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EPPR Progress report to SAOs, November 2020

EPPR-I 2020 meeting, 7-10 September, online

EPPR held its first meeting of 2020 online 7-10 September 2020. The plenary meeting was attended by 97 participants from all eight Arctic States, three Permanent Participant organization (AIA, ICC and GCI), five Observer States (Italy, Japan, Poland, Republic of Korea and Singapore), six Observer organizations (EU, IMO, UNEP, AINA, IASC, UArctic and WWF) and representatives from three other Working Groups (AMAP, PAME and SDWG). Representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Aarhus University attended as invited guests.

EPPR held a Joint Expert Group meeting on 7 September, and on 8 September, the Marine Environmental Response Expert Group (MER EG), Search and Rescue Expert Group (SAR EG) and the Radiation Expert Group (RAD EG) each held 5-hour meetings. A Heads of Delegation meeting was held on 7 September after the Joint EG meeting. At the Working Group meeting, focus was on project updates and progress since EPPR-II 2019, identifying upcoming Ministerial deliverables, starting work on the work plan for 2021-2023, Covid-19, and the Norilsk diesel oil spill. In total, the events during the week gathered 117 participants.

The next EPPR plenary meeting (EPPR-II 2020) is planned to take place in early 2021, most likely fully online. The EPPR-I 2021 is planned to take place in May/June 2021.

Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response (MOSPA)

The Marine Environmental Response Expert Group (MER EG) met on 8 September. The meeting began with a review of follow-up activities from the Joint EG meeting. EPPR and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) renewed their commitment to conduct the October joint tabletop exercise online. The two groups also continue discussing the viability of a spring 2021 Live Exercise in Iceland. Russia briefed on the status of the Norilsk diesel spill, while Canada and the U.S. briefed on domestic experiences and lessons learned managing similar incidents. The Russian Federation thanked MER EG for the cooperation during the Norilsk spill. The current update of the Operational Guidelines is finalized consisting primarily of administrative updates improving the usability of the document and updated contact info. Status of the ongoing projects was reviewed, and MER EG delegates were encouraged to look at past projects to ensure their visibility and relevance by for example using and testing the products during exercises. The MER EG and R&D Initiative leads will draft key documents to facilitate the development of the initiative as an ongoing effort under the MER EG. This approach was also agreed to in the EPPR plenary. Discussion on evolving risks in the Arctic (e.g. melting permafrost and implications for land-based infrastructure) prompted interest in contrasting future risks against the MER EG's current mandate.

Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (SAR Agreement)

The Search and Rescue Expert Group (SAR EG) met on 8 September. ACGF-EPPR cooperation and the postponed exercises were discussed with SAR EG providing two recommendations for objectives to be explored, use of the Arctic ERMA, and logistics of survivor reception and transfer on land. In relation to discussion on Covid-19 and new evolving risks, the Hurtigruten C/S Roald Amundsen case was discussed from a SAR point of view. IMO was invited to provide a presentation on the Polar Code and a discussion on SAR relevant issues followed the presentation providing good insight for the EG. The need to update the appendices of the SAR Agreement and the procedures for doing the update were on the agenda and were discussed. Updates and status of current projects were reviewed, and the translation of the Norwegian Viking Sky incident report in English should be finalized during October. SAR EG recommends EPPR to hold a virtual seminar on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), a timely topic for the SAR community.

Radiation (RAD) Expert Group

The Radiation Expert Group (RAD EG) met on 8 September. The meeting started with a discussion on Covid-19 and the new evolving risks. Discussion covered findings from the Arctic States regarding the pandemic and identifying areas that could pose challenges in the future, such as resource scarcity in small or remote communities. Review of the follow-up activities from the Joint EG meeting and status updates of current and planned future projects were discussed. Country updates and sharing of other relevant information was on the agenda of the meeting, and Norway provided an update regarding the Arctic radiation exercise Arctic Rhein 2022. The RAD EG invited IAEA to present an update on Arctic relevant activities, and University of Tromsø to give a presentation on research on floating nuclear power plants (FNPPs) from a legal perspective. RAD EG is interested in pursuing a project focusing on small communities, and AIA noted their interest to work with other interested partners on this topic. The RAD EG Lead Mr. Øyvind Aas-Hansen (Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority) was appointed as the official RAD EG Chair during the EPPR plenary meeting, with Mr. Dominique Nsengiyumva (Health Canada Radiation Protection Bureau) as the Vice-Chair.

Cross-cutting activities

- SDWG was invited to join the plenary meeting discussion on Covid-19 in the Arctic and the possible role and perspective of the EPPR on pandemic-related work. SDWG ES Ms. Jennifer Spence briefly noted how the process of developing the briefing document for the SAOs was organized and the current perspectives of the SDWG work related to Covid-19. An initial connection between the WGs was created to facilitate possible future collaborative work on pandemics in the Arctic.
- Representatives of AMAP, PAME and SDWG participated in the plenary meeting.
- ACGF representatives participated in relevant EG meetings.
- Update on the EU Horizon 2020 project Arctic and North Atlantic Security and Emergency Preparedness Network, ARCSAR, was presented during the plenary meeting.

Observer engagement

At the plenary meeting, International Maritime Organisation as a new Arctic Council Observer was invited to present on their work related to EPPR. Mr. Osamu Marumoto (IMO Maritime Safety Division) and Mr. Sascha Pristrom (IMO Marine Technology Section) discussed the Polar Code and other relevant

requirements for emergency prevention, preparedness, and response in the Arctic. Topics covered included challenges for ships in polar waters, overview of the Polar Code's main principles and its goals-based approach, and other IMO instruments relevant to the EPPR.

Current EPPR projects - status and planned Ministerial deliverables 2021

ARCSAFE

The ARCSAFE project is an Arctic Council - EPPR cross-country cooperation network(s) to improve emergency prevention, response and the safety of rescue workers in case of a maritime accident involving a potential release of radioactive substances in the Arctic. The ARCSAFE report was an EPPR Ministerial deliverable in 2019. A decision was made to finish the ARCSAFE project and continue its activities under the RAD EG or other EGs when relevant.

RADSAR

The ARCSAFE sub-project RADSAR focuses on the sharing of competence within search and rescue in a maritime radiological/nuclear scenario. The RADSAR report is under development with the first part to be finalized in 2020, and a draft of the second part to be available in late 2020. The RADSAR report(s) will be a Ministerial deliverable in 2021.

RADEX 2019 TTX

International tabletop exercise including a nuclear icebreaker and a risk for radioactive contamination in addition to rescue operation was held in Bodø on 3 June 2019. The aim of the exercise was to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement. The final report will conclude the findings and emphasize the importance of cooperation among Arctic States. The report is under development and will be a Ministerial deliverable in 2021.

Prevention, Preparedness and Response in Small Communities Phase III

A working group consisting of AIA, Canada, Norway, and US representatives, along with a production company are finalizing a second movie on oil pollution risk and impact to small communities. The movie will be launched in December 2020 and will be submitted as a Ministerial deliverable in 2021.

Risk assessment methods and metadata – web-based guideline tool

The project is a part of the follow-up of the AC Framework Plan for Oil Pollution Prevention (FPOPP). The web-based guideline tool was finalized and approved intersessionally in spring 2020, and a webinar was organized to showcase the guideline. The guideline will be a Ministerial deliverable in 2021, and the project continuation is possibly planned with a new phase.

Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis (COSRVA) Phase II

The Circumpolar Response Viability Analysis resulted in a comprehensive technical report that summarized the background, methodology, input data and results from the project. The objective of Phase II was to develop a web-based tool for the Arctic, including the Bay of Bothnia. The web-based tool is finalized, and a webinar was organized in spring 2020 to showcase the tool. The tool was approved by the EPPR and will be a Ministerial deliverable in 2021.

Arctic Rescue

The focus of this ongoing Russian-led project is to elaborate best practices, recommendations and key elements of the emergency risk assessment system and the system for improving safety of potentially

hazardous facilities. EPPR attended the International Prevention and Response Conference in St. Petersburg in October 2019. The next conference planned to take place in Kaliningrad in October is postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Safety Systems in the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural Projects – Russia

The goal of this ongoing project is the improvement of industrial and environmental safety related to economic and infrastructure projects. In support of this project, SAR and oil spill response exercises are undertaken annually. Latest exercises were organized in August 2020 by Gazprom, and in September by EMERCOM.

Research and Development Initiative

The objective of the initiative is to enhance collaboration between research, operations and policy. EPPR endorsed the initiative to continue under the MER EG and developing guiding and governance documents to help steer its work. The initiative is co-led by Norway, Canada and the U.S.

Circumpolar Wildland Fire

The Circumpolar Wildland fire project was approved in January 2020 intersessionally. The project formed a steering committee which drew a lot of interest, including from AC Observers, and had their first online call in June to plan future work. The project is now confirming project resourcing and planning the next teleconference to review the project plan and timeline.

New Low-Sulphur Fuels – Fate and behaviour in Cold Water Conditions

A series of initiatives and regulatory developments over the past several years have given rise to the importance of studying low-sulphur fuel oil in cold sea temperatures, which led to a project proposal that was formally approved by EPPR and PAME in 2020. The project is led jointly by representatives from EPPR and PAME promoting collaboration on a subject that intersects the mandates of both Working Groups. The first meeting of the project took place in early October 2020.

NEPTUNE

The NEPTUNE project was approved intersessionally in June 2020 and is investigating how expedition cruise vessels might be used as a resource in Arctic oil spill preparedness and response. The project has already collected data both from States and industry representatives and is moving forward.

RAD EG Risks Project

The objective of the project is to conduct a risk assessment to identify risks in the Arctic and classify them by their level of security. The project will develop a report capturing the risks involving radiological/nuclear materials in the Arctic. Possibilities are being explored for a follow-on capabilities analysis to examine readiness for each risk identified. The report is planned to be a Ministerial deliverable in 2021.

Arctic Lessons Learned Arena

Arctic Lessons Learned Arena project was approved intersessionally in June 2020 aiming to build an easy to use database of best practices and experiences for emergency preparedness and response entities, relevant stakeholders and academia, by sharing after action reports, identifying key capability gaps and best practices, assisting in evaluation and planning of exercises and providing a tool for analysis. A demo version of the arena platform should be ready by the end of 2020 and work to gather data is ongoing.