

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:

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Date of submission:

1 June 2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

www.government.nl

Information for appropriate contact person

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Senior advisor on polar affairs / Arctic Official

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The Netherlands

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

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.

Introduction

The Netherlands started active participation in AMAP in 1993 and has contributed actively to the work of the Arctic Council since its establishment in 1996. The Netherlands regards the Arctic Council as the primary circumpolar policy forum for sustainable Arctic development and management of the area. Experienced Dutch Arctic scientists have a long-term active involvement in three working groups (AMAP, CAFF and SDWG) and in 2019 the Netherlands also became active in PAME. Government officials always attend meetings of the Council (SAO, ministerial) and Observer meetings organised by the Arctic Council. As such they promote and support Dutch scientific research in the Arctic. Dutch polar researchers are active in a variety of fields, but have especially good reputations in glaciology, oceanography, biology, international law, human & social sciences and marine litter. The *Netherlands Polar Research Programme* enables the experts to make a substantive contribution to the work of the Arctic Council. The Netherlands stimulates participation by experts – policy makers, researchers and representatives from industry and NGOs – in seminars/workshops/expert groups, for example Arctic Frontiers and the Arctic Circle.

AMAP

The Netherlands participated in AMAP since it became an observer to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). Frits Steenhuisen (Arctic Centre, University of Groningen) has represented the Netherlands as an observer in the AMAP working group meetings ever since. He participates in the Mercury Expert Group and in the Radioactivity Expert Group, contributing to work on the spatial distribution of global emissions inventories (SO₂, lead, mercury) that have been compiled for AMAP since 1995, including global mercury emissions to air, in the framework of the AMAP/UN Environment Global Mercury Assessment (GMA2013 and GMA2018). Several peer reviewed papers have been published in relation to this work. Steenhuisen also works with the AMAP secretariat on spatial analysis and map production of AMAP-reports and collaborates with the Norwegian Radiation Protection Agency in hosting of the AMAP Radioactivity Thematic Data Center. Frits Steenhuisen is highly involved in the global mercury emission modelling within the AMAP/UN Environment network (Global Mercury Assessment 2018) and the upcoming AMAP Mercury in the Arctic Environment Assessment, and in particular contributing to the spatial distribution of the global emissions data. The AMAP Radioactivity expert group is currently working on an undated Assessment of radioactivity in the Arctic to be delivered in 2023 as a follow up of the Radioactivity in the Arctic report (2015).

Several Dutch Research Institutes provide input to AMAP assessments, for example the Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research, Utrecht University, IMAU (University of Utrecht) contributed to the AMAP Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA) 2017 report. And Dutch scientists have been involved in the review process of the AMAP POP's and Climate Change Interactions Assessment.

CAFF

The Dutch Wadden Sea is a very important hub during migration of Arctic breeding waders and geese. Conservation, protection and management of these bird populations is a major task which is carried out with the Arctic countries. That is why the Netherlands has been an active member in CAFF since 1992, with scientific ornithological programmes in Russia, Spitsbergen and east-Greenland.

As official CAFF representative, Maarten Loonen is active in the CBIRD working group and contributing with data collected during his fieldwork on Spitsbergen about arctic tern migration and breeding biology. In the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative, the Dutch government has partly financed an AMBI African Eurasian Flyway coordinator at the *Common Wadden Sea Secretariat* (Sergio Rejado Albaina) for the period 2018-2019. The monitoring efforts and research in the Wadden Sea are very relevant as assessments of breeding success and population size in arctic nesting birds, which feed directly into management.

In the Arctic there are many ornithological studies supported. In Taymir (Russia) studies started in 1990 on Brent Geese (Bart Ebbinge) and now focus on Red Knots and other shore birds (Jan van Gils). In 1988 in the Pechora delta (Russia), studies on Bewick Swans started by Jan Beekman, followed as a multi-disciplinary approach by Mennobart van Eerden (PRISM) and are now continued by Bart Nolet. Jeroen Reneerkens monitors sanderlings in Iceland and east Greenland and Maarten Loonen and Jouke Prop are still working on their more than thirty year data collection on Barnacle Geese and Polar Bears on Spitsbergen. On the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, Theunis Piersma's team (Global Flyway Initiative) is very active in supporting conservation with scientific data.

The Netherlands has financed several research projects on arctic vegetation in Abisko, Spitsbergen and Russia. The Netherlands Arctic station on Spitsbergen is monitoring goose populations, vegetation change, insect and plankton biodiversity in lakes. All these projects have links with CAFF via Maarten Loonen as national representative to the observer status in CAFF.

SDWG

Over the past four years, the Netherlands has been one of the most active Observer States in the SDWG, and has demonstrated a commitment to both sustainable development and Indigenous issues in the Arctic. Since 2016, the Dutch representatives to the SDWG have included Dr. Annette Scheepstra and Dr. Sean Desjardins (both of the University of Groningen's Arctic Centre).

Dr. Scheepstra is highly active in the Arctic social scientific and policy arena, and has engaged substantively with the EU-PolarNet, as well as with the SDWG's Social, Economic and Cultural Working Group (SECEG), to which the Netherlands has pledged continued support. Dr. Desjardins, the current Dutch representative, is an anthropologist and archaeologist who carries out community-based, ethno-archaeological research with Inuit in Canada's Arctic; this has involved co-creation of scientific and traditional knowledge, as well as capacity building for Inuit youth—themes that will be of increasing importance to SDWG projects in the coming years.

In recent years, the Netherlands has facilitated cooperation between Dutch experts in sustainable energy development and the Indigenous Peoples Organization (IPO) and Arctic Council Permanent Participant (PP) Gwich'in Council International. Additionally, the Netherlands has contributed to the development of the Arctic Renewable Energy Atlas (AREA), a repository of information about energy resources in the North. Going forward, the Netherlands has the capacity to engage more extensively with IPOs (both Observer organizations and PPs) on issues ranging from renewable energy to land-water management (a field in which the Netherlands is a globally-recognized leader).

PAME

Marine litter

Through ocean currents, litter may travel long distances. As a result of this, even in the remote and often sparsely populated Arctic, many shorelines are littered with plastic waste. The origin of which could be the Arctic itself, but a large share also originates from North-America and Europe, including the Netherlands. The Dutch government regards marine litter as an increasing problem on the national and international level, that not only has negative consequences for the marine ecosystem but also has social, safety and economic consequences as well as possible consequences for health. As such, the Netherlands is actively engaged on this topic in a number of different contexts: locally, nationally, regionally and globally. The effect of the Dutch effort is manifested in the Government-wide Programme for the Circular Economy.

Because of the international dimension to this issue, the Netherlands is actively working together with other countries to address this issue such as in OSPAR, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML). Since 2019, the Netherlands is active on this issue in the Arctic Council (PAME working group on marine litter). In PAME, the Netherlands is represented by Wouter Jan Strietman MA, who is active on the topic of marine litter in the Arctic since 2017 within the context of the Arctic Marine Litter Project (www.wur.eu/arcticmarinelitter), which is partially financed by the Dutch government. By actively involving local stakeholders and experts in the project, a feeling of ownership and a better understanding of the issue and the solutions is cultivated. Within the working group he contributes his knowledge and the project's data from fieldwork on Spitsbergen, Jan Mayen, Iceland and Greenland on the origin, root causes and pathways into the Arctic marine environment. This knowledge and data also provides input to the Regional Action Plan which is being developed by the working group.

Shipping

The Netherlands is a nation of water and has a rich maritime history and a flourishing maritime industry. It is known around the world for its modern fleet: 2,200 vessels with some 30,000 crew members. Furthermore the Netherlands is acclaimed for its innovations and high standards when it comes to safety and sustainability. Every year, more than 50,000 vessels moor at the Dutch maritime ports – the biggest of which are Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The largest part of the Netherlands is situated along the North Sea – one of the busiest seas in the world. More than 250,000 ships pass by its coast every year. The Netherlands aspires to bring this knowledge to the table of the Shipping Expert Group. In this vain a representative of the Dutch Embassy in Oslo gave a presentation on this matter at the PAME-meeting in February 2020 as a first step in this direction.

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.

In its Polar Strategy 2016-2020 the Netherlands focusses on climate change, the environment and sustainability of Arctic activities, with international cooperation, higher standards and polar research as cornerstones. The Arctic Council remains the most important forum for the Netherlands to realize its policy goals. To continue the contribution to the work of the Arctic Council and to intensify the participation of highly qualified experts in AMAP, CAFF, SDWG and PAME the Netherlands increased its budget for polar research. In addition a separate budget has been created to fund meetings or co-finance studies of the Arctic Council working groups or expert groups. It can also be used to finance specific small-scale projects and outreach initiatives. The Netherlands is currently in the process of formulating its Polar Strategy for the period of 2021-2025.

An important part of the current Netherlands polar policy was the appointment of an Arctic Ambassador. The Ambassador will continue to participate as an observer in Arctic Council Ministerial meetings, conferences and engages in talks with Arctic and Dutch stakeholders with three objectives: increase international research cooperation, enhance cooperation between different stakeholders and raise sustainability standards. All these objectives are in the interest of the Arctic Council.

As a maritime nation with experience in offshore energy technologies, infrastructure development and marine protection and monitoring, and with a strong endeavor to contribute to cleaner, safer and sustainable shipping, the Netherlands has a growing interest to contribute to PAME. While a Dutch representative attended several marine litter expert group meetings, the Netherlands is planning to also provide active participation in PAME's Shipping Expert Group .

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.

The Dutch industry – gathered in the Dutch Arctic Circle (DAC) - has a strong interest in contributing to the sustainable development of the Arctic. In the remaining months of 2020, this initiative will be actively used to identify sustainable opportunities for engaging with the Arctic region.

In 2015, the largest ever Dutch polar research expedition visited the island of Edgeøya, Spitsbergen. The overarching goal of the expedition was to study climate change in the Arctic by reexamining an area that has remained untouched for 40 years. The multidisciplinary research team has mapped the consequences of climate change for the area by comparing the data that were gathered during the expedition with scientific data from 40 years ago. The results were shared with the members of the Arctic Council and the Arctic research community. There are serious plans to organize a second polar expedition of similar proportions in 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19).

The Belmont Forum has awarded two Arctic projects for 2020-2023 with contributions from the Netherlands: SVALUR and SeMPER-Arctic.

The Netherlands participated in the German-led MOSAiC expedition (2019-2020). NL contribution 1.2 mio euros.

Granting (June 2020) of policy-driven research call the Netherlands Polar Program for Arctic and Antarctic research (5.5 mio euros).

Additionally, extra funding (4.5 mio euros) has been mobilized by the Dutch government and the Dutch Research Council to support a thematic research program on the effects of tourism on the ground in the Arctic and Antarctica for the coming three years.

Furthermore, the Netherlands will provide a financial contribution to the PAME project 'Plastic in a Bottle' with the aim to show how marine litter and plastics can travel and to gain a better understanding of how plastics that originate from far away end up on shores in the Arctic.