
INTERNATIONAL ARCTIC SCIENCE COMMITTEE (IASC)

We want to congratulate the Icelandic Chairmanship for their very successful work over the last two years. IASC has been an accredited observer of the Arctic Council from its inception and is supporting the work of the Arctic Council, its Working Groups and Permanent Participants by providing scientific expertise from all our member nations, including the non-Arctic countries. Over its history, IASC has evolved into the leading international science organization of the North and its membership today includes national science organizations from 23 countries involved in Arctic research, including 15 non-Arctic countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a global catastrophe impacting society on a scale that has not been experienced in our lifetimes. It has affected every aspect of our lives, from our work to our leisure, to our personal and professional relationships. The critical need to slow the spread of this contagion nearly halted all travel and ceased all in-person meetings, disrupting our field research campaigns, our outreach efforts, workshops, conferences, and seminars. The impacts to personal communications and field research have been severe, but the real and potential consequences of the virus have been worse. While the number of lives lost is staggering, the emotional and social impact of this pandemic can never be quantified. Despite the difficulties under which we have operated since the start of the pandemic, Arctic scientists have remained compelled and committed to exploring the mysteries of our environment and advancing our societies' understanding of the complexities and subtleties of the role of the Arctic in the Earth System. In July 2020, IASC released our first [State of Arctic Science Report 2020](#), which we hope to update annually. This short report enables IASC to communicate to the world the current conditions from an informed perspective as we observe rapid changes in ecosystems, atmospheric dynamics, sea ice fluctuations, physical, chemical and biological oceanographic responses, landscape evolution, flora and fauna distribution and populations, and of course the role of people as an integral component of the Arctic system. We hope this report will be a useful resource for the Arctic Council WGs in the future.

Despite the pandemic, IASC was able to continue our strong cooperation with the Arctic Council WGs. During the past two years, several Arctic Council WGs used IASC's broad expertise to ensure the scientific quality of their reports and assessments. We both nominating experts to the WGs developing reports and we also recommended scientists to review several of the assessment reports that were published ahead of this Ministerial Meeting, to ensure that their review process could be conducted in an independent manner.

Youth engagement, and capacity building of the next generation of scientists were also a strong focus for cooperation with the Arctic Council WGs. A second cohort for the co-sponsored IASC- CAFF Fellowship Program was selected in 2020, with the two Fellows contributing to CAFF's work in its Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative and the CBMP's Coastal Working Group. A similar Fellowship Program is currently being developed between the SDWG, IASC and IASSA and will be launched in fall 2021.

IASC is strongly committed to better involving Indigenous peoples and incorporating Indigenous /Traditional Knowledge into IASC and its activities. We are implementing several actions at the moment that resulted from a report provided by an IASC Action Group on Indigenous Involvement in 2020, which featured engagement of multiple PP representatives as well as a member of the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat. Most notably, we want to mention the establishment of an annual *IASC Indigenous Fellowship* in 2020 to engage Indigenous early career researchers more strongly in the work of the IASC Working Groups. The recipients of the first three Fellowships were from Canada, Greenland and the US.

Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) continues as an important joint activity of IASC and the Arctic Council. Its biennial Arctic Observing Summit (AOS) is held in conjunction with the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW) and will be organized next year at the [ASSW 2022](#) in Tromsø, Norway in March 2022. ASSW was initiated by IASC in 1999 to provide opportunities for coordination, cooperation and collaboration between the various scientific organizations involved in Arctic research and to economize on travel and time. ASSW 2020 was hosted by Rannís – The Icelandic Centre for Research and the University of Akureyri and was an important part of the Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. It was originally scheduled as an in-person meeting in Akureyri (Iceland) but had to be moved online as circumstances due to the pandemic worsened both locally and globally. The [ASSW 2020 Scientific Summary Report](#) was published in May 2021 to keep a record of scientific discussions at ASSW and present them to the Arctic community at large.

IASC is looking forward to continuing its cooperation with the Arctic Council under the upcoming Russian Chairmanship and to contribute to upcoming activities and assessments of the Arctic Council WGs. The International Science Initiative in the Russian Arctic (ISIRA), a Russian and IASC cooperative initiative to assist Arctic science and sustainable development in the Russian Arctic will be of particular interest during the Russian Chairmanship. Future engagement from IASC is also expected to align with the forthcoming Strategic Plan of the Arctic Council.

IASC has started the planning for its *Fourth International Conference on Arctic Research Planning* (ICARP) in 2025. The ICARP conferences have allowed Arctic researchers, policy makers, residents and stakeholders from around the world to collegially discuss the state of Arctic science, the place the Arctic occupies in global affairs and systems, and to consider the most urgent knowledge gaps and research needs that lie before us. The outcomes of the previous ICARPs have demonstrated that drawing the attention of the world's researchers to critical problems can result in accelerated progress and far greater achievements than would be possible through uncoordinated efforts. IASC is seeking strong engagement by the Arctic Council WGs and PPs in this process. ICARP IV will be a prime vehicle to initiate planning for the next International Polar Year in 2032-33.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Arctic Council, its Working Groups, Permanent Participants and other Observers.