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Chairmanship Concept Note: Informal Arctic Council Youth Group

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Chairmanship concept note; Informal Arctic Council Youth Group

Background and discussion

Focus on meaningful engagement with youth has been gaining momentum in the Arctic Council over the past few years, and the Icelandic Chairmanship has felt strong support for finding new innovative ways of engaging youth in the Council's work, from Arctic States Permanent Participants (PPs) and, Working Groups (WGs) during its tenure. At the November 2020 SAO meeting the Chairmanship invited delegates to discuss options for next steps. Two documents were shared in advance to inform discussion at the meeting. The first one was a [background paper](#) on youth engagement in the Arctic Council submitted by the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS), and the second one was a [discussion paper](#) with possible points of action developed by the Chairmanship.

At the November meeting, delegates expressed general interest for establishing a youth group to help advise the Council on youth engagement, and to serve as a networking platform. The SAOC emphasized that the process of youth engagement in the Council is still at the beginning stages, and concurred that a youth group could be a possible element in the Council's efforts.

Informal Arctic Council Youth Group proposal

Building on previous efforts and following delegates general appreciation of the overview and options presented at the November SAO meeting, and taking note of the Indigenous People Secretariat's *Youth Engagement in the Arctic Council: Background Paper* which points out that the Arctic Council "does not have a separate youth section, board, or council," and goes on to suggest "to set up a parallel Youth Arctic Council or youth board" the Chairmanship proposes that an informal Arctic Council Youth Group be started.

The Group would be composed of delegates of the Arctic States and, PPs, as well as the WGs, and members of Staff of the ACS, and IPS; 32 years of age and younger.

The Group could function as a sounding board for Youth priorities and perspectives informing the work of the SAO-level. The practice of allowing for one or two additional seats for Youth representatives on the abovementioned delegations to SAO meetings, could be consistently continued.

The Group would gather primarily on virtual platforms, but Youth Group delegates attending in-person meetings could also gather on the margins of regular Council gatherings, or international conferences as convenient. The Youth Group could potentially have a standing item on the SAO plenary agenda to present its conclusions, recommendations and, issues of concern.

Should this proposal be approved the Chairmanship suggests that it will convene the first online gathering of the Group following the SAO meeting in March 2020. The Group could at this first meeting discuss existing proposals for enhanced participation of youth in activities of the Arctic Council, come forward with new proposals to the same effect, and discuss how best to organize activities of the Youth Group. The Youth Group could exceptionally for this first time, report back to SAOs intersessionally, no later than by CoB. Wednesday 7 April.