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# EPPR Progress report to SAOs

2 December 2021, Salekhard, Russian Federation

## Recent activities

EPPR held its second Intersessional Heads of Delegation meeting of 2021 on 28 October 2021. During the meeting, a U.S. project proposal on Validation of International Maritime Organization (IMO) Polar Code Survival Time Requirement was approved. Arctic States also decided to move the EPPR-II 2021 meeting, originally planned for Kaliningrad, to a fully online format. The meeting will be held 22-24 November 2021, with the Search and Rescue Expert Group and Marine Environmental Response Expert Group meetings on 10 November and 18 November, respectively.

The Russian Federation organized the Safe Arctic live exercise 7-8 September in Murmansk, with 12 emergency scenarios across its northern territory. The exercise was linked to two Russian Federation projects in EPPR, Safe Arctic and Safety Systems in the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural Projects. EPPR was represented at the exercise by Dan Cowan, MER EG Chair, Øyvind Aas-Hansen, RAD EG Chair, and Tore Hongset, SAR EG Vice-Chair.

## EPPR-I 2021 meeting, 22-23 June 2021, online

EPPR held its first meetings of 2021 online in June 2021, and the first meetings under the new Canadian Chair, Ms. Kathy Nghiem from the Canadian Coast Guard. The plenary meeting was attended by 90 participants from all eight Arctic States, four Permanent Participant organizations (AAC, AIA, GCI, ICC), two Arctic Council Working Groups (PAME and SDWG), six Observer States (France, Japan, Poland, Singapore, Spain, U.K.), and five Observer organizations (IFRC, ACOPS, IASC, Uarctic, WWF).

MER EG and SAR EG convened for one-day meetings, while RAD EG met for two days over the 15-17 June. A Head of Delegation meeting was held 21 June, preceding the EPPR plenary meeting 22-23 June. In total, 122 participants joined the EPPR-I 2021 meeting.

The agenda included project updates, readouts from Expert Group meetings, and approval of three new project proposals. EPPR also began a process of reflection to align activities and projects with the Reykjavik Declaration and the new Arctic Council Strategic Plan. The HoDs agreed to incorporate these discussions into further strategic planning in 2022, a proposal led by the U.S. ICC presented a concept on mobilizing Indigenous Knowledge to improve understanding of Arctic change and operationalization of emergency preparedness and response in the Arctic, which was very well received as the basis for a project proposal to promote collective learning.

## Cross-cutting activities

- EPPR collaborates with CAFF on wildland fires under the ongoing projects in both WGs. EPPR and CAFF are co-organizing an online Wildland Fire Sharing Circle, led by Gwich'in Council

International, 17-18 November 2021, to share knowledge, foster collaboration, and identify opportunities amongst fire related activities ongoing both within the Council and externally.

- PAME was invited to present at EPPR-I 2021 in June on “Raising awareness in the Arctic Council of the provisions of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement” project. EPPR has been invited to join PAME’s Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum 16-17 November, and will present on search and rescue related activities. EPPR also joined the PAME fall 2021 meeting.
- EPPR is actively sharing information with AMAP on radiation related activities, through liaisons between delegates, attending meetings and through the secretariats.
- EPPR participated to SDWG plenary meeting 26 October, and is exploring opportunities to cooperate on aspects of the newly approved Resilience project.
- EPPR worked closely with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum to finalize the Arctic Guardian 2021 After Action Report which is currently up for approval by both EPPR Head of Delegation and ACGF Principals.
- EPPR has invited Arctic Coast Guard Forum to present on their new workplan at EPPR-II 2021 meeting, and is actively reviewing options for ongoing collaboration per the Joint Statement of Cooperation signed in May 2021.

## Ongoing projects including the newly approved projects

**Prevention, Preparedness and Response in Small Communities Phase IV** The overall objectives of the project are to better understand preparedness and risk exposure in small and remote communities, and to find meaningful ways to raise awareness and engagement. The aim of the fourth phase is to produce a third short movie on planning for an initial community-based pollution response. The script of the new film is finalized, and the contracted production company is working on a second draft version of the video.

**Arctic Rescue** The focus of this ongoing Russian Federation-led project is to elaborate on best practices, recommendations and key elements of the emergency risk assessment system and the system for improving safety of potentially hazardous facilities. Emergency response exercises are undertaken annually to achieve the objectives of this project and Safety Systems in the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural Projects.

**Safety Systems in the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural Projects** The goal of this ongoing project is the improvement of industrial and environmental safety related to economic and infrastructure projects. Emergency response exercises are undertaken annually to achieve the objectives of this project and Arctic Rescue project.

**Arctic Oil Spill Research and Development Initiative** The objective of the initiative is to explore how EPPR can lead in promoting cooperation and collaboration between research, operations and policy-makers on oil pollution research and development in the Arctic, and how research can be translated into improved operational outcomes. The initiative will also examine integration of Traditional Knowledge and Local Knowledge.

**Circumpolar Wildland Fire** The Circumpolar Wildland fire project aims to improve the coordinated response by Arctic States and Permanent Participants to catastrophic wildland fires in the Arctic region,

and to promote opportunities for international cooperation and contracting of wildland fire resources across State boundaries, as well as trainings between relevant agencies so that emergency prevention, preparedness and response to wildland fire is effective and contemporary.

**New Low-Sulphur Fuels – Fate and Behaviour in Cold Water Conditions** A series of initiatives and regulatory developments, including the heavy fuel oil ban in the Arctic, have increased the importance of studying the fate and behaviour of low-Sulphur fuel oil when released into the cold sea. The project is jointly led by EPPR and PAME, and seeks to understand the characteristics of these new fuels, and their corresponding impacts on emergency operations and the marine environment.

**RAD EG Risks Project** The objective of the project is to conduct a risk assessment to identify nuclear materials and activities that pose the greater risk for an event in the Arctic and classify them by their level of severity. A summary report was submitted as a deliverable at the Reykjavik Ministerial meeting in May 2021. The project is currently finalizing a full technical report.

**Arctic Lessons Learned Arena** The project aims to build a user-friendly database of best practices and experiences for emergency preparedness and response entities, relevant stakeholders and academia. The tool will use key word searches to identify capability gaps, lessons, and experiences from exercises to assist with exercise evaluation and planning.

**Analysis of Potential Radiological Consequences of Selected Emergencies Relevant for the Arctic Region** The objective of the project is to provide an analysis of potential radiological consequences of selected nuclear or radiological emergencies relevant for the Arctic region. The project will draw on the RAD EG Risks project for emergency scenarios and coordinate selection of risks to be analysed with the Capability Analysis to Respond to a Radiological/Nuclear Emergency in the Arctic project. The project will develop a consensus report.

**Capability Analysis to Respond to a Radiological/Nuclear Emergency in the Arctic** The objective of the project is to examine the resources and expertise available to respond to nuclear or radiological emergencies likely to occur in the Arctic region, and propose a way forward for any identified gaps. The project will draw on the RAD EG Risks project for emergency scenarios and coordinate selection of risks to be analysed with the Analysis of Potential Radiological Consequences of Selected Emergencies Relevant for the Arctic Region project. The project will develop a consensus report.

**International Cooperation on Aerial Maritime Surveillance ICAMS** The project aims to improve understanding of the capacity and capabilities of national aerial surveillance programs across Arctic States for emergencies related to EPPR's mandate. A suite of multiple actions is being undertaken to promote exchanges of information, knowledge and experiences relevant to planning and mounting response operations in harsh and remote Arctic conditions.

**Validation of International Maritime Organization Polar Code Survival Time Requirement** This project is a follow-up to previous presentations to EPPR on the IMO Polar Code and search and rescue exercises by the University of Stavanger, Norway. Additional discussions on survival time and time to rescue have been identified in after action reports from several search and rescue exercises that question the validity of the IMO Polar Code maximum expected time to rescue. This project will analyse research and findings from international efforts to develop a consensus report detailing the viability of the IMO Polar Code five-day survivability requirement.