

Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

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Observer 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.

Based in Copenhagen, Denmark the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) is an NGO that works in support of indigenous peoples worldwide, through publication and documentation, project support and participation and advocacy in international processes.

IWGIA has received observer status to the Arctic Council in 2002. The main focus of interest for IWGIA has been the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) and the meetings of the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs). As an organization working in support of indigenous peoples worldwide, including in the Arctic region, the close collaboration with the Permanent Participants (PPs) is of particular importance for us.

In the past few years IWGIA has published several articles that directly relate to the work of the AC, including an article on the work of the Arctic Council in IWGIA's yearbook *The Indigenous World*, most recently in 2018. A number of IWGIA Board members, as well as members, have worked with the Arctic Council for many years and have contributed to our strategic development in the area. Currently, IWGIA has two members of Arctic indigenous origin (from Sápmi and from Greenland) and one member with extensive experience working on Arctic issues.

Unfortunately, in recent years, due to lack of funding, IWGIA had challenges following Arctic Council work closely and particularly participating in meetings of the Arctic Council. We were therefore not able to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council in the way we would have liked to. The COVID19-related migration of meetings to a virtual format has, however, provided IWGIA the opportunity to participate in the last two sessions of the SDWG. We very much welcome this opportunity and hope to be able to use similar alternative meeting participation possibility, which will make it easier for us to take our role as an observer.

Moreover, as described in the section three of this report, IWGIA carries a number of activities and programs relevant to the Arctic Council and continues to have internal strategic discussions on its work in the Arctic region, including its contribution to the work of the Arctic Council.

IWGIA has submitted an observer report on 1st of June 2018, hence this report only highlights developments and activities that took place since the last report.



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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.

IWGIA, in cooperation with the PPs will further encourage and support indigenous peoples' organizations from Arctic States to actively engage and participate in the SDG processes and present their observations to State Reports during the sessions of the High Level Political Forum on the implementation of the SDGs.

In the context of the implementation of the SDGs, IWGIA together with its indigenous partners in the Arctic region will emphasize the need to address issues of social and economic inequality faced by indigenous peoples in the region as well as effects of infrastructure development, expansion of extractive activities, environmental degradation and climate change on Indigenous Peoples in the region. A number of activities that IWGIA has already carried out in this respect are described in the next section.

IWGIA is closely following the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) under the UNFCCC and has cooperated with Indigenous organizations, including PPs on different activities of the LCIPP. We believe that there are many parallels between the LCIPP and the SDWG and interesting links could be established.

In the next two years IWGIA is also planning to publish at least one thematic article on the work of Arctic Council in its yearbook *The Indigenous World*, highlighting latest developments, initiatives, decisions and recommendations given by the Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups. The book is distributed widely to a global audience and provides for a possibility to communicate the work of the Arctic Council, and particularly its PPs, to a wide audience. IWGIA is currently discussing with the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat about their contribution to *The Indigenous World*. Other publications that IWGIA produces are including sections on Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic (see next section).

In 2021 IWGIA will start a process of consultation with Arctic Indigenous leaders and institutions, including Arctic Council's Permanent Participants about the organisation of an Arctic Peoples Conference which is planned to take place in Copenhagen in 2023. The conference will mark the 50th anniversary of the first Arctic Peoples Conference, held in Copenhagen in November 1973, where for the very first time, Arctic Indigenous peoples met to exchange information and to discuss the future at a time when they were all under increasing pressure from nation states and industrial development on their lands and territories. The meeting in 1973 was facilitated by IWGIA.

We believe these initiatives can constitute an important contribution to the work of the Arctic Council. If IWGIA has the opportunity to engage more with the Arctic Council by virtual means, it will be better equipped to provide inputs to the work of, particularly, the SDWG on its initiatives.

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.

In 2018 IWGIA was commissioned by FAO to prepare four regional reports on **the Status of Food Security and Nutrition of Indigenous Peoples**. One of the regional reports is focused on the status of Food Security and Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic. This report was produced by three researchers, two from *Priestley International Centre for Climate, University of Leeds, United Kingdom* (A. Naylor and J.D. Ford) and one from *the Department of Global & International Studies, University of Northern British Columbia, Canada* (Pearce, T).

The report was officially presented by IWGIA and FAO at the Expert Seminar on Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' Fisheries in the Arctic Region which was jointly organized by the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, the FAO Indigenous Peoples Team, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, the Government of Canada and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on September 23-24, 2019. The expert seminar brought together indigenous experts, fishers, researchers, and other stakeholders from the region to share perspectives and exchange experiences on traditional knowledge and elements that could guide and support indigenous peoples' fisheries policy.

Representatives of Arctic States and Permanent Participants attended the Seminar. (More information at <http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/arctic/en/>).

In March 2019, IWGIA organized an International workshop on **Indigenous peoples' right to autonomy and self-government as a manifestation of the right to self-determination** that took place in Mexico City. For the very first time, Indigenous Peoples from Arctic, Latin America, Africa and Asia met to share, discuss and analyse their experiences with and developments of their self-government models. It was also the first time that representatives of Indigenous Peoples and international/regional human rights mechanisms were able to meet and agree on common strategies to position the recognition of the right to autonomy and self-government as a central theme in their programmes and to identify specific actions required for implementation.

Indigenous representatives from Nunavut, Greenland, Alaska and Russia shared their experiences with the implementation of their models of self-government.

Prior to the international seminar, IWGIA published a [book](#) *Indigenous Peoples' rights to autonomy and self-government*, which includes four articles on self-government experiences in the Arctic: Nunavut, Greenland, Sapmi and Russia (Yakutia).

Following the meeting in Mexico, in 2020 IWGIA published a [book](#) "Building autonomies" which forms an essential contribution to the process of legitimizing the recognition and exercise of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination in domestic and international law. The book includes an article written by former leader of Greenlandic Inuit Ataqatigiit party Sara Olsvig, that analyzes Greenland's self-governing status and its relationship with Denmark from security and defense perspective.

In the context of **the implementation of the SDGs** and during the annual sessions of the HLPF (2018 and 2019) IWGIA together with its indigenous partners in the Arctic region and the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for the SDGs have emphasized the need to address issues of social and economic inequality faced by indigenous peoples in the Arctic region as well as risk imposed on Indigenous Peoples in the region by development, environment and climate change in the implementation of the SDGs. The contribution of Indigenous Peoples in achieving the SDG's in the Arctic region has also been highlighted.

Starting from 2019 IWGIA is implementing a **Leaving No One Behind project** in the Russian Arctic. Building on the best practices of Indigenous communities in Nordic countries the project aims at operationalizing SDGs for two indigenous communities in accordance with indigenous values, knowledge and way of life. The project is implemented with participation of civil society organizations, local authorities and expert community. As a final result it is expected that the project will produce two Sustainable Development Strategy documents, one for each targeted community.

