by focusing on the human dimensions of the Arctic, have direct relevance to all three AEMM focus areas, and highlight the interconnectedness of the sustainable development goals. An ongoing challenge, however, is to balance economic development with social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Below are some SDWG projects that include efforts to foster this balance:

##### **FOCUS AREA 1: BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**

As noted by CAFF, “current knowledge of many Arctic species, ecosystems and their stressors is fragmentary, making detection and assessment of trends and their implications difficult for many aspects of Arctic biodiversity. However, while more information is needed there is also a lot of existing information being generated by scientists, indigenous peoples and local communities.”

Through recent and current projects, the SDWG is building the Arctic knowledge base and helping to understand the economic, cultural, social and health relationships between Arctic biodiversity and the human dimensions of the Arctic. These projects include:

- *Economy of the North 2015 (ECONOR III)* [Leads: Norway, United States, Canada, Saami Council]
- *The Arctic as a Food-Producing Region* [Leads: Canada, Norway, GCI, ICC]
- *Arctic indigenous youth, climate change and food culture* (EALLU) [Leads: Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Norway, Russian Federation, U.S., AIA, Saami Council]



- ***Reducing the Incidence of Suicide in Indigenous Groups—Strengths United through Networks (RISING SUN)*** [Leads: United States, Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Norway, ICC]
- ***Circumpolar Resilience, Engagement and Action Through Story (CREATES)*** [Leads: Canada, Finland, ICC]
- ***Operationalizing a One Health approach in the Arctic, Parts 1 & 2 (One Health)*** [Leads: United States, Canada, Finland]

### **FOCUS AREAS 2 & 3: POLLUTION PREVENTION & CLIMATE CHANGE**

Through recent and current projects, the SDWG has undertaken practical work that is, broadly speaking, related to the pollution focus area, as well as the climate change focus area.

SDWG projects relevant to atmospheric, terrestrial and marine pollution and climate change issues include:

- ***Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA)*** [Leads: Canada, Finland, Iceland, U.S., GCI, AIA]
- ***Arctic Renewable Energy Atlas (AREA)*** [Leads: Canada, U.S., GCI]
- ***Arctic Energy Summit 2017 and 2019*** [Leads: Finland, Iceland]
- ***Arctic Sustainable Energy Futures Toolkit*** [Leads: Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, GCI]
- ***Assessing the Use of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) in Indigenous Communities*** [Leads: U.S., Canada, AIA, CCU]
- ***Good Practice Recommendations for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Public Participation in EIA in the Arctic (Arctic EIA)*** [Leads: Finland, Kingdom of Denmark, Canada]
- ***Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF)*** [Leads: United States, Sweden, Finland]
- ***Zero Arctic: Concepts for carbon neutral Arctic construction based on tradition*** [Leads: Finland, Canada]

A priority area for the SDWG is human health. Human health issues have links to all three themes: biodiversity, climate change, pollution. The SDWG One Health project is especially relevant. One Health is an approach to assess health issues at the interface between humans, animals, and ecosystems. The project objective is to operationalizing a One Health approach in the Arctic by forging co-equal, all inclusive collaborations across multiple scientific disciplines and Arctic communities in order to enhance resiliency of the Arctic inhabitants through an enhanced understanding of climatic change impacts on health risks to people, animals, and the environment. This is a valuable strategy for the Arctic, where there is a great need to understand the complex nature of climatic change on all aspects of human, animal and ecosystem health. The One Health approach assesses the potential health effects at the human-animal-ecosystem interface and can greatly enhance scientific understanding of the threats to Arctic communities and ecosystems. It will contribute to the development of new tools for effective policies focused on reducing the burden of health threats and enhancing community resiliency. These include tools and methods for assessing vulnerability,



screening and evaluation strategies, programs for climate risks assessments, identifying adaptation options, and weighing the costs and benefits of those options.

The SDWG project on *Improving Health through Safe and Affordable Access to Household Running Water and Sewer (WASH)*, conducted during the US Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, was directed specifically at SDG #6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

## **G. Challenges**

The SDWG is faced with a constantly and rapidly changing operational environment. These challenges apply to all AEMM focus areas and include:

- 1. Prominence and understanding of the human dimension:** in the face of rapidly changing and competing priorities in the Arctic region, the SDWG faces a challenge in its efforts to foster a better understanding of the human dimensions of Arctic issues and to ensure this theme remains prominent across the work of the Arctic Council.
- 2. Direct access to sustainable development expertise:** sustainable development requires significant interdisciplinary expertise; the SDWG has created expert groups to meet some of these needs. In addition to the Expert groups, the Working Group must also find ways to best utilize and draw upon this in-house expertise as well as augment its focus as required.
- 3. Economic diversification in the Arctic:** global market fluctuations can jeopardize Arctic economies with limited diversification. Innovative approaches to economic development are required to promote increased economic diversity.
- 4. Variation in human circumstances across the Arctic:** human circumstances in terms of capacity, literacy, education and income levels across the Arctic vary widely at the community, national and regional levels. This variation can make it difficult to identify and scale SDWG projects appropriately.
- 5. Balance:** There is constant tension between economic and resource development and the need to preserve and protect a unique and fragile environment. The challenge is to create diverse economic opportunity that balances the economic benefit with social, cultural, environmental and ecological goals.

## **H. Actions to Address Common Challenges**

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As such, this



principle calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and the planet. For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonize three core elements or pillars in an integrated way: social equity, economic development and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected and are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies. In addition to being at the center of the work of the SDWG, sustainable development is also a cross-cutting concept that runs through the work of the Arctic Council, its working groups and task forces.

SDWG shares with other Working Groups the call for action to address common challenges, including the need for:

- Regular and consistent **evaluations** of implementation actions to determine effectiveness and to modify actions using new and **innovative approaches**, when necessary, to respond to changing conditions;<sup>1</sup>
- Active collaboration and **information sharing across knowledge systems** (i.e., science and Indigenous and Local Knowledge) and disciplines (i.e., natural and social sciences) via clear and consistent communication and access to information;<sup>2</sup>
- Specific **investments to support the SDWG** and its projects and to communicate and promote sustainable development efforts in the Arctic;
- Specific **investments to build capacity** for sustainable development at local, national and regional levels;
- Development of a platform for the **co-production of knowledge**;<sup>3</sup>
- Maximize the potential for **community-based and led research and monitoring** while drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge;
- **Increase public awareness** of the value of Indigenous and local knowledge;
- Increase awareness of **research ethics** and respect for research protocols for working with local and Indigenous communities and people;
- Specific investments to **disseminate knowledge** obtained through AC projects to enable Arctic people to make informed decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommended by CAFF

<sup>2</sup> Recommended by CAFF

<sup>3</sup> Recommended by CAFF



## ANNEX

### UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.