



Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting Member state input (Kingdom of Denmark)

Finland has invited the Member States (MS) to provide inputs for the Arctic Environmental Ministers Meeting in October, 2018. Finland invites the ministers to discuss one or all environmental challenges as 1) biodiversity conservation 2) pollution prevention and 3) mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Finland recommends inputs on exploring best practices and proposals for common solutions at the meeting being linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. Kingdom of Denmark (KoD) encourages Finland to focus on all 3 challenges as these challenges are strongly interlinked under the heading environmental protection. The following gives an introduction to the challenges.

Substantial changes are occurring in the arctic affecting living conditions and ways of life. Many Arctic societies have developed from being societies based on traditional subsistence hunting and fishing to societies in which large scale extraction of living and non-living resources, public management and connectivity with other regions form the economic foundation.

No matter at which scale Arctic communities and societies utilize services from arctic ecosystems in the form of fisheries, hunting, agriculture, aquaculture and raw-material extraction etc. living conditions in the Arctic are closely linked to a sustainable management and utilization of arctic ecosystems and its resources.

The pace of change is faster than ever with climate change, modernization processes and the global economy being among the significant drivers of change. The current and anticipated changes pose serious challenges but also emerging opportunities. For instance, diminishing sea ice conditions, increased freshwater inputs to arctic marine waters, intrusion of southern plant- and animal species are changing Arctic marine ecosystems, but are at the same time providing new possibilities in fisheries, while on land changes in climate conditions could open new opportunities for agriculture. On the other hand, changes in local-regional scale ecosystems and ecosystem services will impair the traditional way of living and subsistence use of those systems. Climate change is also seen as the main threat to unique Arctic ecosystems and species tied to the vulnerable systems,

Environmental and human health impact from long range transboundary pollution (such as persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals) have been well documented by the Arctic Council and have spurred international agreements to phase out and/or ban these substances. However, new substances with un-known effects for the population and ecosystems in the Arctic and the world as such are identified and continuously being detected in the Arctic such as new persistent organic compounds. Another example is marine litter, such as plastic and microplastic, from sea- and land based sources that may pose a threat to the Arctic marine environment and its ecosystems.

The sustainable development and management of the Arctic region is tightly linked to responsive adaption and mitigation actions to the changing conditions, including the safeguarding of Arctic ecosystems and biodiversity under changing conditions and to the services these systems provide. However the detection of impacts, our understanding of the rapid changes in the Arctic as well as our capabilities to forecast and quantify future changes are impaired by lack of systematic long term data series, and an incomplete understanding of the implications of the rapid change. The demand for accessible, current and accurate information is therefore increasing

In order to be able to respond to significant trends and pressures, strengthen Arctic sustainable societies and ecosystems, ensure sustainable use of living resources and environmentally sound extraction of non-living resources as well as knowledge building of vulnerable ecosystems, KoD suggest that key priorities of the AEMM be given to:

- Strengthening of systematic long-term monitoring of changes and impacts in the Arctic environment, ecosystems and biodiversity
- Monitoring and assessing Arctic Ecosystem and biodiversity change and implications for ecosystem Services
- Monitoring and assessing global pollution with an increased focus on issues of Arctic emerging concern, such as new persistent organic pollutants, marine litter, microplastic and other pollutants impacting Arctic inhabitants and ecosystems.
- Improving the knowledgebase for short- and long term risk management and adaptation through improved weather and climate modelling.
- Continued focus on communication and outreach to Arctic inhabitants, relevant Arctic institutions and stakeholders as well.
- Continued focus on using the best available scientific and Traditional and Local Knowledge (TLK).
- Emphasizing the needs for AC and its member states and observers in a timely manner to bring Arctic environmental key findings, recommendations and data forward to relevant international agreements as well as for national and local needs.

The relevant SDGs should be brought forward in further communication at all levels. However special focus should be given to SDG # 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages; substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination”, #13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts # 14 “Conserve and sustainably use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds” and #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”.