

Switzerland - Observer Report 2018

Please describe in no more than two pages your state's or organization's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. Please detail any collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

Switzerland is known for its long-standing and reliable commitment to peaceful international cooperation with Arctic nations, ranging from a large number of joint research projects with Arctic partners to a strong engagement in sustainable development in the region through multilateral bodies.

The principles of promoting shared well-being, sustainable development, internal cohesion and cultural diversity, which are enshrined in the Swiss Federal Constitution, converge with the Arctic Council's overall objective of inclusiveness. As a country with outstanding research facilities, and as one of the most innovative countries worldwide, Switzerland is willing and able to provide valuable scientific contributions that could enhance the work of the Council.

Switzerland's high degree of involvement in the Arctic finds its motivation in the characteristics of Swiss landscape which has been shaped – like the Arctic – by the ice ages, and is composed of mountain ranges accommodating many glaciers, among them the largest ice flow of the Alps. Scientific exploration of the Arctic has consequently always been of particular importance to Switzerland. In the near future scientific collaboration with Arctic partners will receive a boost through new research endeavors.

Swiss research in the Arctic has a long tradition dating back to the 19th century. The very diverse array of research fields include geology, geo-ecology and geophysics, glaciology, climatic history, botany, archeology and anthropology. It is worth to mention that Switzerland's glaciology research in the Arctic is providing a substantial contribution to climate change research.

Swiss partnerships include a long track record of initiatives with partners from all Arctic Council Member States. Over the past decade, Swiss researchers have participated in several international Arctic projects involving multiple Arctic Council Member States. Switzerland's strong commitment to international polar research cooperation has led to fruitful scientific exchanges. The Swiss Committee on Polar and High Altitude Research (SKPH), of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences acts as an exchange and coordination platform for Swiss scientists at various international research institutions, and coordinates participation in the scientific work of the Arctic Council and of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC).

Swiss solidarity has led to a strong advocacy for indigenous issues in international fora. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is crucial for indigenous peoples and local communities. As stewards of natural resources over time, they know best how to strike the balance between economic development and environmental protection.

Both in the Arctic and in the Alps, the temperature will continue to increase more rapidly than the global average. Swiss research is focused on what this means for our societies, our economies and our environment. These activities need international scientific and logistic collaboration across all disciplines. This in an effort to better predict future local and global change.

At the 10th Arctic Council ministerial meeting, held in Fairbanks (Alaska) on 11 May 2017, the Arctic Council granted Switzerland the observer status. Since then, Switzerland has been represented at every Senior Arctic Officials Meeting of the Arctic Council and has presented its activities during the Observer special sessions.

Even before obtaining the observer status, Swiss experts and scientists were already involved in some of the Council's Working Groups and have monitored activities of other Subsidiary Bodies. The observer status has made it possible to increase the participation of Swiss contributions to the work and the objectives of the Arctic Council's Working Groups and Experts Groups (please find below a non-exhaustive list):

Working Groups:

AMAP:

Switzerland operates several regionally representative monitoring stations whose data can be used to validate the models employed for the AMAP scientific work. The data are freely available. Prof. Konrad Steffen, WSL/Swiss Polar Institute, contributes to AMAP, in particular through the project Snow, Water, Ice, Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA) assessment coordinated by AMAP.

Dr. Julia Schmale, Paul Scherrer Institute, regularly participates in the AMAP Expert Group (EG) Meeting on Short-Lived Climate Forcers. One of her specific contributions in this EG is to establish the link between the EG and PACES, the international initiative on "Arctic air pollution: Climate Environment and Society" hosted by IASC and the International Global Atmosphere Chemistry Community.

CAFF:

Dr. Gabriela Schaepman-Strub, University of Zürich, joined in March 2018 the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)'s Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) Terrestrial group and is representing Switzerland in this group. Dr. Schaepman-Strub is acting as an effective link between CAFF and IASC Terrestrial Working Group for biodiversity aspects. She participated in October 2018 in Rovaniemi at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress where she chaired a session on Pan-arctic assessment and data management of plant diversity and community.

SDWG:

Since October 2017, Switzerland, through the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, is covering this group with the aim of identifying areas/topics in which Switzerland could contribute.

Expert Groups:

Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM): Switzerland welcomes and supports the Arctic Council's initiatives on black carbon and methane emissions reduction. In July 2018, Switzerland submitted to the EGBCM its national report on policies and success to abate emissions of black carbon and methane. This report contains the actual data on emissions and emission estimates for the future, which are consistent with the data submitted to the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (UNECE CLRTAP) and to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your state's or organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

The Arctic Council is for Switzerland the leading intergovernmental forum to realize its policy goals. Observer status allows Switzerland to support the work of the Arctic Council and to put its expertise at the service of the various Working Groups, particularly in the field of interdisciplinary research related to the environment, especially on climate change and biodiversity. Switzerland will continue to promote international collaboration and synergies in Arctic research within the framework of international scientific projects related to the Arctic (predominantly from the eight Member States, Permanent Participants, Organizations and Observers of the Arctic Council).

Switzerland plans, fosters and supports the participation of Swiss delegates in Working Groups in which expertise can be provided. Furthermore, Switzerland is committed to continuing the support in the future of the work of the following particular Working Groups: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). A Swiss Polar Policy is in progress and is expected to be released in 2019.

As a new observer to the Arctic Council, Switzerland is still exploring the ways to better strengthen its presence and engagement in the Council's different initiatives. Switzerland's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council include:

- In partnership with relevant Swiss institutions, Switzerland is ready to host meetings of the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies.
- Switzerland will continue to work with the Swiss scientific community to provide information to the Working Groups.
- Switzerland intends to nominate new scientist/experts in the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and Experts Groups.
- Switzerland will continue to support the Arctic Council's initiatives on black carbon and methane emissions reduction.

- Switzerland wants to increase the monitoring activities on the Greenland ice sheet as a contribution to the Sustaining Arctic Observing Network (SAON), an initiative by the Arctic Council. The current Greenland Climate Network (GC-Net) automatic monitoring stations will be enhanced with additional sensors to measure all components of the mass balance to resolve mass change in climate sensitive regions on the ice sheet.
- While the Department of Foreign Affairs currently covers the SDWG, the possibility of being represented in the SDWG more consistently with an expert is currently investigated.
- Switzerland will continue to respect the values, interests, traditions and culture of Arctic indigenous peoples and other inhabitants of the Arctic and contributes to the advancement of Arctic concerns in global decision-making bodies, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Whaling Commission, as well as conventions on chemical compounds such as persistent organic pollutants and mercury.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your state's or organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.

Switzerland's strong commitment to international Arctic research cooperation has led to numerous scientific and political exchanges and initiatives.

In addition to the SAO meetings and ministerial meetings, Switzerland covers some other meetings and initiatives that take place in the context of the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Swiss delegates, officials and guests attended the following meetings:

- Warsaw Format Meeting (WFM) in Warsaw, a platform to exchange views between the Arctic Council Observer States and the EU as well as to allow discussion with current AC Chairmanship.
- Environment Ministers' Meeting, October 2018 in Rovaniemi
- Arctic Biodiversity Congress 2018
- Model Arctic Council, October 2018 in Rovaniemi

Switzerland has recently organized and contributed to the international conference POLAR2018, a joint activity of SCAR and IASC that took place in Davos, Switzerland in June 2018. At this occasion, the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW), the Arctic Observing Summit and the Open Science Conference have been hosted by the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL) under the patronage of the Swiss Committee on Polar and High Altitude Research (SKPH). On this occasion, the SAO Chair Aleksi Härkönen participated in a mini-symposium on Polar Science and Policy.

The Embassy of Finland, the Embassy of Sweden and the Norwegian Embassy, together with foraus - a Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy - and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, invited in March 2018 in Bern the SAOs of Finland, Sweden and Norway to the event: "The Arctic: Closer Than You Think". A visit to the High Altitude Research Stations at Jungfraujoeh - the highest research station in Europe that is accessible all year round - followed this event.

In 2016, the Swiss Polar Institute (SPI) was launched by a consortium of Swiss universities. This new institute coordinates and promotes research in both Polar Regions, as well as in the "Third Pole" (remote high altitude regions). The SPI has launched a series of small funding instruments and support measures to help Swiss researchers bridge funding gaps and bring their activities into a broader context. These instruments are open to all researchers based in Switzerland without thematic limitations. The SPI will launch a new expedition in summer 2019: the GreenLAND Circumnavigation Expedition (GLACE) will offer an unprecedented complete circumnavigation of Greenland in a single expedition lasting for an over 2-month period from August to September. The expedition will provide access to the remote – and as yet critically understudied – of Northern Greenland and provide a unique opportunity to investigate the marine, terrestrial, atmospheric, and cryospheric environments of the Arctic.

Swiss researchers will also contribute actively to the Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate (MOSAIC) initiative, leading two projects (one on snow and the other on atmospheric measurements) which will be implemented in 2019-2020. This unique year-long expedition will provide invaluable information about oceanic, ecological and atmospheric fluxes in the Arctic Ocean.

In order to promote exchanges and cooperation among all the stakeholders, Switzerland participates regularly to meetings, platforms, conferences and fora such as "Arctic Circle", "Arctic Frontiers", "Arctic Science Ministerial Meeting" and "The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue".

Through the promotion of Arctic art and culture, Switzerland contributes to the conservation of aspects of culture and creativity, tangible and intangible heritage and the diversity of cultural expressions in the Arctic. The Swiss Arctic Collections Network was initiated in 2017 by the following institutions: NONAM Nordamerika Native Museum Zurich, Historisches Museum Bern, Historisches und Völkerkundemuseum St.Gallen and Cerny Inuit Collection Bern. The aim of the network is a comprehensive exchange for people involved in Arctic collections in Switzerland.

Switzerland facilitated, through its Commissioner, at the 67th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission IWC the renewal of aboriginal subsistence hunting quotas for Denmark (Greenland), Russia (Chukotka), and the United States (Alaska).

Switzerland intends to continue its commitment to peaceful international cooperation and to research excellence. To find solutions to common challenges, Switzerland is willing to collaborate and work with all the Member States, Permanent Participants and other Observers of the Arctic Council.