

Arctic Environment Ministers' Meeting
Exploring Common Solutions for the Arctic Environment
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Written statement by Germany
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The goal of finding solutions **together** is a key aspect of Finland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council. „Exploring **Common** Solutions“ is the theme of the chairmanship program. It fits this approach of togetherness that the Finnish chair invites observer countries like Germany to cooperate. Germany would like to express its appreciation for the possibility to participate in the Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting.

Environmental protection is a top priority in Finland's Chairmanship Program. Germany would like to emphasize some political aspects in this context.

Germany perceives the Arctic as a region in rapid transition. The Arctic is becoming increasingly important for the international community from a geo-political and geo-economic perspective, but also from the geo-ecological perspective. In 2013, with the adoption of its Arctic Policy Guidelines, the German government committed to taking on responsibility with regard to developments in the Arctic. Taking on this responsibility means advocating the highest possible environmental standards for all activities in the Arctic.

The German government supports multilateral cooperation on Arctic issues – primarily in the Arctic Council. We are well aware of the role observers have within the Arctic Council. We strive to meet these expectations. Moreover, we strive to enhance our input, in particular through increased and intensified participation in many working groups dealing with environment related subjects.

This ambition can be substantiated by a few examples, which deal with climate change and black carbon, oil spills and marine litter and finally marine protected areas.

The Arctic has provided for the iconic picture of **climate change**: The polar bear clinging on to a much too small piece of ice. On the scientific side, the 5th Assessment Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (2013/2014) concluded that the spread and total volume of ice in the Arctic is decreasing. The upcoming IPCC special report on the ocean and cryosphere will deepen the understanding of these phenomena and make an important scientific contribution. The work on the whole report is co-chaired by a professor from the Alfred-Wegener-Institute. And one of the lead authors for the chapter covering the polar regions is a German scientist from the Max-Planck-Institute for Meteorology.

To counteract the negative impacts of climate change, the German government worked intensively for the adoption of the global climate agreement in Paris. Implementing the Paris Agreement is paramount for safeguarding the protection of the Arctic. Germany has promoted the swift and ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement as G20 Presidency. And we will continue to do so at COP24 in Katowice in December this year.

Although the combat against climate change is a global endeavor affecting the Arctic, some action can and should be taken in the Arctic region itself. Climate-related air pollutants, especially **black carbon**, play a significant role here. Germany has submitted preliminary results of a black carbon measurement campaign carried out as part of one of our research projects to the International Maritime Organization. These results may help the IMO in its work to investigate appropriate black carbon measurement and emission control methods for international shipping.

The Arctic Council's Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane is laying the foundations for the formulation of ambitious reduction targets for its member states. Observer countries have been

invited to submit national inventories. Germany has nominated an expert from the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) for this group. We are grateful that his participation was accepted. Germany submitted a first national report on black carbon and methane by the end of last year. Some discussion on methodological and on timing issues might be useful in order to achieve even better targeted results.

There is a compelling need for measures to protect Arctic waters from the threat of **oil spills** and marine litter.

The Federal Environment Agency has been contributing to the work in the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR) since 2013. The Agency will provide information about the OSPAR Offshore Industry Committee, especially about the major challenges arising from the current decommissioning of many oil platforms in the North Sea.

Germany attaches great importance to the issue of **marine litter** and already has a wealth of experience to draw on. We are therefore pleased to be accepted to participate in the PAME project on marine litter in the Arctic. Marine litter has been a major topic on Germany's environmental agenda during its G7 and G20 Presidencies as well as in OSPAR and HELCOM. Suitable measures include eco-design, waste avoidance, optimal recycling and environmentally sound storage of waste. UBA's experience in these processes could also be drawn on for the second phase envisaged by PAME from 2019-2021 on reviewing the need for and establishing a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

The idea of **Marine Protected Areas** (MPAs) has gained prominence and momentum recently. CCAMLR has been successful in establishing a large MPA in Antarctica after quite some discussion. The BBNJ process is moving forward. OSPAR has the task to establish an ecologically coherent and representative network of protected areas in the North-East Atlantic, which includes Arctic waters.

Germany as chair of the OSPAR working group on MPAs took on the responsibility for carrying out a scientific review and completing an expert proposal on setting up an Arctic high seas MPA in 2015. This proposal was presented to the relevant OSPAR bodies. The revised MPA proposal was supported in spring 2016 by a majority of OSPAR Parties, including Finland and France. However, at the request of some Arctic states the proposal was not discussed any further within OSPAR but forwarded to the Arctic Council. Germany is interested in substantive - science-based - feedback on the draft MPA. We would like to hear from members of the Arctic Council how they would like to proceed. This issue is quite sensitive. Against the background of OSPAR's task to establish a coherent and representative network of protected areas and given the progress in other areas mentioned above, we face quite a number of questions from the public and members of parliament on this issue.

For completeness' sake it should be mentioned that the German government is also able to contribute to the work of several **other environment related working groups**. This includes the Arctic Contaminants Action Programme (ACAP), the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Group (PAME) and the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC). Experts come primarily from our government agencies for environment and for nature protection respectively.

Where science cannot yet provide guidance for decision-makers, **precaution** comes into the picture. New developments quite often require the application of the precautionary principle. This will hold true for developments in the Arctic, too.

From all the above, it should have become clear that Germany is profoundly interested in intensifying its cooperation on the issue of environmental protection in the Arctic with the Arctic Council in its many different working groups and in many different ways.

Germany would like to thank the Finish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council for offering many possibilities of cooperation.