

# Report: SAO plenary meeting

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Arctic Council

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# Report: SAO plenary meeting

Rovaniemi, Finland | 1-2 November 2018

*Third SAO plenary meeting during the Finnish Chairmanship*

Link to meeting documents:

<https://arcticcouncil.sharepoint.com/sites/AC/SAO/>

# Acronyms and abbreviations commonly found in Arctic Council reports

AAC	Arctic Athabaskan Council
AACA	Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic (AMAP)
ABA	Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (CAFF, 2013)
ABC	Arctic Biodiversity Congress
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
AEMM	Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting
AIA	Aleut International Association
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (1 of 6 Working Groups)
AMATII	Arctic Maritime and Aviation Transportation Infrastructure Initiative (SDWG)
AMBI	Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (CAFF initiative)
AMSA	Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (PAME, 2009)
AMSP	Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2025 (PAME, 2015)
AOA	Arctic Ocean acidification
AORF	Arctic Offshore Regulators' Forum
ARA	Arctic Resilience Assessment
ARAF	Arctic Resilience Action Framework
ARF	Arctic Resilience Forum
ARIAS	Arctic Invasive Alien Species project (CAFF initiative)
ARR	Arctic Resilience Report
ASTD	Arctic Ship Traffic Data project (PAME initiative)
BCM	Black carbon and methane
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (1 of 6 Working Groups)
CBMP	Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CAFF initiative)
CCAC	Climate and Clean Air Coalition
CLEO	Circumpolar Local Environmental Observers [network] (ACAP initiative)
EA	Ecosystem Approach [to Management]
EG / EGs	Expert Group(s)
EGBCM	Expert Group in support of Implementation of the Framework for Action 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
HFO	Heavy Fuel Oil
HLPF-SD	UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
IK	Indigenous knowledge
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITU	International Telecommunications Union

IPCAP	Indigenous Peoples Contaminants Action Program (ACAP Expert Group)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPS	Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat
LRTAP	UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution
MAC	Model Arctic Council
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
OAR	Open Access Repository
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (1 of 6 Working Groups)
POPs	Persistent organic pollutants
PP / PPs	Permanent Participant(s)
PSI	Project Support Instrument
RAIPON	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
RRFP	[Arctic] Regional Reception Facilities Plan (PAME initiative)
SAMBR	State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (CAFF initiative)
SAO / SAOs	Senior Arctic Official(s)
SAOC	SAO Chair (Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials)
SAON	Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks
SAOX	Senior Arctic Officials' executive [meeting]
SAR	Search and rescue
SCTF	Task Force on Enhancing Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic
SDGs	[UN] Sustainable Development Goals
SDI	[Arctic] Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group (1 of 6 Working Groups)
SLCFs	Short-lived climate forcers
SLCPs	Short-lived climate pollutants
SWIPA	Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (AMAP)
TF / TFs	Task Force(s)
TFAMC	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation
TFAMC-I	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (2015-2017)
TFAMC-II	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (2017-2019)
TFICA	Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic
TFOPP	Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention
TFTIA	Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic
TK	Traditional knowledge
TLK	Traditional and local knowledge
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
WG	Working Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Opening remarks

The SAOC welcomed delegates to the third plenary meeting of SAOs during the Chairmanship of Finland (2017-2019). He invited the two new Heads of Delegation for Norway, SAO Bård Ivar Svendsen, and ICC, Dalee Sambo Dorough, to briefly introduce themselves to the plenary meeting delegates.

## 1.2. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

## 1.3. Welcome speeches

Rector Mauri Ylä-Kotola delivered a welcome speech on behalf of the University of Lapland. He underlined the key role his institution plays in delivering higher education in the Arctic with expertise on various fields including design, sustainable development, indigenous issues, mining and tourism. He also pointed out that UArctic's Secretariat, as well as several UArctic thematic networks, were based at the University of Lapland.

The rector's presentation was followed by welcoming words from Rosa-Mären Magga of the Saami Council who welcomed delegates to the region, which borders on Sápmi, and explained how different educational programs and tools provided by the University of Lapland were significant in protecting and promoting Saami culture. She also called for further cooperation with the tourism sector in Rovaniemi area in ensuring that Saami traditions are better reflected in the tourism business.

# 2. Report from SAO executive meeting

The SAOC provided information on issues discussed in the SAO executive meeting held on 31 October 2018. He noted the following points in particular:

- The SAOs continued their discussions on the strategic plan for the Arctic Council. The Chairmanship invited SAOs and PPs to provide additional feedback on the second draft of the strategic plan. The outline of the second draft includes five sections – an introduction, guiding principles, two priority areas which are sustainable development and environmental protection, implementation and follow-up, as well as a final section on the review of the structures of the Arctic Council.
- SAOs had a discussion on the ongoing Observer review. 18 Observers are being

reviewed during the Finnish Chairmanship. They each completed and submitted their review reports in June 2018. The review process has proceeded in a positive manner and its outcome will be announced when the Arctic Council Ministers meet in Rovaniemi in May 2019;

- Regarding the use of the terms traditional and local knowledge vs. indigenous knowledge and local knowledge in the workings of the Arctic Council, ICC, on behalf of the PPs, asked that the Council at all levels formally refer to their knowledge as “indigenous knowledge” henceforth, not as “traditional knowledge”. Discussions will continue through the next SAO executive meeting in March 2019. RAIPON stated it needs more time to consult with policymakers, and discussions will continue through the next SAO executive meeting in March 2019;
- The Arctic Council’s relations with external bodies and possible formal co-operation mechanisms were discussed and the SAOs will continue considering the matter. It was decided that the PAME Working Group will move forward on a cooperative Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC). Providing the Arctic Council with a uniform cover, to be prepared by the ACS, for its dealings with external bodies was also identified as a priority; The PAME-AHRC MoU will require the uniform cover before finalizing their agreement.
- The SAOs discussed the recently completed review of the Project Support Instrument (PSI) and decided to support the proposed prolongation of the PSI until the end of 2021, expecting updates on the realization of the review’s recommendations by the next SAO meeting;
- Finally, discussions will continue on how to simplify and make more efficient the archiving practices for Arctic Council documents at the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS).

### 3. Arctic Council Secretariat update

Nina Vaaja, director of the ACS, gave a status update on the ACS, whose work is guided by the 2018-2019 Work Plan previously approved at the Fairbanks Ministerial. She reported that all major tasks listed in the ACS Work Plan were either completed or on schedule. As of 30 September 2018, all eight Arctic states had fulfilled their financial commitments. She thanked the host country, Norway, who provided the ACS with a new office location shared with the IPS and AMAP secretariat in the recently completed FRAM Center II building in Tromsø.

The director advised delegates of several staff changes in 2018, including the departure of the ACS Communications Officer Tom Fries, as well as Web and Digital Media Advisor Linnea Nordström, who was now participating in her last SAO meeting. Their positions have been filled with the hiring of Kristina Bär, who will take office as Communications Officer in

December 2018, and Svein-Gunnar Johansen, who recently joined the ACS as Web Officer. The ACS has also hired an Adviser, Joël Plouffe and a new Technology Officer, Ingeborg Ytterstad Pettersen.

### Conclusion

The 2020-2021 ACS Work Plan will be completed in early 2019 and submitted to the SAOs for approval at the next executive meeting in March 2019.

## 4. Presentations by Working Groups on their work 2017-19

The Working Groups were invited to raise issues that require specific attention from the SAOs before the WGs enter the final phase of preparation of deliverables for the Ministerial meeting.

EPPR Chair Jens Peter Holst Andersen opened the discussion by highlighting how the WGs were increasingly coordinating their work and sharing expertise with each other in planning ministerial deliverables on a diverse range of cross-cutting Arctic Council issues. The presentations during the thematic discussion were designed to highlight cooperation between the WGs.

### 4.1 AMAP

The AMAP Chair Marianne Kroglund first introduced AMAP's new Executive Secretary, Rolf Rødven who started in his position in March 2018. She reported that AMAP's work was well under way with a series of completed and ongoing projects, but with no major delays in view. AMAP released two scientific assessments at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress on Arctic Ocean Acidification and Biological effects of Contaminants on Arctic Wildlife and Fish. AMAP continues to provide updated information on pollution and climate change, and on implications for Arctic physical environments, ecosystems and human health.

AMAP's deliverables for the 2019 Ministerial in Rovaniemi were summarized as follows.

- Two 'Summary for Policy-Makers' based on the results of a) the *Arctic Ocean Acidification* updated assessment, and b) the updated assessment on *Biological Effects of Contaminants on Arctic Wildlife and Fish*;
- A communication product on *Key Climate Issues for Ministers* summarizing updated results of SWIPA follow-up and other related work;
- An updated AMAP Strategic Framework document.

Key messages from the summaries for policy-makers are that the levels of contaminants are still high in some key target species for subsistence harvesting and that multiple stressors

and chemical cocktails need to be considered in further work. Arctic ocean acidification, on its part, impacts Arctic marine ecosystems and poses a significant economic risk to fisheries when combined with other impacts of climate change. Ms. Kroglund also noted that the AMAP Expert Group on climate had expanded its membership to include representatives of the meteorological community, and that this would further strengthen AMAP's work to provide the knowledge needed for adaptation and resilience. She also highlighted the perspectives for cross working group cooperation in the issue of marine litter and on ecological and socio-economic impacts of climatic change, which was welcomed by many of the SAOs in addition to the overall high-quality work of AMAP.

## 4.2 ACAP

Ms. Inger Johanne Wiese of Norway provided a progress summary on behalf of ACAP Chair, Ulrik Westman. She reported that ACAP had focused much of its work over the year on the reduction of pollution through a variety of pilot projects that aimed to gather specific field experiences and acquire and share best practices among countries.

Ms. Wiese also reported that ACAP produced a series of fact sheets on 1) community-level measures to reduce emissions of black carbon, 2) mitigation of emissions from associated petroleum gas flaring and 3) greenhouse gas and ozone depleting substances reductions from fish and seafood processing. Video on black carbon reduction case studies is also being produced. Local environmental observing network has expanded and reached communities from across the Arctic.

ACAP plans to continue to work on short-lived climate pollutants, hazardous waste, POPs and mercury as well as address the issue of solid waste including plastics especially through IPCAP, which was welcomed by the SAOs.

## 4.3 EPPR

Chair Jens Peter Holst Andersen highlighted phase II of the small communities' outreach project that aims to build awareness through up to three short videos, including trailers for easy sharing on social media. The videos demonstrate basic oil pollution response principles, planning for an initial community-based pollution response and highlight the risks of oil pollution and their impacts to Arctic communities. This first deliverable will be ready for approval at the SAOX in March 2019 followed by distribution to small communities.

The EPPR Chair provided a status report on the Framework Plan for Oil Pollution Prevention and Response (FPOPP). This deliverable was developed in collaboration with PAME and provides a Google form that captures follow-up activities from relevant stakeholders in the Arctic.

The MOSPA 2018 table top exercise 'After Action Report' and updated MOSPA 'Operating Guidelines' were presented as EPPR's third deliverable to be approved at the March 2019 SAOX. The report focuses on the comparison of communication and notification protocols established under the Copenhagen and MOSPA agreements, and highlights the use of EPPR



products, website tools as well as social media. It also looks at the liaisons and efforts of cooperation between EPPR and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, through the SAR EG.

The United States encouraged the Arctic Council to continue supporting MOSPA table top exercises in the future, and to maintain close collaboration with the ACGF. The EPPR's plan to possibly establish cooperation with other Arctic Council WGs on wildfires/forest fires was welcomed and was overall seen as an important initiative requiring serious consideration for action. Also, EPPR plans to work on maritime search and rescue operations in a radio-nuclear scenario was welcomed.

## 4.4 PAME

Ms. Soffia Guðmundsdóttir, PAME's Executive Secretary, presented PAME's progress report on behalf of PAME Chair Renée Sauvé. She summarized some of the key activities currently being worked on for inclusion into PAME's 2017-2019 Work Plan largely focused on the following areas for deliverables and planned work for 2019-.

- Marine Protected Areas and co-operation with CAFF on MPAs and Invasive Alien Species;
- Arctic Marine Shipping, including Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum summary report and web-portal; Heavy Fuel Oil information paper and report; a state of knowledge report on underwater noise; report on safe/low impact shipping corridors; Arctic Ship Traffic Data summary report and database; Regional Reception Facilities Plan outline and planning guide;
- Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAM), including guidelines for EA implementation;
- Arctic Offshore Resource Exploration and Development, including Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples in Marine activities (MEMA) report and database;
- Marine Pollution, namely desktop study on marine litter and microplastics in the Arctic.

PAME's initiative on establishing a cooperative Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) was welcomed as well as PAME's MEMA project, which seeks meaningful engagement with Arctic indigenous peoples through different types of collaborations and knowledge co-production. In addition, PAME's work on marine litter, Heavy Fuel Oil and harmonized implementation of the Polar Code was welcomed and further work anticipated.

## 4.5 CAFF

Chair Cynthia Jacobson provided a summary of CAFF's most recent work on mainstreaming biodiversity in the mining industry through a user-driven approach. A workshop on the issue is planned to be held in Anchorage, Alaska, USA in February 2019 and in Finland in March 2019.

Biodiversity themes are discussed in more detail on the second day of the Rovaniemi SAO meeting. Here, the CAFF Chair summarized concrete deliverables for the 2019 Ministerial.

- Advancing biodiversity conservation through State of the Arctic Freshwater Biodiversity report, through the project on mainstreaming biodiversity in the Arctic with a focus on the mining industry, the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program strategic plan for 2018-2021, and through the Arctic Coastal biodiversity monitoring plan;
- Informing decisions through Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative for 2018-2021, providing advice on Arctic freshwater biodiversity monitoring, and a report from phase 1 of the Resilience and management of Arctic Wetlands initiative.
- Engaging people through initiatives such as the Arctic Biodiversity Congress, the Salmon People of Arctic Rivers meeting and CAFF's Arctic Youth Initiative: Inspiring Arctic voices through Youth.

Delegates expressed their appreciation for CAFF's ongoing initiatives and its efforts to collaborate with other WGs such as PAME on cross-cutting issues. The ongoing work with the mining industry was welcomed as a good example toward closer cooperation with the private sector.

## 4.6 SDWG

Chair Pekka Shemeikka reported that the SDWG currently had 26 projects organized under 12 priorities that were in progress or under development and carried out in accordance with the new *SDWG Strategic Framework* approved at the Fairbanks Ministerial in May 2017. He highlighted, among others, the increased activity in the SDWG related to education in the Arctic as well as the work on gender equality. The importance of SDWG's efforts on economic issues was emphasized in some of the comments.

The SDWG Chair noted that the SDWG seeks further guidance from the SAOs regarding the future disposition of ARAF, such as the nature of, and responsibility for, any ARAF follow-on work during the Icelandic Chairmanship and implementation of recommendations flowing from the ARAF and ARF (i.e. whether to continue to gather good examples of resilience from the Arctic; whether to organize a 2<sup>nd</sup> ARF; and/or whether SDWG Secretariat or ACS should provide secretariat support). The SAOs thanked the SDWG for the successfully organized resilience forum and decided to discuss next steps of the ARAF in their spring 2019 meeting, when the ARF report as well as the report of the ARAF implementation project is expected to be at their disposal.

## 5. Report from UN HLPF event

The SDWG Chair Pekka Shemeikka reported on the Arctic Council's presentation held at UN headquarters in New York on 17 July 2018 as part of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). At the Arctic side-event at the HLPF, speakers from the Arctic States, Permanent Participants, Working Groups, and Observers talked about their own experiences, concerns, and visions for the Arctic, as well as their hopes that the Arctic can provide inspiration to other regions. Arctic cooperation received positive attention at this event and a suggestion was made to organize similar side-events regularly.

## 6. Report from the Arctic Resilience Forum

Under this agenda point, Finland presented the outcomes from the first ARF which was held on 10-11 September 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland. Ministerial Adviser from the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry, Saara Lilja-Rothsten, underlined in her remarks that expertise needs to be shared between various partners and stakeholders to work towards building resilience in the Arctic, in particular when dealing with issues of biodiversity where a holistic and human perspective needs to be at the core of the Arctic Council's work. She noted the need for hydro-meteorological data to support efforts to reduce vulnerability to extreme weather conditions. She also highlighted the importance to prevent risks in advance and use education and awareness-raising as one important tool. During the discussions, some regarded ARF as an event that could be useful to be organized on a biannual basis, but it was also highlighted that there should be a review of ARAF before next steps were decided upon.

## 7. Presentations by the EGBCM and Task Forces on their work 2017-19

### 7.1 EGBCM

Chair Mikael Hildén provided an update on the status of the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM), which held its fifth meeting in Helsinki in September 2018. He reported that the expert group was progressing according to the plan with the upcoming Summary of Progress and Recommendations Report 2019. The report aims to deliver a readable and informative document for the intended audience that includes policy makers and interest groups in the Arctic and Observer countries. The report would include open biomass burning and forest fires as new areas of the EGBCM work. The group also foresees to produce some new recommendations. Cooperation with in particular AMAP and ACAP

has been close. The contribution of the EU black carbon project is also thankfully acknowledged.

The Chair informed the delegates that most states had submitted national reports on black carbon and methane emissions to the EGBCM technical group. According to preliminary assessments, progress can be tracked, but lack of data makes the conclusions uncertain. Up-to-date data would be needed especially for emissions from the Russian Federation. More data from Observer countries would also be useful. Information on specific actions to reduce emissions (to be included as an appendix to the report) is important for understanding how the work is progressing. The EGBCM Chair also noted that to achieve results, innovations suitable for Arctic conditions should be developed and shared. For example, an initiative launched by the [Finnish Climate Leadership Coalition](#) will be one way to showcase initiatives that could be disseminated by ACAP.

In the discussion, Norway called for concrete actions and was willing to look at the possibility to make the common aspirational goal more ambitious. The U.S. noted that their internal policies were at the moment being reviewed and that they emphasize economic growth and access to affordable energy. On a practical level, significant emissions reductions were taking place. The Russian Federation emphasized their commitment to implement concrete projects on the ground, including replacing fuel oil with LNG in shipping. Finland highlighted the importance of the work of the EGBCM and the commitment to the common aspirational goal. Canada was pleased with the progress with implementing the emission reduction goal and noted that Canada would be achieving a 26 per cent reduction. The Kingdom of Denmark emphasized the need to engage the Observer states in the good work of the EGBCM.

## 7.2 TFICA

Co-Chair Marjukka Vihavainen-Pitkänen provided an update on the work of the Task Force on Improved Connectivity in Arctic (TFICA). TFICA was mandated by the Fairbanks Ministerial in 2017 to work with industry and the Arctic Economic Council (AEC) to encourage the creation of improved connectivity in the Arctic. The task force has focused its work on researching and understanding new technologies for connectivity in Arctic environments, identifying best practices in the telecommunications industry and learning about the industry's expertise. The Co-Chair reported that the TFICA was currently drafting a report with recommendations to be delivered at the Ministerial Meeting in May 2019.

Ms. Vihavainen-Pitkänen asked specific guidance from the SAOs on the following questions by TFICA concerning possible future options for connectivity work within Arctic cooperation.

- Should the Arctic Council establish a joint Task Force with the Connectivity Working Group (CWG) of the AEC?
- Should future work on connectivity be led by the CWG of the AEC with input from the Arctic States, PPs and WGs?
- Should connectivity be discussed regularly through thematic discussions at SAO

meetings?

- Should future work on connectivity be led by one of the Arctic Council's WGs?

Several delegates recognized the importance of moving forward in collaboration with the AEC to find practical solutions for connectivity issues across the Arctic. However, a concern regarding an Arctic Council/AEC joint task force on connectivity was that it could potentially pose problems of representation and competitiveness as not the entire telecommunications industry is represented at the AEC. There was general agreement that connectivity should remain high on the Arctic Council's agenda also after TFICA delivers its report in May 2019. Pan-Arctic connectivity needs were particularly highlighted. The United States suggested that the Arctic Council should appoint a high-profile individual (sherpa). Public-private partnerships were mentioned as being vital arrangements (i.e. funding) to bring more connectivity to users in the region.

### 7.3 TFAMC

Co-Chair Anita Mäkinen provided an update on the work of the Task Force II on Arctic Marine Cooperation, which was mandated to address the functional needs for improved marine co-operation in the Arctic Council. Dr. Mäkinen informed the delegates that based on additional instructions from the SAOs in February 2018, the TFAMC II had redirected its work toward developing "recommendations for potential complementary enhancements to existing Arctic Council mechanisms" that include the possibility of dedicated SAO sessions as requested by the SAOs in their meeting last March in Levi. She noted that the proposed complementary enhancements could not fulfil all of the identified functional needs.

Co-Chair Mäkinen reported that the TFAMC II had concluded to recommend a SAO-based mechanism to coordinate and guide the marine work of the Arctic Council. This would include convening annual meetings with invited marine experts to provide a holistic discussion on marine issues. The meetings would be conducted in connection with the SAO meetings and they would follow the SAO meeting rules. The deliverable from the TFAMC to the ministerial will be a short report by the Co-Chairs.

Several delegations welcomed TFAMC II's report and recommendation on establishing a SAO mechanism to guide marine policy. Arctic Council leadership on marine issues is needed. Some proposed a unified marine work plan for the Arctic Council and others emphasized the need to take into consideration the role of PAME and the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan in this process. The importance to take into account indigenous expertise in marine issues was also emphasized. Some questions were raised about the costs of a dedicated SAO meeting mechanism as well as the SAOs capacity to provide guidance through it. It was also noted that there should be a possibility to re-establish the TFAMC in the future, if needed, especially to address regional cooperation on area-based stewardship.

## 8. Report from the Arctic Environment Ministers' Meeting

Henna Haapala from the Ministry of the Environment of Finland presented the outcomes and the draft Chair's Summary document of the Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting (AEMM) which took place on 11-12 October 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland. It was the first time in five years that Environment ministers of the Arctic states had convened around the issue of environmental protection in the Arctic.

The Arctic 'Environmental Super Week' in Rovaniemi kicked off on 9 October 2018 with CAFF's Arctic Biodiversity Congress which was opened by Finnish President Sauli Niinistö. The first day of the AEMM was devoted to dialogue between ministers, PPs and WGs to take stock of the Arctic Council, as well as other international work on environmental challenges in the Arctic, with focus on knowledge and action. After the mornings' discussions at the AEMM, a Talanoa lunch session was organized around the theme of Changes in the Arctic with ministers and PP HoDs. In the afternoon, an AEMM ministerial panel and interactive discussion took place at plenary session of the Arctic Biodiversity Congress. This panel was preceded by a panel reporting on the outcomes from the Arctic Youth Summit, organized by CAFF and WWF. This included the presentation of a declaration developed by the Youth Summit to the Environment Ministers ([download here](#)). The second day of the AEMM was devoted to common solutions to Arctic environmental challenges. The Arctic ministers and PPs were convened to a morning ministerial discussion where they provided brief statements. Arctic Council WGs and Observers were in attendance.

The main outcome of the AEMM was a Chair's Summary that is [available online](#) and can be used in preparation for the Arctic Council Ministerial to be held next May in Rovaniemi.

Delegates thanked Finland for its efforts to organize the AEMM and the quality of the meeting overall. They agreed that the AEMM was a good opportunity to exchange information between governments, PPs and WGs. It was also noted that the holding of the Ministerial in conjunction with the Arctic Biodiversity Congress provided a good way to illustrate the connection between science and policy.

It was noted that Arctic climate issues were very visible in the discussions of the AEMM and a clear need for ambitious action to mitigate climate change was underlined by the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1,5°C [released](#) just before the AEMM. The need for further cooperation and worldwide action on marine litter was another important theme. Participation of indigenous peoples, especially in the nature conservation activities was also highlighted.

## 9. Update on the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation (2017)

SAO for the Kingdom of Denmark Hanne Fugl Eskjær provided a status update of the planning of the implementation of the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation that entered into force in May 2018. She reported that a Point of Contacts network was established in all eight Arctic states with competent authorities who were identified for implementation coordination. The inaugural implementation meeting is planned for 11 March 2019, just before the next SAO meeting. She further noted that the Danish Ministry of Science and Education had been in contact with IASC and other scientists to explore different options on how they can be involved in the agreement.

Further discussion will be needed on the practical issues regarding the implementation, including identifying exactly whom scientists are to contact with questions under the agreement, and whether a standard or template should be developed for this.

## 10. Report from the UArctic Congress

Vice-President Outi Snellman provided an update on the UArctic Congress that took place on 3-7 September 2018 in Oulu and Helsinki, Finland. UArctic is the largest university network in the world with over 200 member institutions. The UArctic network fosters sustainable development and knowledge exchange in the Arctic region for the benefit of the North, as well as the world. It is committed to work with the people of the Arctic and seeks to promote higher education amongst Northerners. UArctic membership is broad ranging from all Arctic and Observer states, as well as different partnerships with Observer organizations. The Vice-President reported that the UArctic Congress gathered over 600 participants coming from 30 different countries to discuss issues of Arctic environmental protection, connectivity, education and training, SDG goals, climate change, which are all themes aligned with the Finnish Chairmanship.

During the discussion, the Saami Council praised UArctic for its efforts to include indigenous issues up front on the program, as well as gender issues. The SAO Chair commended UArctic for mainstreaming gender equality at its Congress.

## 11. Report from the Second Arctic Scientific Ministerial Meeting

The EU's Ambassador at Large for the Arctic Marie-Anne Coninx provided a report on the outcomes of the Second Arctic Scientific Ministerial meeting, co-hosted by the EU Commission, Finland and Germany, that took place on 25-26 October 2018 in Berlin. In total, 25 governments and the EU took part in the event which brought together 280 scientists and science managers to discuss the most urgent steps to advance Arctic research. A total of 206 projects were presented to the delegates and ministers attending the meeting, which was organized as a Science Forum on day one, and a ministerial meeting on day two. The ministerial meeting focused on three themes: 1) observation, data and research infrastructure; 2) understanding Arctic change, and; 3) assessing vulnerability and building resilience. An improved and better-coordinated international scientific effort in these themes provides opportunities to advance capacity to understand and respond to rapid change and major challenges in the Arctic and globally.

The [Joint Statement of Ministers](#) was one of the main outcomes of the meeting. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Arctic Science Ministerial will be hosted by Japan in cooperation with the incoming Chair of the Arctic Council, Iceland.

The Ministerial was found very well organized and useful and PPs thanked the organizers for integrating indigenous representatives in the discussions and also providing financial support. Strong Arctic indigenous representation was found especially important when Arctic issues are discussed with non-Arctic actors.

## 12. Thematic discussion: biodiversity in the Arctic

In the thematic discussion, CAFF and other WGs reported on how they worked to promote *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-2021*, the implementation plan for the recommendations of the *Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA)*.

CAFF Chair Cynthia Jacobson opened the discussion by underlining how the ABA was the foundation of all work on biodiversity in the Arctic Council and that the *Actions for Biodiversity 2013-2021* provides the framework to guide, follow-up on and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of the ABA recommendations. She noted that the presentations of the thematic discussion were designed to demonstrate how each WG was implementing the recommendations of the ABA. The ABA recommendations are directed to the Arctic Council as a whole. While some are intended to be implemented through CAFF, others are intended to be led in full, or in part, by other Arctic Council working groups and other subsidiary bodies. Some recommendations will require action by national authorities, stakeholders, and international organizations.



CAFF's Executive Secretary Tom Barry provided a general overview of the outcomes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arctic Biodiversity Congress (ABC) which was held in Rovaniemi in October 2018 in conjunction with the Arctic Environment Ministers meeting (AEMM), gathering a total of more than 500 participants from around the world. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ABC was the largest Arctic Council event ever held.

While the 1<sup>st</sup> ABC looked was focused on baselines and knowledge gaps this 2nd Congress reflecting the theme of the Arctic Environment Ministers meeting – *from knowledge to Action* had a stronger focus on actions and applying the knowledge we have in response to changes and challenges being faced in the Arctic.

Mr. Barry explained how the ABC provided a great platform to showcase the work the Arctic Council and facilitate people across disciplines to engage and form new approaches and partnerships. It was noted that organization of the ABC entailed participation from all WGs both in terms of planning and organization of common sessions and activities during the ABC.

The overriding message coming from the ABC was that there is an urgent need for action if the Paris targets are to be achieved. There is also a need for the Arctic Council to find new tools and improved ways to ensure that the work of its WGs, their findings and recommendations are communicated more effectively to policy makers.

## Theme 1: Advancing biodiversity conservation. Providing tools and information to understand and manage threats to biodiversity.

### *Key pressures on biodiversity*

AMAP Chair Marianne Kroglund provided an overview of key pressures on Arctic biodiversity. Human activities are increasingly causing profound and observable changes to biodiversity and ecosystems in the Arctic region, through local activities such as tourism, infrastructure development and land-use change, as well as remotely through pollution, climate change and ocean acidification.

In the Arctic region, climate change is evident and far reaching, and the consequences for marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems are fundamental. In marine ecosystems, temperature increase, and loss of sea ice are powerful drivers of change. Ocean acidification will have serious consequences for the entire Arctic marine ecosystem. Changes in land ice, snow cover and permafrost have direct impacts on Arctic freshwater ecosystems and associated ecosystem services, including water quality and food provisioning in northern communities. She emphasized that the risks to Arctic natural and human managed systems can be kept at a manageable level, if the global increase in temperature is kept at a maximum of 1.5 degrees.

Ms. Kroglund reported that despite regulation, Persistent Organic Pollutants and Mercury is an ongoing challenge in the Arctic. There is also a growing concern about new, largely unmonitored chemicals entering the Arctic from remote sources. There is limited knowledge on the ecological impact of multiple stressors in the Arctic, such as climate change and pollution combined with indirect impacts from habitat loss and habitat fragmentation. She underlined that the development towards ecosystem-based management (EBM) is an effective, coordinated and coherent way of managing ecosystems and ecosystem services in changing conditions, also taking multiple stressors into account. Ms. Kroglund stressed the importance of data access and data-sharing (e.g., between AMAP and IASC through the SAON) and acknowledged the contributions all experts and groups have made to the work produced thus far.

#### *Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program*

CAFF's Executive Secretary Tom Barry provided an overview of CAFF's work under the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP). The challenge is to harness the knowledge to inform decision making in the face of cumulative and accelerating change in the vast Arctic region. The CBMP is a key tool via which CAFF works to achieve this and to ensure implementation of a range of recommendations from the ABA.

Recent important products from the CBMP include the first report on the state of the Arctic marine biodiversity released in 2017, providing a synthesis of the state of knowledge about biodiversity in Arctic marine ecosystems, detectable changes, and important gaps in our ability to assess state and trends in biodiversity. The report also identifies knowledge gaps in circumpolar biodiversity monitoring and provides advice for improved monitoring. A report on the state of freshwater biodiversity and advice for monitoring and the Arctic coastal biodiversity Monitoring plan (the final of four ecosystem monitoring plans to be developed by the CBMP) will be delivered to the Arctic Council Ministerial in May 2019. The State of Arctic Terrestrial Biodiversity report is scheduled for 2019. These reports are adopting innovative new ways in which to communicate more effectively the outcomes of the CBMP activities.

#### *Pan-Arctic Network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Toolbox and the Implementation of the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan*

Jan Ekebon, Finnish HoD to PAME, reported that PAME's expert group on MPAs continued to work closely with CAFF within the framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of MPAs and the MPA Toolbox. The toolbox is based on a cross-disciplinary approach among international scientists, managers, indigenous experts to inform decision makers, practitioners, indigenous peoples, and stakeholders involved in developing the MPA networks and ecosystem-based management in the marine Arctic. It focusses on "other measures" for achieving desired network conservation objectives and outcomes as additional tools for designing Arctic MPA networks. The toolbox also provides reports which summarize key findings and next steps, as well as case studies.

Several delegates congratulated CAFF's team for the successful second Arctic Biodiversity Congress which has become a key platform to share and gain knowledge on a multitude of key issues. Many underlined their satisfaction with the crosscutting collaboration that is deepening between Arctic Council WGs with the example highlighted of how WGs cooperated on the Arctic Biodiversity Congress. The Kingdom of Denmark, co-lead of the CBMP, noted that a milestone had been achieved with the biodiversity and ecosystem assessments, and the connected well-functioning networks of experts, and that further discussions should be had with other WGs to plan future steps.

## Theme 2: Informing decisions. Affecting biodiversity outcomes: Actions that directly or indirectly impact biodiversity decision making.

### *Marine environmental response, prevention and risk assessment*

Chair Jens Peter Holst Andersen informed delegates that EPPR approaches biodiversity through prevention and response to avoid damage to ecosystems from accidental releases of pollutants. He noted that EPPR aims to ultimately conduct a full-scale circumpolar risk assessment, but this objective will be difficult to achieve in near future. Several actions should be developed and implemented to enhance pollution prevention and response, such as i) risk-based contingency planning; ii) gaining knowledge of risks; iii) sharing standards for input data to risk assessments; iv) data-sharing; v) enhanced cooperation on cross-sectoral issues and at the inter-state level; vi) inclusion and involvement from all stakeholders.

EPPR's project Risk Assessment Methods and Metadata is a step wise approach towards a full Circumpolar Marine Environmental Risk Assessment. It seeks to develop a guideline document and practical tool box for decision makers which will provide simple data access (i.e., a one stop shop) and a platform to compare between risk assessments from various regions.

### *The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative*

CAFF Chair Cynthia Jacobson offered an overview on the progress achieved with the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI) which is a project designed to improve the status and secure the long-term sustainability of declining Arctic breeding migratory bird populations. She noted that two major stressors are being addressed in this context: loss of habitat and illegal killing of migratory birds. AMBI works with many Arctic and non-Arctic partner countries and organizations to support and initiate actions that target priority species and conservation issues both within the northern and southern hemispheres. She also highlighted a new initiative focused on plastics in seabirds and funded by the PSI. CAFF is arranging the first Arctic Council event in China, an AMBI meeting scheduled for December 5-8, 2018 in Changjiang, Hainan, PR China.

In the comments, the importance of risk assessment was highlighted, and CAFF was thanked for its work on the conservation of Arctic migratory birds. The importance of engaging Observers in WG activities was emphasized with AMBI noted as a good example on how this can be achieved. CAFF noted that a 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration of the AMBI work plan is being prepared as a 2019 Ministerial deliverable. It was also noted that AMBI is facilitating cooperation within the East Asian Australian flyway regarding illegal hunting of birds.

## Theme 3: Engaging people in biodiversity conservation

### *Human Dimension on Biodiversity*

SDWG Chair Pekka Shemeikka explained that through its work the SDWG aims to engage with local communities and Arctic peoples. It seeks to build the Arctic knowledge base and help understand the economic, cultural, social and health relationships between biodiversity and humans. For example, the SDWG *One Health* project is especially relevant through its unique approach that seeks to assess the potential health effects at the human-animal-ecosystem interface. This can greatly enhance scientific understandings of potential threats to Arctic communities and ecosystems, including food security.

### *Circumpolar Local Environmental Observers' Network (CLEO) and Solid waste management*

Inger Johanne Wiese provided an overview of the CLEO network framework. CLEO's mobile app, which was launched in February 2016, is in its second phase. It has expanded from North America to the Nordic countries and has also begun outreach to Russian indigenous communities. Ms. Wiese invited WGs, PPs, Observers and other relevant stakeholders to provide input that would greatly benefit the use and expansion of CLEO.

On solid waste management, Ms. Wiese provided a summary of ACAP's future collaborative efforts to contribute to cleaner water, air and land waste management in remote communities. These efforts will include assessments for at-risk communities, share best practices, create action plans and prioritize issues to assist Arctic communities. Current and future ACAP work include: a) the clean-up of Saami territory in the Murmansk Region; and b) a Solid Waste Management Project with SDWG.

### *Marine litter outreach efforts*

Soffia Guðmundsdóttir, Executive Secretary provided an overview of PAME's work on marine litter outreach efforts. She informed delegates that currently marine litter represents 150 million tonnes of plastic in the world's oceans. Every minute, the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic is dumped into our oceans. By 2050, plastics in the ocean will outweigh fish. To create awareness and encourage action and change, PAME is developing a project video; has organized a marine litter workshop; plans a litter competition and will send capsules afloat with GPS transmitters to raise awareness about plastic litter especially among the youth.

### *Salmon Peoples of Arctic Rivers*

Cynthia Jacobson provided an overview on CAFF's Salmon People of Arctic Rivers project which brings together Traditional Knowledge (TK) holders, scientists and resource agencies to design an assessment of freshwater river systems based on TK. The design of this holistic assessment will focus on "Salmon peoples" as a measure of ecosystem health and outline future data needs that could contribute to the resilience and adaptation of these peoples and the salmon populations upon which they depend.

The initiative is focused on the Yukon/Kuskokwim drainage systems (flowing through the U.S. and Canada, the territories used by Athabaskan and Gwich'in tribes, and some Alaska Native tribes represented by the ICC); the Kamchatka River drainage (flowing through the Siberian region of the Russian Federation, territories used by Russian Indigenous peoples); and the Deatnu/Teno River drainage (flowing through the Lapland region of Finland and Finnmark County of Norway, the territories used by Saami). Salmon on these river systems are in most cases undergoing changes that challenge the food security of the peoples who rely upon them.

A first workshop was held in Anchorage in February 2018 and work is underway to deliver a report from this first phase for the 2019 Ministerial.

### *Inspiring Arctic Voices*

CAFF Chair Cynthia Jacobson informed delegates that the purpose of the Inspiring Arctic Voices youth program is to provide a platform for youth from around the world to help raise awareness about the Arctic, and to engage in international discussions about Arctic issues, strategies, and policies. This initiative is helping advance a number of CAFF Working Group priorities and broader Arctic Council mandates expressed in Ministerial Declarations having to do with meaningful engagement of Arctic communities, international collaboration, and engagement with observers.

Over the last year, youth representatives were engaged through online webinars, meetings and youth exchanges. The first Arctic Youth Summit was organized by CAFF and WWF in conjunction with the ABC. The outcome of that event was the [Arctic Youth Summit Rovaniemi Declaration](#) which was presented to the Arctic Environment Ministers. One of the representatives from the youth program, Stephanie Pike, from Yukon Territory, Canada, was invited by CAFF to share with the SAO plenary three actionable requests for the SAOs as follows.

- 1) Support future Arctic Youth Summits to help allow the program to continue to grow;
- 2) Allow Arctic Youth Summit ambassadors have the opportunity to present their work at the Ministerial Meeting in May 2019; and
- 3) Facilitate communication between the youth ambassadors and the SAOs to discuss the Rovaniemi Declaration.

The outcomes of the Youth Summit were welcomed and it was highlighted as an inspiring initiative to engage the next generation in Arctic issues. Also addressing solid waste and plastic litter was found highly relevant. Integration of indigenous peoples in the planning of protected areas and in initiatives such as the Salmon Peoples were found important.

## 13. Arctic Council Side Event at UNFCCC COP 24

Ministerial Adviser Henna Haapala from the Ministry of the Environment of Finland provided an update on the preparations for the Arctic Council side event at UNFCCC COP 24 that will take place next December 2018 in Katowice, Poland. She reported that an application had been submitted to the organizers for the Arctic Council to report about black carbon and its impacts in the Arctic, on the one hand, and the impact of black carbon pollution on air quality and health. While the side event is now confirmed, the date has yet to be revealed to the Finnish Chairmanship, which has halted the process of confirming speakers.

Ms. Haapala also informed delegates of another side event with CAFF at the COP 14 of the Convention of Biodiversity on 28 November 2018. She invited all delegates to deliver information about both of these Arctic side-events.

Finland informed the delegates that it had prepared a funding package of approximately 2 million euros for initiatives to reduce black carbon. These include support to the work of the World Bank, Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the OECD. ICC highlighted the UNFCCC platform for indigenous peoples and asked for support from all states for the platform. AMAP informed that in Minamata COP-2 an Arctic side event would be organized by AMAP and UNEP.

## 14. Briefing by the Arctic Economic Council

Chair Tero Vauraste provided an update on the activities of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC). Mr. Vauraste reported that the AEC now had a new WG on investment and infrastructure that works with potential investors in the Arctic. Up to date, the AEC has organized three summits on connectivity with information that could be useful and shared with the Arctic Council who also has a working focus on this issue. The AEC will propose a statement to ministers on connectivity.

Mr. Vauraste informed the delegates that the AEC had cross-border trade high on its agenda and would continue to work on how free trade mechanisms could potentially be utilized in the context of Arctic economies (e.g., obtaining certificates to work in different jurisdictions).

He also acknowledged that the AEC was fully aware that the majority of jobs in the Arctic are provided by small-medium enterprises, including micro-businesses, and that more

indigenous involvement and an increased focus on sustainable development would be priorities noted in the AEC's new protocol which is under development. He also noted that the AEC is open to membership outside the Arctic, does not limit the number of businesses from individual countries other than the three legacy seats, and that it will continue to address issues of youth involvement in its work.

The Kingdom of Denmark summarized their on-going work that address financing schemes for start-ups and small companies in the Arctic, with close coordinating with the AEC. A report, hopefully useful to all, would be ready by the end of the year and could be discussed in the next SAO meeting.

AEC was thanked for managing a broad scope of activities. The PPs also raised their own business co-operation mechanisms as well as the need to make the Arctic investment protocol more comprehensive. One PP representative expressed concerns about the experience of its business representatives with the AEC. It cautioned that the AC should encourage the AEC to adopt some of the AC practices with respect to indigenous inclusion should the AC seek closer cooperation with the AEC. Successful co-operation and the potential to engage even more with the AC Working Groups was highlighted.

## 15. The Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2019-2021: 'Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic'

SAO for Iceland Bryndís Kjartánsdóttir presented a preliminary program for the Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2019-21. With an overarching theme on sustainable development, Iceland's Chairmanship seeks to build on good work already in progress within the Arctic with a focus on four areas.

**Arctic Marine Environment:** SAO Kjartánsdóttir explained that Iceland will aim to foster continued cooperation on marine issues, in particular on: i) plastic pollution in the Arctic Ocean; ii) safety at sea and pollution prevention; iii) ocean acidification; and iv) Arctic marine tourism. She noted that Iceland will also seek to introduce innovation and efficient utilisation of marine biological resources.

**Climate and Green Energy Solutions:** Iceland will aim to introduce a digital elevation model of Arctic glaciers and freshwater inflow and accumulation in the Arctic Ocean. Moreover, it will seek to sustain continued cooperation on further solutions for non-fossil fuel energy production in small Arctic communities and on work to address black carbon and methane.

**People in the Arctic:** Iceland will introduce new preventative measures targeted at young people and shall seek to maintain cooperation on i) improved connectivity; ii) adaptation and resilience; iii) biodiversity issues; iv) mercury; and v) gender equality in the Arctic.

**Strengthening the Arctic Council:** i) enhancing the coordination of communications; ii) tightening the ties with relevant International Organizations; and iii) seeking greater participation of Observers with the Arctic Council's work. SAO Kjartánsdóttir also pointed out that Iceland will seek to enhance collaboration between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council.

The participants expressed their support to Iceland's plans.

## 16. Any other business

Norway expressed their wish to see many of the SAO meeting participants at the Arctic Frontiers to be organized in Tromsø 20-25 January 2019.

## 17. Observer Special Session

### 17.1. Warsaw Format Meetings

Poland's Head of Delegation Piotr Rakowski provided an update of the Warsaw format meetings of Arctic Council Observer states. The Warsaw format initiative was launched in 2010 between the Observer states and the EU and is planned to be continued, perhaps on an annual basis and perhaps not always in Poland.

### 17.2 Interventions by Observers: Biodiversity in the Arctic

SAOC invited Observers interested in presenting their work on biodiversity in the Arctic to present short statements to the delegates of the plenary meeting during an Observer special session. The following Observers and the EU accepted the Chair's invitation to speak.

#### *Observer States*

- China;
- France;
- Germany;
- India;
- Italy;
- Japan;
- Singapore;
- South Korea;
- Spain;
- Switzerland;
- United Kingdom.



### *Intergovernmental and interparliamentary organizations*

- Nordic Council of Ministers;
- UN Environment.

### *Non-governmental organizations*

- Arctic Institute of North America;
- Association of World Reindeer Headers;
- International Arctic Science Committee;
- IASSA;
- Northern Forum;
- OCEANA;
- World Wide Fund for Nature-Global Arctic Program.

Prior to Observer statements on Arctic biodiversity, CAFF Executive Secretary Tom Barry introduced a video on migratory birds which highlighted how collaborative initiatives and institutional arrangements between the Arctic Council and non-Arctic actors can strengthen regional-transnational cooperation and help protect endangered species such as migratory birds, especially in areas of East-Asia where these species are experiencing unprecedented decline.

Several Observers reported that they attached great importance to the protection of Arctic migratory birds and have also taken part in the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI). For example, in Singapore alone, over 30 species of migratory birds make their annual 'winter holidays' to Singapore's Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserves. The People's Republic of China is geographically located as a transit country for the Arctic migratory birds along East Asian-Australasian flyway and will host the next AMBI workshop in December. As for the EU, it has applied legislation directly to the territories of EU Arctic States through its EU Birds Directive established to protect wild bird species naturally occurring within its jurisdictions.

Overall, the Observers shared information on how their policy actions are designed to safeguard biodiversity at the international, national and local levels. Continued efforts to support long-term monitoring practices at a pan-Arctic scale were mentioned, as well as the importance of coordinating Observer activities on Arctic biodiversity with those of the Arctic Council WGs, EGs and TFs.

Other key work areas and policy development initiatives mentioned by Observers during the special session included the following.

- Active involvement in the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) as well as partnering with the IASC network of expertise to provide, share and acquire data;
- Governmental commitment to the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)'s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020); aiming to achieve Aichi Targets; the 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) as national priorities;

- Working on Marine Protected Areas, specifically whether and how the Arctic Council would respond to the proposal for an Arctic marine protected area by the Oslo-Paris Commission (OSPAR);
- Funding national projects and supporting the participation expert researchers in Arctic and non-Arctic international initiatives, as well as participating in the Arctic Council's WGs, in particular in the areas of tracking and understanding mercury contamination of Arctic seabirds and Arctic marine food webs; identifying pollution hotspots in the Arctic; studying the impact of emerging pollutants and their impact on Arctic marine biodiversity;
- Protecting biodiversity through transboundary cooperation and sustained efforts to work collaboratively between Arctic and non-Arctic states; scientists; indigenous peoples; and other stakeholders;
- Working with UN members on the negotiation of an agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction;

Full statements from the Observer special session on Arctic biodiversity of 2 November 2018 can be found on the [Arctic Council Repository](#) website.

## 18. Closing of the SAO meeting

In closing of the meeting, the SAO Chair thanked all participants for an active and useful debate. He paid tribute to GCI Head of Delegation, Ms. Ethel Blake, who was attending the Arctic Council meeting as GCI Head of Delegation for the last time. The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of all delegates to Ethel for her many years of insightful and inspiring participation in the Arctic Council.