

Instructions for Observers subject to review

Introduction

This document provides the reporting template and accompanying instructions for Observers to be reviewed during the **Icelandic Chairmanship (2019-2021)**.

The deadline for submission is **1 June 2020**.

According to the "[Arctic Council Rules of Procedure](#)" (Annex 2), every **two years** Observers are requested to submit to the Chairmanship up-to-date information about relevant activities and their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. Every four years, from the date of being granted Observer status, Observers will be reviewed at the Ministerial meeting. The following **20 Observers** will be reviewed at the next Ministerial meeting, and are requested to submit their review report by **1 June 2020**:¹

- Germany;
- The Netherlands;
- Poland;
- Switzerland;
- United Kingdom;
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM);
- OSPAR Commission (OSPAR);
- Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Regions (SCPAR);
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE);
- United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment);
- West Nordic Council (WNC);
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO);
- Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Seas (ACOPS);
- International Arctic Science Committee (IASC);
- International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES);
- International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH);
- Northern Forum (NF);
- Oceana; and,
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Global Arctic Program (WWF).

¹ These include the Observers reviewed before the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting in 2017 as well as Observers admitted that year.

Role of Observers

The role and responsibilities of Observers, as well as criteria for admission to the Arctic Council, can be found in the “Arctic Council Rules of Procedure” (Annex 2) and the “[Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies](#).”

The primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Observers contribute to the Arctic Council primarily through engagement at the level of Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Observers are invited to the meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council unless the Senior Arctic Officials decide otherwise. Observers may also propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant.

Report submission

Observer review reports should include the relevant information described below and in the template.

- (a) A description of the Observer’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants;
- (b) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s future plans to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants; and,
- (c) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered in the previous sections since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years.

Observer review reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: acs@arctic-council.org not later than **1 June 2020**. Please bear in mind while preparing your report that all Observer reports will be published online in the *Observer* section of the [Arctic Council online Library](#).

If an Observer fails to submit a report during the review process, the Arctic Council will consider this to mean that the Observer **is no longer interested in maintaining its status** as an accredited Observer to the Arctic Council.

Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

Oceana

Date of submission:

31 May 2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

www.oceana.org

Information for appropriate contact person

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Organization or department: United States, Pacific region

Job Title: Deputy Vice President, Pacific

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Is your state or organization interested in continuing as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

X Yes No

Observer Review Report

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.

Over the previous two years, and since the time of our most recent Observer report, Oceana scientists and policy leaders have had the opportunity to participate in each meeting of the Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials as well as the 11th Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council held in Rovaniemi, Finland. What is more, as the world's largest conservation group solely focused on protecting oceans, Oceana has a shared interest in the work of the Arctic Council Protecting the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group.

Since being welcomed as an Arctic Council Observer in 2017, Oceana scientists have consistently contributed to PAME meetings and participated in PAME expert groups such as the **Ecosystem Approach Expert Group** and **Marine Litter Expert Group**. Whether at the PAME working group or meetings of the Senior Arctic Officials, Oceana has greatly appreciated the opportunity to contribute and exchange ideas with representatives from Arctic nations and Arctic peoples around common goals of protecting the Arctic's unique ocean ecosystem and biodiversity for the benefit of Arctic peoples, local communities and the natural world.

Oceana's global reach, combined with focused local and national campaigns in more than a dozen nations, uniquely positions us to not only engage in Arctic Council discussions, but to integrate the ideas and practices developed at the Arctic Council and PAME working group within our campaigns. We are able to do this within the individual countries where we work, including multiple Arctic nations where we campaign for marine protections and strong science-based policies that support healthy oceans and coastal communities.

Oceana recently launched a campaign to end plastic pollution in our oceans. We are therefore extremely interested in the Icelandic Chairmanship's focus on the Arctic marine environment, particularly plastic pollution and the development of a Regional Action Plan to reduce marine litter, including microplastics. Plastic pollution has quickly become a leading threat to the health of our world's oceans. Plastic products and packaging, often designed to be used once and discarded, can last for thousands of years and are filling our oceans and beaches, threatening marine ecosystems, fisheries and ocean animals all over the world.

Oceana is now working around the world to reduce the production and use of single-use plastics, with efforts at the local, regional and national level ranging from support of strong plastic reduction policies to development of alternative plastic-free choices for consumers. In our role as Observers we have been pleased to combine our efforts with those underway at the Arctic Council.

Oceana marine scientists participate as members of the PAME Arctic Marine Litter Expert Group. In that role, we have been actively involved in the development of the Arctic Council's Regional Action Plan (RAP) on marine litter in the Arctic, contributing ideas and providing expert review of the plan as it develops, including at the recent Arctic Marine Litter Expert Group Workshop held in Oslo, Norway in February of 2020.

We look forward to the continued development of the RAP and ultimately working with partners on implementation of the plan. This presents an exciting opportunity for international collaboration and exchange of ideas as we all seek to tackle the incredible challenge of reducing the overwhelming flow of plastics and other harmful pollution into our world's oceans, including the Arctic Ocean.

While our primary focus this year is active participation in the PAME Arctic Marine Litter Expert Group, we remain engaged in a number of other subgroups within PAME as well. Just as our international ocean conservation campaigns cover a broad spectrum of issues facing the world's oceans, so do our contributions involve a wide array of issues under consideration by the Arctic Council.

For example, at the same February 2020 meeting in Oslo we continued our participation in discussions around an integrated ecosystem-based approach for the central Arctic Ocean, as well as discussions on how to implement Marine Protected Areas in the Arctic. This builds on our prior participation on the PAME Marine Protected Areas Expert Group, as outlined in our previous observer report.

The group's vision of a pan-Arctic network of Marine Protected Areas remains compelling for our own efforts at Oceana, as does the ongoing opportunity to bring our experience and expertise to bear, including our years of experience identifying and protecting Important Ecological Areas in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas.

Oceana scientists also engaged in discussions at a number of working groups at the PAME-1 and PAME-2 in 2019 in Malmo, Sweden and Reykjavik, Iceland respectively. Our years of experience focused on ecosystem based management, including developing data syntheses and mapping Arctic marine characteristics, continue to serve us well as observers and contributors to the Ecosystem Based Management working group, as again outlined further in our previous observer report and on our website here: <https://oceana.org/publications/reports/ecological-atlas-bering-chukchi-and-beaufort-seas>.

We also shared our vast experience working on Arctic offshore oil issues in the United States with the Resource Exploration and Development group within PAME, especially with regard to offshore oil development in Arctic Ocean waters. Considering the treacherous conditions and lack of infrastructure found through much of the Arctic, Oceana believes it imperative that no expansion of Arctic oil development in marine waters should be considered unless and until there is a clear sense of the risks, a realistic response plan, and adequate infrastructure in place to respond to any spill or other accident.

Oceana and our partners worked to implement that precautionary approach to Arctic Ocean waters, including the territorial waters of the United States and Canada. Oceana remains committed to ensuring that Arctic marine ecosystems are not irrevocably harmed by expanded development as sea ice recedes, and that any resource development occurs only with caution, care and with meaningful engagement of Arctic indigenous peoples and communities.

Going forward Oceana is excited to continue as an Observer organization and bring our unique perspective and expertise to the work of the Arctic Council, especially by continuing to engage at the PAME working group as a member of the Arctic Marine Litter Expert Group and elsewhere as our common interests align. We are equally excited to concurrently bring the work and new ideas from the Arctic Council and its working groups back to the many nations in which Oceana campaigns around the world.

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.

As we are all keenly, and often painfully, aware, the sudden emergence of the COVID-19 virus and associated global pandemic has left much of the future in doubt. Like many institutions around the world, Oceana had to rapidly adjust to the current situation, including where and how we work. This is applicable both in terms of isolating our worldwide staff at home for the health and safety of our employees and to prevent the spread of infection, and in assessing how these dramatic changes might affect future collaborative efforts, research and policy change.

Oceana remains committed to our goals of protecting ocean ecosystems. Oceana is continuing our work to develop and implement science-based solutions and policies for the protection of marine ecosystems, sensitive habitats, and threatened species, as well as for the reduction of marine plastic pollution around the world. While the methods going forward may be different, and the current challenges unprecedented in our lifetimes, we are confident we can continue to work with stakeholders, local communities, indigenous peoples and all those who care for and about the oceans to ensure that we leave a healthy ocean legacy for future generations.

Our role as observers at the Arctic Council is a key part of that work going forward. It is Oceana's intent that whenever and however the Arctic Council and its working groups find ways to resume meetings and proceed that we will continue to engage and participate as Observers. This is especially true in our role on the Arctic Marine Litter Expert Group working to develop the Regional Action Plan on Arctic Marine Litter. As Oceana campaigns to reduce plastic production and waste around the world, we continue to discover new and innovative policy approaches, and look forward to bringing those new ideas to the expert group and the Arctic Council as a whole.

In addition, we envision continuing our now longstanding participation in other working groups focused on Ecosystem Based Management, Marine Protected Areas and Resource Exploration and Development.

Oceana has long valued Local and Traditional Knowledge as essential to any understanding of Arctic marine ecosystems, including the integration of LTK into the marine syntheses we developed in prior years covering the Bering Strait and Beaufort and Chukchi seas. Continuing our understanding of LTK and working with those who hold that knowledge remains essential to our campaigns to protect Arctic marine ecosystems, and we hope to engage more fully and directly with Arctic Council Permanent Participants in the coming years as part of our expanding role as observers.

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.

Our direct efforts as observers were well covered in the above sections. As the world's largest conservation group solely focused on protecting the world's oceans, Oceana remains well positioned to share the work and expertise of the Arctic Council around the world, in particular through our dedicated campaign offices in the Arctic nations of the United States, Canada and also within the European Union.

As the Arctic Council continues to develop a pan-Arctic vision for healthy marine ecosystems and responsible economic development, our role as observers allows us the opportunity to not only participate in shaping that vision, but also in sharing and reinforcing that vision within the individual nations where we work.

Whether it is helping develop a pan-Arctic vision for Marine Protected Areas, innovative ways to better understand Arctic marine ecosystems, new approaches to reduce plastics and other marine pollution, integrating ecosystem-based principles into Arctic management practices, or any of the other important projects of the Arctic Council and PAME working group, Oceana remains committed to share our own knowledge based on collective decades of experience working in individual Arctic nations, and bring new ideas and practices developed at the Arctic Council back to those same nations. We remain committed to and enthusiastic about continuing that work as observers in the coming years.