

# REPORT: SAO PLENARY MEETING

Salekhard  
1-2 DECEMBER 2021  
Final report

[Link](#) to meeting documents



ARCTIC COUNCIL



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Opening remarks

The SAO Chair (SAOC) welcomed delegates to the first Senior Arctic Officials' (SAO) plenary meeting of the Russian Chairmanship (2021-2023), organized in a hybrid format due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, although with significant in-person attendance. He welcomed three new SAOs to the Arctic Council family, including Heidi Kutz (Canada); Morten Høglund (Norway); and Lou Crishock (United States). He also welcomed the new Director of the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS), Mathieu Parker, who took up his role in Fall 2021.

The Head of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Region welcomed delegates to Salekhard and the region. He provided a brief overview of the region's social-economic development and environmental monitoring. The SAOC expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome.

## 1.2 Approval of the agenda

The second draft agenda was approved as presented.

# 2. Arctic Council Secretariat update

### **Background and discussion**

The Director of the ACS was invited to present a status update on the operations of the ACS. He thanked the ACS team and larger Arctic Council family for supporting his transition into his new role as Director. He also thanked Joël Plouffe who took on the role of Acting Director before the current Director's contract formally began.

In reviewing ACS operations over the past year, the Director noted the strong effort spent supporting the Icelandic Chairmanship leading up to the Reykjavik Ministerial meeting in May and facilitating the Chairmanship transition process between Iceland and the Russian Federation. The ACS provided administrative support in a number of areas, including drafting the SAO Report to Ministers in strong collaboration with the Council's Working Groups (WG), particularly their Executive Secretaries (ES), coordinating the Observer review and reporting processes, and assistance in drafting the Reykjavik Declaration and the Council's first Strategic Plan. The ACS team also provided administrative and logistical support for several events, meetings of informal committees and groups, Russian Chairmanship SAO meetings, and coordinated relationships with Observers and other external bodies. The ACS also assisted the Russian Chairmanship in

highlighting and promoting the Council's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary through several communications outreach efforts. Moreover, the ACS launched the Council's first magazine, *Pathways*. The inaugural edition was launched in the Spring to highlight the work of the Council over the past 25 years. The ACS also played an active advocacy role through its outreach and engagement efforts, including notably through targeted media and social media outreach that lead to substantial increases in media articles, social media growth and website statistics.

With an operating budget of 13.8M Norwegian kroner in 2021, the ACS is once again forecasting a surplus for this year. However, given anticipated increases in operating costs and upcoming changes to the ACS Financial Rules moving forward, this surplus is expected to be significantly reduced in the coming years by lessening the impact of currency fluctuations. The Director thanked the ACS host country Norway and the Arctic States for their financial contributions, and thanked the United States and Iceland for additional funds that were allocated to anniversary and communications activities.

In terms of staffing, the ACS comprises 14 staff members based in Tromsø. The Director noted the departures of Tiia Tanskanen, Advisor, Nina Buvang Vaaja, Director, Alona Yefimenko, Advisor, and the upcoming departure of André Skrivervik, Head of Administration, who will be moving on in February 2022 after serving the Council for over nine years. He also welcomed new arrivals Jonas Sørflaten Torgersen, Administrative Advisor, and Jens Toft, intern, while noting that the ACS is currently hiring a new ACS Advisor, and recently launched the process to identify a replacement for André as Head of Administration.

Delegates expressed their appreciation of the ACS's dedicated work and welcomed the Director to the Arctic Council family. The ACS's high performance was highlighted, especially in light of a year with several leadership changes, Chairmanship transitions and managing it in a hybrid environment given the ongoing pandemic. The collaboration and support from the ACS communications team was also highlighted. One delegate proposed that in addition to an ACS update as a standing item in SAO meetings, attention should also be given to the situation pertaining to the different Working Group (WG) Secretariats. An update on their human resources, funding and activities should also appear as a standing item in order to complete the picture. This proposal was supported by another delegation. The Chair of the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS) expressed his appreciation for Norway and the Kingdom of Denmark for providing funding for IPS administration, and to Finland and the United States who provided project funding in 2021.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC noted with appreciation the hard work of the ACS throughout 2021 and thanked the Director and his team for their efficient and effective work. He noted that

given the pandemic situation, the communications strategy plays an important role in support of the Arctic Council. He also welcomed the proposal to include an update from WG Secretariats as part of future meetings.

### 3. Fourth round of Observer review

#### **Background and discussion**

According to the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure (annex 2), Observers are to be reviewed every four years. The SAOC provided information on the process for the 19 Observers being reviewed in 2022-2023, the so-called *Rovaniemi Group*.<sup>1</sup> He noted that as this is the fourth round of the review process, after the Ministerial in 2023, nearly all Observers will have been reviewed twice. Observers subject to review are to submit written reports by 1 June 2022. Informal, virtual follow-up meetings with Observers under review will be conducted in November-December 2022 and will be led by the Chairmanship with support from the ACS. The 19 Observers not under review, the so-called *Fairbanks Group*, will be required to submit a report detailing their most recent Arctic Council related activities, as instructed in the Council's Rules of Procedure, before 1 December 2022.

Delegates expressed their support for the Observer review process and highlighted the importance of Observers' positive contribution to the Arctic Council and beyond. It was mentioned that this process can be beneficial as an opportunity to better understand the Arctic, especially as Observer States develop Arctic policies. One delegate also encouraged Observers to keep the Strategic Plan in mind during the review process and assess how they can contribute to its implementation.

#### **Conclusion**

The SAOC concluded by thanking Observers for their important contributions to the work of the Arctic Council and for their important collaboration throughout the review and reporting processes. He noted for the record that the Chairmanship will provide all Observers with written instructions and appropriate templates for the review and regular reporting before the end of 2022.

<sup>1</sup> The *Rovaniemi Group* comprises of eight non-Arctic States (France, Italian Republic, Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of India, Republic of Korea, Republic of Singapore, Spain) and eleven International Organizations (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Nordic Environment Finance Corporation, North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission, United Nations Development Programme, Arctic Institute of North America, Association of World Reindeer Herders, Circumpolar Conservation Union, International Arctic Social Sciences Association, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, University of the Arctic, International Maritime Organization).

## 4. Region-to-region circumpolar cooperation

### Background and discussion

The SAOC invited three speakers to share their perspectives on region-to-region cooperation, including Indigenous cooperation. First, the newly appointed Chairmanship Special Envoy for Indigenous and Regional Cooperation, Dr. Mikhail Pogodaev, provided an overview of his mandate and future work. The Special Envoy was appointed in August 2021 to contribute to the implementation of Action 4.9 of the Arctic Council's Strategic Plan on cooperation between Arctic regions and people-to-people contact, and the relevant engagements from the 2021 Reykjavik Declaration. His mandate is focused on facilitating and strengthening communications and coordination between the Russian Chairmanship and Permanent Participants (PPs), and on identifying regional cooperation activities for Arctic Council consideration and within the Russian Federation. The Special Envoy shared examples of best practices for regional cooperation in the Russian Arctic and outlined several recommendations where efforts could be increased with the PPs: education and training program development; seminars and roundtables; monitoring the socio-economic situation in Indigenous Peoples' places of residence; projects on relevant issues of importance for all PPs and support for Indigenous Peoples' organizations.

Second, the Executive Secretary of the Northern Forum, Dr. Vladimir Vasilev, provided an overview of the organization's engagements in the Arctic region, including numerous events held this year and plans for future events. The Northern Forum is one of the Council's oldest Observer organizations, admitted at the Rovaniemi Ministerial meeting in 1998. The Executive Secretary highlighted that the Northern Sustainable Development Forum (NSDF), which is scheduled to take place next September in Yakutsk, is a permanent international expert platform for discussing the issues and prospects of sustainable development of the Arctic and the North. He noted that the Northern Forum established an organization of goodwill ambassadors to expand communications and external influence. He then shared several proposals to enhance cooperation, including: establishing an International Decade of the Arctic and International Day of the Arctic; potential engagement of SAOs and Arctic Council Working Group (WG) representatives in Observer events; the intent to invite SAOs and WGs to take part in the NSDF; and training young specialists as future leaders of international cooperation.

Third, the County Governor of Lapland, Mika Riipi, addressed delegates as the current Chair of the Northern Forum. He outlined the Lapland Chairmanship goals: making the Northern Forum's work more efficient; widening membership of the Northern Forum; and, strengthening the regional voice inside the Arctic Council. He suggested establishing a joint task force between the Arctic Council and the Northern Forum focused on strengthening interregional cooperation.

Delegates welcomed the appointment of Dr. Pogodaev as the Chairmanship's Special Envoy for Indigenous and Regional Cooperation. During the discussion, many delegates shared additional examples of interregional cooperation from other areas of the circumpolar Arctic, including:

- One delegate highlighted that Greenland has seen benefits of increased people-to-people interactions, particularly with youth.
- One delegate noted its involvement in the digitalization of languages project, where youth have been able to sing songs and utilize technology to keep Aleut languages alive.
- One delegate mentioned that it sees concrete results from daily interactions between regions in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and highlighted the Arctic Mayors Forum as a potential collaboration partner. He also noted that Norwegian institutions in the Arctic are leading collaborative health efforts related to telemedicine and providing help to settlements.
- One delegate noted that the Icelandic Parliament approved its policy on the Arctic region in May 2021, and that Iceland plans to host two conferences in Akureyri where the public will be invited to share their views on how the country's policy should be implemented.
- One delegate highlighted both the Arctic Mayors Forum, the BEAC and the Northern Dimension Policy Framework as forums with cooperation potential. He also mentioned the topics of permafrost thaw and economic development as two areas that would benefit from enhanced Indigenous and regional cooperation. The delegate also urged to consider creative ways in making the local and regional voices better heard.
- One delegate highlighted cooperation across the Bering Strait is important and that he looks forward to continued cooperation in this area.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked the three guest speakers and delegates for their insights. He highlighted the importance of enhancing regional cooperation for the benefit of people of the Arctic and to ensure their voices are heard in the Arctic Council. He concluded that examples from this discussion will most assuredly help guide efforts to implement the Strategic Plan's commitment around region to region cooperation.

## **5. Chairmanship priority areas for marine cooperation in the Arctic Council**

### **Background and discussion**

The SAOC invited the Chairmanship's newly appointed Special Representative on Arctic Marine Activities, Nikolay Shabalin, to provide more details on the concept [paper](#) submitted to delegates prior to the meeting, an effort to outline the Chairmanship's priority areas and objectives related to the Arctic marine environment, including a roadmap for upcoming maritime activities intended to support the Council's work on marine cooperation over the next two years. An earlier version of the draft paper was reviewed by the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group. PAME's feedback was incorporated into the version presented to delegates.

The Special Representative highlighted priority areas for multilateral cooperation on the marine environment during the Russian Chairmanship, including: environmental protection, climate change research and mitigation, and biodiversity conservation; development of sustainable shipping;

preventing emergencies; and international scientific cooperation. He noted that the roadmap will be delivered through collaboration with the research and expert community within Arctic States, Observers, Indigenous Peoples' organizations and local communities, the private sector and the public sector.

Delegates overall reacted positively to the draft concept paper, welcoming strong cooperation and engagement on marine issues. Russia's broader engagement on the topic, including increasing its involvement on marine issues in the WGs, was also welcomed. Many noted that participation and engagement in WG activities on this topic is key to progress and that PAME remains the main venue in which Arctic Council marine activities are undertaken. The Chair of CAFF took the floor to note the WG's intention to support efforts to improve marine cooperation, and noted its existing cooperation with PAME on alien marine invasive species, other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs) and marine protected areas. Several delegates highlighted the first Senior Arctic Officials' Marine Mechanism (SMM) implemented by the Icelandic Chairmanship<sup>2</sup> as an important and successful initiative for marine cooperation, and asked that the Russian Chairmanship considers its continuation. Due to its late submission, the document still needs further reviewing by some delegations.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked the Special Representative on Arctic Marine Issues for his presentation and delegates for their feedback. Regarding the SMM, the SAOC reminded that there was no consensus on the exact format for its continuation, but that marine cooperation will continue first and foremost through PAME and the established

<sup>2</sup> This first SMM constituted the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation and was welcomed in the Reykjavik declaration (2021), which also looked forward to continued dialogue of this kind under future Chairmanships.

governance structures. He concluded by welcoming delegates' continued feedback on the concept paper and engagement in marine related issues.

## 6. Special joint session on Arctic Council – Arctic Economic Council cooperation

### **Background and discussion**

The joint session between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council (AEC) was the second time delegates of both Councils met since signing a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2019. The Chairmanship held this second meeting to discuss the status of the MoU and potential next steps in support of specific tasks set by the 2021 Reykjavik Declaration and Strategic Plan regarding sustainable economic development, infrastructure development and improvement of well-being of Arctic residents, including the Indigenous Peoples. Overall, delegates expressed strong support for sustainable economic development and were very positive towards enhancing cooperation between the two Councils under the MoU.

The SAOC invited the Chair of the AEC to open the discussion. He provided an overview of ongoing cooperation between the AEC and the Arctic Council's respective WGs, including dialogue with the Arctic Council's SDWG and CAFF WGs, and other initiatives such as the joint Connectivity in the Arctic report in collaboration with the Arctic Council's previous Connectivity Coordinator. The AEC Chair highlighted three focus areas where there is potential for collaboration between the Council: fostering qualified labour in the Arctic and building up SDWG's Demography Index project; collaboration on energy production and transportation; and finally, creating a database accessible to both Councils and businesses that includes data and traditional knowledge and local knowledge about the Arctic.

The SAOC then invited delegates to provide feedback on the basis of four questions, structured to take stock of the implementation of the MoU since 2019 and to discuss future opportunities for joint collaboration between the two Councils.

**Question one:** What are the areas/projects that the MoU has been the most instrumental in facilitating cooperation between the WGs of both Councils?

- One delegate noted that collaboration with the Arctic Council's former Connectivity Coordinator and cooperation in the form of an event with the AEC's Shipping WG had been a success.
- Several delegates called on the WGs to be more aware of the opportunities for dialogue and to work together.
- One delegate mentioned several cooperation initiatives between the WG and the AEC, including the AEC's participation in the connectivity session in SDWG's Arctic

Resilience Forum and the AEC's contribution to the Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic Region project. She also mentioned discussions have been initiated between SDWG and the AEC regarding the Arctic Demography Index and that a meeting with project leads is planned in December.

- One delegate noted the AEC's participation in its Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum. She also mentioned AEC's participation in PAME's Fall 2021 plenary meeting, which initiated the possibility of developing an Arctic Shipping Status Report that will have mutual interest for the AEC and the Arctic Council.
- One delegate also mentioned that the AEC has been helpful in work related to CAFF's Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Arctic Mining project.

**Question two:** Have you encountered, or do you foresee, specific risks, obstacles and/or challenges in the Arctic Council-AEC collaboration?

- The pandemic was brought up several times as an obstacle for enhanced cooperation over the last two years.
- It was raised that the capacities of the AEC and the Arctic Council differ, though both are impacted by limited capacity.
- One delegate informed that the AEC is creating a position at its secretariat to focus on WG work, which could enhance cooperation between the Councils at the WG level.
- One delegate noted that while there is a natural connection between the two organizations, the AEC is an independent body and should have its own voice, while emphasizing that businesses are the driver of economic development.
- Several delegates raised that one challenge is that the Arctic Council does not have a clear structure to address economic development issues, with one noting this warrants a strategic discussion on whether this can be strengthened in existing Arctic Council WGs or whether a new structure is needed.
- One delegate noted that economic matters and recommendations for implementation within the Arctic Council should be held within SDWG where there are guidelines for PP involvement. Another delegate noted that one big challenge faced by both Councils is managing the perception of the Arctic and educating businesses and people that it is an interesting, culturally rich area with potential for sustainable economic development. One risk mentioned by several delegations was resources and investments moving south instead of staying in the Arctic and benefiting communities.
- One PP delegate noted that while they initially engaged with the activities of the AEC, they needed to stop due to the large resources necessary to be fully engaged in AEC activities.
- One delegation stressed that the topic of fossil fuels will be an area where it is difficult to cooperate and find agreement on. Hydrocarbons was also raised as a topic with opposing viewpoints between Arctic States.

**Question three:** What type of AEC-led activities, analysis or research would be of greatest value to the work of the Arctic Council? Conversely, what activities, initiatives or research conducted by the Arctic Council does the AEC consider to be of greatest value to its members?

- Many delegates highlighted the importance of identifying projects with mutual benefits, and, in some instances, the need to listen to both the WGs and businesses in the AEC to help identify these. Some of the areas of importance mentioned include climate mitigation, facilitation of data collection, mapping industry needs, infrastructure development, the energy sector and green energy transition and connectivity.
- One delegate highlighted the blue bioeconomy as one area of mutual value to both Councils. He noted concrete results have been achieved by investing in this area, and there is more work to be done in both Councils on this topic.
- One AEC delegate mentioned PAME's shipping data as a valuable tool for the AEC's shipping WG. He noted the AEC's WG members are premiere ship operators in the Arctic, and that damage and incident reporting from ice operation in the Arctic, for example, is needed for improving regulations.
- Solid Waste Management in Small Arctic Communities is an SDWG project that was raised as an area of high value, as it relates to health, safety, infrastructure and costs.
- SDWG's work related to food development was mentioned by several delegates. They highlighted the importance of food security, and the opportunities for increasing food markets and improving food quality. The development of innovative micro businesses evolved from Indigenous cultures was mentioned as one area of high value and priority. One item raised several times by AEC delegates is that the development of a database accessible to AEC members and the Arctic Council could be extremely valuable as a one-stop-shop for Arctic information and demographics. While some made comments of support towards the idea of a joint database, one delegate cautioned that any Arctic Council data procured using State resources should be open-sourced and available to all.

**Question four:** Where do you see the greatest potential for Arctic Council-AEC collaboration moving forward?

- One delegate noted that cooperation on maritime transportation is a big area for further cooperation, and aligns well with some themes from the Russian Chairmanship program.
- One delegate mentioned energy production. As some regions ban oil and gas offshore production, renewable energy resources have a big potential in many Arctic regions.
- An AEC delegate noted that decarbonization is a challenge for ship operators as new fuel types and power systems are introduced, which is complicated by the Arctic's lack of infrastructure that limits which type of fuel is used. He suggested a

joint forward-looking meeting on these issues. Some challenges identified for both Councils include: lack of investments and underfinanced Arctic communities that have led to underdeveloped infrastructure, sanitary systems, transportation and communications, lack of education and poor access to healthcare.

- Infrastructure development was highlighted in particular by the AEC, noting that many challenges in economic development relate back to infrastructure and lack of communications, suggesting the need to synchronize efforts on satellite communications.
- Another common challenge raised was fostering and maintaining a talented workforce in the region, which was tied to ensuring access to high quality education and promoting employment opportunities. One AEC delegate mentioned some Arctic Council projects that have a direct focus on economic development and could be excellent areas for cooperation between the two Councils, such as CAFF's Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Arctic Mining project, PAME's Arctic Shipping Status Reports and ship traffic database and the demography index. It was noted that it is important that the AEC follows the work of the Arctic Council, and vice-versa, and how the AEC can support the implementation of goals from the Strategic Plan and the Reykjavik Declaration. The Arctic Council should also be attentive to the work of the AEC. One suggestion was made for the creation of a joint development strategy where areas of cooperation and responsibilities of each entity are clearly outlined.

**Other comments raised during the session include:**

- A call for Arctic States encouraging companies in their respective nations to join the AEC.
- The development of success stories about economic activities that support Indigenous Peoples and make a difference in Arctic inhabitants' lives.
- The Arctic Investment Protocol, which gives the AEC important guidelines for responsible investment in the Arctic supported by scientific research and traditional knowledge and local knowledge, which can strengthen Arctic investments. A call for further work to develop and operationalize the implementation of the Arctic Investment Protocol.
- Respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights and ensuring that traditional lifestyles can be maintained when dealing with matters of sustainable economic development.
- Providing equal opportunities for all genders, paying special attention to youth, ensuring trade frameworks are free and fair and that economic development benefits local growth.

**Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked colleagues from the AEC for joining the meeting and all delegates for sharing their perspectives on ongoing and future collaborations. He noted that this

discussion will help guide the next steps for implementing the MoU and future work between both Councils. He summarized key points and issues that were discussed, including: the necessity of investments in education and human resources; the need for data and information sharing between the two Councils; the potential in the green energy transition; infrastructure and communications; and the issue of disproportionate resources between the two Councils and the need to keep this in mind. He also raised the importance of community-level and small and medium sized enterprises. and suggested to organize low-level cooperation between regional chambers of commerce in the Arctic. The SAOC tasked the ACS to continue facilitating and exchanging information with the AEC, as stipulated by the MoU. The SAOC also noted interest in exploring in the future a possible joint strategy between the AEC and the Arctic Council.

## 7. Youth cooperation

### 7.1 Enhancing youth cooperation in the Arctic region

#### **Background and discussion**

The SAOC invited the recently appointed Chairmanship Youth Envoy, Mikhail Uskusov, to discuss his mandate and goals, which are communicating youth voices to decision makers and supporting youth-focused events and youth-run initiatives. The Special Envoy highlighted ongoing youth initiatives in the Council, such as CAFF's Youth Engagement Strategy 2021-2026 and the creation of the PP Youth Network. He noted that the Chairmanship would like to jointly explore the possibility of international Arctic youth cooperation aimed at synchronizing efforts on addressing migration issues, enhance well-being and cultural sustainability and facilitate the Arctic as an attractive market and place to live.

Many delegates expressed support on the appointment of a Chairmanship Youth Envoy and efforts to enhance youth cooperation on Arctic issues. Several delegates commended CAFF for its Youth Engagement Strategy and welcomed similar activities from other WGs. The Chair of SDWG named projects that focus on youth, including the EALLU and Local2Global projects. SDWG's fellowship initiative was also mentioned, which was established as a partnership with two Arctic Council Observers – the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA) and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). The Chair of CAFF noted that CAFF gives a high priority to youth engagement, which is also included to the priorities of the Finnish CAFF Chairmanship with specific outcomes. She also mentioned that CAFF is implementing its Youth Engagement Strategy and has a youth advisory committee to co-create its processes with Arctic youth. Several delegates also mentioned that they include youth as part of their delegations, and some shared examples of how youth voices are included in national Arctic initiatives. Some

highlighted the importance of providing funding for youth to participate in Arctic Council activities.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked the Youth Envoy for his ambitious goals and welcomed delegates' youth engagement initiatives. He wished the Youth Envoy success in the implementation of his program and noted the Chairmanship's support.

## **7.2 Forum of the Young Leaders of the Arctic Council Countries ICE and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arctic Youth Leaders' Summit**

### **Background and discussion**

The SAOC invited RAIPON's Indigenous Youth Envoy, Ekaterina Evay, to provide an overview of two Chairmanship youth events: the Forum of the Young Leaders of the Arctic Council Countries ICE taking place on 6-9 December 2021, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arctic Youth Leaders Summit in 2022. Some of the topics to be discussed in these forums include business growth, volunteering, developing creative industries, developing youth media, intellectual property of Indigenous Peoples and preservation of Indigenous Languages, among other topics.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked RAIPON's Indigenous Youth Envoy for her presentation and wished her success for her impressive program and future.

## **8. Presentations by Working Groups on their work, 2021-2023**

### **Background and discussion**

Each WG was invited to present an update on their work plans, progress to date and plans for this Chairmanship cycle.

### **AMAP**

The Chair of Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Benjamin DeAngelo, highlighted AMAP's continued work on updating information on climate change and pollution issues and their implications in the Arctic. His summary also identified projects that support actions in the Strategic Plan.

He highlighted AMAP's upcoming assessment on radioactivity, which supports strategic actions 2.1-2.5, and will cover main sources of artificial radionuclides, recent trends in

activity, and provide new information about radioactive waste handling and decommissioning. AMAP is also conducting a joint project with SDWG on biosecurity with a focus on emerging threats, including zoonoses. Moreover, AMAP is working on its biennial climate change update that will be published in 2023. He also noted that joint work with CAFF has begun on an assessment of ecosystem impact of climate change and feedbacks to the climate. AMAP's cross-cutting work is ongoing with all five of the Council's WGs.

AMAP has continued to enhance its efforts towards PP engagement, including mainstreaming this engagement into the WG's traditional assessments in addition to pursuing dedicated pilot projects.

Among some of the various communications and outreach initiatives this year, AMAP has attended COP26, published, reviewed and supported many scientific papers associated with the WG's deliverables and is currently producing an AMAP 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary documentary.

Many delegates noted with appreciation AMAP's increased efforts in cross-cutting work with other WGs, PP engagement and Observer engagement. Several projects were highlighted by delegates, including AMAP's climate change updates, litter and microplastics and radioactivity. AMAP received recognition for its reporting methods that made a direct linkage between its work to a corresponding Strategic Plan goal and activity. Other WGs were encouraged to also report on their activities in this way.

## SDWG

During her presentation, the Chair of SDWG, Abidat Magomedova, noted SDWG's recent plenary and executive meetings, in which a new detailed 2021-2023 work plan was endorsed that aligns the WG's activities with the Council's Strategic Plan and Reykjavik Declaration. In addition, three new projects were endorsed: Preserving Arctic Architectural Heritage, COVID-19 in the Arctic Assessment Report and Advancing Arctic Resilience: Exploring Aspects of Arctic Resilience Connected to the Impacts of Permafrost Thaw. In total, SDWG has 16 endorsed projects and five projects under development.

An update was also provided on the new permanent secretariat being established at the Université de Laval in Québec City, Canada. The new secretariat, which will increase capacity and strengthen overall operations of the WG, is expected to launch in Spring 2022.

Many delegates expressed their appreciation for Canada hosting the SDWG's permanent secretariat. Some PP delegations noted their hope that Secretariat staffing will be inclusive of Indigenous Peoples from all parts of the Arctic. One delegate highlighted the newly launched SDWG Activity Tracking Tool and encouraged other WGs to take a similar approach to ease administrative processes. Several delegates highlighted the

Gender Equality in the Arctic project and the Solid Waste Management in Remote Arctic Communities project in particular as important efforts from SDWG.

## ACAP

The Chair of the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP), Patrick Huber, noted that four projects have recently received funding by the Council's Project Support Instrument (PSI), including: the Community-based Black Carbon Health Assessment; the Solid Waste Management in Remote Arctic Communities project; the Aqueous Film-Forming Foam and Other PFAS Containing Foam Phase Out in the Arctic project; and the Arcrisk – Mercury Risk Evaluation. He shared that eight projects are currently underway from ACAP's 2021-2023 work plan.

The ACAP Chair highlighted that the WG has been focusing efforts to enhance collaboration with other WGs. For example, ACAP and AMAP are planning several joint sessions on contaminants at the expert level in addition to collaboration on several projects. ACAP and SDWG have started implementing a joint project on solid waste management and continue to explore synergies in the field of community health and youth engagement. ACAP and CAFF have collaborated on an ongoing project, and are currently working with the AEC on the development of an innovation prize concept. Wildland fires is another area of potential cooperation with CAFF, AMAP, the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) WG and the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM).

Delegates commended ACAP for its important work in reducing pollution. One delegate highlighted the importance that States follow the recommended measures in ACAP reports, particularly related to APG flaring. Delegates took note of the good cooperation with other WGs and the active participation of PPs, particularly in the Indigenous Peoples Contaminants Action Program.

## EPPR

The Chair of EPPR, Kathy Ngheim, shared updates from recent EPPR WG meetings, in which two new projects were approved, Casualty Tracking Workshop and Shoreline COSRVA, and two reports were approved, Arctic Guardian Exercise After Action Report and Radiological/Nuclear Risk Assessment in the Arctic. She also shared that Heads of Delegation agreed to embark on strategic planning early next year to ensure EPPR is well-positioned to implement the Strategic Plan.

She highlighted one recent event, the joint CAFF-EPPR Wildland Fire Sharing Circle, which was hosted by the Gwich'in Council International (GCI) and the United States, and supported by CAFF and EPPR. The event was designed for information sharing related to wildland fires within and across WGs as well as with the broader research community,

practitioners and responders from Arctic and non-Arctic States. She also highlighted ongoing cooperation with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF), which includes the development of the Arctic Guardian Exercise After Action Report and the upcoming joint Casualty Tracking Workshop, which will be the first joint project with ACGF since both parties signed a Statement of Cooperation earlier this year. She noted that this joint work will continue both within the strict confines of EPPR's mandate and the MOU between the two entities.

Many delegates noted with pleasure the strong efforts underway with multiple WGs on the cross-cutting issue of Arctic wildland fires. Several delegates commended efforts on the Wildland Fire Sharing Circle and noted its importance in fostering cooperation on the emerging issue. The SAOC highlighted the importance of intensifying efforts to address wildland fires and noted with appreciation GCI's strong leadership in this area. He suggested considering the development of a wildland fire action plan that would drive concrete and practical actions on tackling the issue. Several other projects and initiatives were highlighted by delegates, including EPPR's work on radiation and the COSRVA oil spill tool, which is actively used in oil spill response training and exercising.

## PAME

The Chair of PAME, Jessica Nilsson, underlined that there are 39 ongoing activities across the WG's seven thematic EGs. She also noted the WG's continuing efforts towards enhancing collaboration with other WGs and strengthening engagement with Observers, particularly in shipping-related activities.

The PAME Chair highlighted the WG's work related to marine shipping, where currently 12 activities are underway in line with the Russian Chairmanship's priorities. She noted the recent 5<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum, which included 175 registered participants, the highest amount to date, and supported efforts to advance awareness and support the effective implementation of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Polar Code and sustainable Arctic shipping more broadly. She also highlighted PAME's Arctic Ship Traffic Data (ASTD) – a database of Arctic shipping activities that provides reliable data for research and analysis, responding to a growing need for data in a new age of increased Arctic ship traffic.

PAME is also working on its implementation plan for the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the Arctic (ML-RAP), adopted at the Reykjavik Ministerial. This work is being done in collaboration with all other WGs and through two projects from PAME's 2021-2023 work plan. Another prominent initiative was PAME's update of the Council's Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (2015-2025) (AMSP), which will involve cross-cutting work with other WGs.

Delegates thanked the Chair of PAME for the strong ongoing work, and welcomed in particular the update of the AMSP and the development of an implementation plan for the ML-RAP. Several delegates encouraged WGs to contribute to the ML-RAP implementation plan. It was noted that the Kingdom of Denmark is pursuing deliberations to pave the way to a global agreement on plastic pollution, and that they will look for others to support this. PAME's work on the ecosystem-based approach to management was also highlighted as an important initiative. Several delegates commended PAME for their cross-cutting work with other WGs and their strong engagement with outside organizations and Observers.

## CAFF

The Chair of CAFF, Mia Rönkä, shared CAFF's cross-cutting activities with other WGs, such as the Marine Invasive Species in Arctic Waters project, Arctic Protected Areas project and Information Briefs on the Arctic Marine Environment Under Change in cooperation with PAME, Wildland Fire Ecology Mapping and Monitoring Project in cooperation with EPPR, an assessment of ecosystem impact of climate change and feedbacks to the climate with AMAP and the Arctic Biodiversity Congress that will involve all subsidiary bodies – among other projects.

One initiative that remains a strong focus for CAFF includes developing new Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2023-2030. This is a key CAFF activity under the Finnish Chairmanship of CAFF in 2021-2023. The new Action Plan will be developed to align with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to facilitate reporting on how the Arctic as a region is responding to global biodiversity targets and supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Another prominent upcoming initiative will be the Arctic Biodiversity Congress that is scheduled for early Summer 2023.

The CAFF Chair highlighted initiatives such as meaningful engagement with PPs, inclusion of Traditional Knowledge and Local Knowledge (TKLK) and the co-production of knowledge. Among several ongoing projects with PP leadership, she noted plans for calls, workshops and trainings about TKLK and co-production of knowledge that will take place in 2022. She also highlighted the WG's efforts towards youth engagement, such as CAFF's Arctic Youth Engagement Strategy 2021-2026, Youth Advisory Committee, cooperation with early career scientists with a CAFF-IASC Fellowship Program and internships, and other channels such as school visits, the development of learning material and hosting a youth writing competition.

Many delegates welcomed CAFF's active cooperation with other WGs and efforts to enhance meaningful participation of PPs. Delegates also shared appreciation for CAFF's youth engagement efforts and noted it could serve as an inspiration for other WGs. One delegate noted that the Arctic Biodiversity Congress in 2023 will be a crucial milestone

and asked for further details on the event as it is planned. The SAOC noted that biodiversity and conservation measures are a promising avenue for regional cooperation, and encouraged the CAFF Chair to explore regional initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked all six WGs for their presentations and project updates.

## **9. Arctic Council work on black carbon and methane**

### **Background and discussion**

The SAOC invited the Chairs of EGBCM, AMAP and ACAP to provide brief updates on their work on black carbon and methane.

### **EGBCM**

First, the Chair of EGBCM, Veronika Ginzburg, noted that during the EG's first meeting under the Russian Chairmanship in October, it was agreed that a stronger focus should be placed on implementation of the recommendations in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summary of Progress and Recommendations Report 2021 in order to reduce emissions of both black carbon and methane. Options include widening communication efforts, scaling up projects, identifying barriers to action and highlighting the continued need for science research. During the October meeting, it was also decided to add a seventh priority area for black carbon and methane emissions – cross-sectoral- which would examine cross-cutting issues. The other areas are oil and gas, residential combustion, solid waste, wildfires (new in 2021) and animal husbandry and agriculture (new in 2021). She also reminded that Arctic States and Observer States are asked to submit their national reports to EGBCM up until 15 May, 2022 to allow sufficient time for the EG to assess collective progress and produce recommendations ahead of the 2023 Ministerial meeting.

In light of the Reykjavik Declaration, which calls to consider updates to the collective goal to reduce black carbon emissions and to consider recommending a goal on methane, the EGBCM Chair proposed a small subgroup within EGBCM to work on these taskings for the 4<sup>th</sup> Summary of Progress and Recommendations report to be delivered in 2023.

Delegates thanked the EGBCM Chair for her update and welcomed the EG's work in tracking progress and developing recommendations for reducing black carbon and methane emissions. Some delegates stressed the importance on achieving urgent reduction of these emissions as a pathway to reduce global warming.

### **AMAP**

The Chair of AMAP highlighted recent findings from the WG's assessments that could assist in the mitigation of emissions, including that States' current policies seem to be

sufficient to meet the collective goal, but that significant additional emissions reductions are achievable by using Best Available Technology. He noted that AMAP found that fully implementing current legislation would lead to a collective decline of 37 percent in Arctic States and 52 percent in Observer states in 2050 compared to 2015. He also noted that methane emissions are expected to increase, and that reductions need to occur particularly in the oil and gas industry. He welcomed further dialogue with EGBCM on what additional issues AMAP could look into to address knowledge gaps.

## ACAP

The Chair of ACAP noted that it has a number of projects currently in progress to reduce emissions of black carbon and methane, and highlighted previous successful projects such as the Murmansk Bus Project and the Tundra Project. He noted that ongoing projects have potential to provide lessons learned for future feasibility studies, capacity building and research and development of similar projects. He also highlighted ACAP's black carbon case study platform as a tool for Arctic Council and national initiatives that have successfully reduced emissions.

### Conclusion

The SAOC thanked all three Chairs for their insightful presentations. He tasked the ACS to review the work being done within the Arctic Council on efforts to reduce black carbon and methane emissions, and to prepare an overview of all of the concrete outcomes of these activities and what could be done in the future to enhance efforts. He noted that this effort would equip EGBCM with relevant options on the way forward on this very important issue.

## 10. Scientific cooperation in the Arctic

### 10.1 Meeting of the Senior Representatives for Arctic Science

#### Background and discussion

Sergey Terashkevich, Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Department at the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education provided a summary of the meeting's conclusion that was held virtually on 18-19 November. He noted that an outcome he perceived from the meeting was all States agreeing to continue the discussion of a possible mechanism to organize scientific research based on the bidding principle and co-financing. Another outcome was a discussion around a mandate for the SRAS to continue work as a permanent body. He suggested that confirmation of this work could occur through adding an article on the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic

Scientific Cooperation that would initiate an organizational body to arrange science research.

Many delegates disagreed with the organizer's perceived outcomes of the meeting. While many delegates affirmed their willingness to discuss strengthening research cooperation, some noted concerns, which include: an unclear distinction between scientific activities that are Arctic Council related and non-Arctic Council related; an unclear mandate for the coordinating committee; and differing approaches to research programming and collective funding between countries. Some delegates welcomed the plans for a March 2022 workshop among researchers and science funding organizations. A strong message was sent by several delegates that this initiative needs a bottom-up approach with researchers in the driver's seat.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC took note of the differing conclusions drawn from the organizers and attendees of the meeting. He highlighted the importance of exploring different ways to enhance scientific cooperation and encouraged the organizers to go ahead with their plans to organize a March 2022 science cooperation event where further discussions on this matter will take place. Clarifications and updates will be provided at the May SAOX meeting.

## **10.2 Arctic Science Summit Week**

### **Background and discussion**

The Executive Secretary of IASC provided delegates with an overview of the upcoming ASSW, which will be held in a hybrid format in Tromsø, Norway and online from 26 March – 1 April 2022. She noted that 65 business and community meetings and workshops are currently being planned and that IASC is still accepting proposals for more. She highlighted that two important themes will be Arctic remote sensing and techniques, as well as observing the intersection of health, understanding and resilience, including how Covid-19 has impacted Indigenous Peoples. She also noted that travel support will be available for researchers and knowledge holders.

The SAO for the United States thanked IASC for its long-term efforts to improve cooperation in Arctic research and noted that the United States is working with Norway to host a One Arctic One Health event on the margins of ASSW 2022.

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC thanked the Executive Secretary of IASC for her informative presentation.

## 11. Past and upcoming side events with Chairmanship/Arctic Council participation

### Background and discussion

The SAOC provided information on the involvement of the Chairmanship and the Arctic Council in various past and upcoming side events. He shared an overview of 27 events in the last months where the Chairmanship, Working Groups, the ACS and IPS have represented the Council. Highlights include:

- **Arctic Council anniversary events:** The Chairmanship hosted a national anniversary roundtable in Moscow on 17 September 2021, attended by the bilateral ambassadors of the Arctic States and Observer States, as well as Indigenous and youth representatives from Russia. In addition, the ACS and IPS hosted an anniversary exhibition in Tromsø from 16-30 September 2021.
- **Arctic Circle Assembly:** From 14-16 October, the Arctic Council had a presence at the event in Iceland with a booth and an interactive anniversary quiz exhibit. In addition, WGs hosted a session titled, “The Arctic Council – Snapshot of a Success Story” and the SAOC gave an address during a plenary panel on the Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council
- **UNFCCC COP26 Glasgow:** The Arctic Council had a presence at the event that took place from 31 October-12 November. There were two Chairmanship sessions on youth engagement and the Russian Chairmanship program during Arctic Day at the Russian Federation Pavilion, and the SAOC shared a COP26 Statement by the Russian Federation. In addition, AMAP, ACAP and CAFF hosted a total of four sessions at COP26 and a roundtable on sustainable development in the Arctic was held.

Upcoming events of the extended Russian Chairmanship program include:

- **Arctic Council events:**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Biodiversity Summit, Salekhard, 2023
  - Arctic Council Strategic Retreat, St-Petersburg, 10-11 April 2022
- **Russian Chairmanship Official Module**
  - International Arctic Forum – Territory of Dialogue, St. Petersburg, 11-13 April 2022
  - Arctic Economic Council meeting, Vladivostok, September 2022
- **The Development of Human Capital in the Arctic**
  - IV Northern Sustainable Development Forum, Yakutsk, September 2022
- **Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the Arctic**

- Forum on Public Private Partnership in the Area of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples, Dudinka, 31 March-April 2022
- **Climate Change and Ecology of the Arctic**
  - Arctic Meteorological Summit, Salekhard, September 2022
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Biodiversity Summit, Salekhard, 2023
  - Environmental Ministerial Meeting, Russia, May 2023
  - Summit on Climate Change and Permafrost Degradation, Yakutsk, Spring 2023
- **International Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic**
  - UArctic Congress, Moscow, September-November 2022

Other upcoming conferences of interest include:

- **Arctic Frontiers**, Tromsø and virtually, 31 January-3 February 2022: The ACS is planning a side event on Digitalization and Indigenous Languages
- **COP4 Minamata Convention on Mercury**, Bali, Q1 2022
- **Arctic Science Summit Week**, Tromsø and virtually, 26-31 March 2022
- **COP10 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollution**, Geneva, June 2022
- **UN Ocean Conference**, Lisbon, 2022
- **Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region**, 2022

### **Conclusion**

The SAOC noted that he will provide updates on his outreach efforts at the next SAO plenary meeting.

## 12. Any other business

### **Blogger initiative**

The SAOC invited a guest speaker to share plans for a project that will follow a team led by a Russian extreme polar traveler Bogdan Bulychev, who plans to travel across the Arctic starting in Moscow and ending in New York; with stops in Arctic Russia, Canada and Alaska. This project will be a part of the Bering Strait Festival scheduled for August 2022 under the Russian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. It is aimed at raising awareness about the Arctic region, its unique and fragile ecosystems and its inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples, as well as fostering regional cooperation through highlighting Arctic twin-cities ties. He invited interested parties – professional travelers and influencers – from Arctic States to take part in this initiative. The SAOC noted that this project is for delegates' information, that this expedition is not necessarily an official part of the Bering Strait Festival, and highlighted that activities that foster people to

people cooperation and have youth involvement and Indigenous perspective should have support. While some delegates shared safety concerns related to traveling in rough terrain, they wished the project well.

## 13. Closing of the SAO meeting

Before the meeting's adjournment, many delegates took the floor to congratulate the Chairmanship and the ACS for a very well organized week in Salekhard, including notably the health and safety protocols put in place related to COVID-19, and very successful SAO executive and plenary meetings. The SAOC thanked delegates for their warm words and, in turn, thanked the ACS for their support.

The SAOC thanked all delegates for taking part in the first SAO plenary meeting of the Russian Chairmanship, either in-person or virtually. Appreciation in particular was given to virtual participants that joined the meeting at all hours of the day and night. The SAOC noted that the next SAO plenary meeting will take place in May 2022.

## Acronyms and abbreviations commonly found in Arctic Council reports

AAC	Arctic Athabaskan Council
ABC	Arctic Biodiversity Congress
ACAP	Arctic Contaminants Action Program (1 of 6 Working Groups)
ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
ACS	Arctic Council Secretariat
AEC	Arctic Economic Council
AIA	Aleut International Association
AIM	Arctic Investment Matrix
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (1 of 6 Working Groups)
AMBI	Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (CAFF)
AMSA	Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (PAME, 2009)
AIP	Arctic Investment Protocol
ARENA	Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (SDWG project)
ARR / ARA	Arctic Resilience Report / Arctic Resilience Assessment
ARAF	Arctic Resilience Action Framework
ARHC	Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission
ASDS	Arctic Shipping Data Service (PAME)
BCM	Black Carbon and Methane
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (1 of 6 Working Groups)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBM	Community-Based Monitoring (CAFF)
CBMP	Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CAFF)
CLEO	Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer Network (ACAP)
CliC	Climate and Cryosphere
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EA	Ecosystem Approach



EAAFP	East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership
EALLU	Arctic Indigenous Youth, Climate Change and Food Culture (SDWG)
EBM	Ecosystem-Based Management
EG	Expert Group
EGBCM	Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane
EPPR	Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (1 of 6 Working Groups)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
FP-OPP	Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic (2015)
GCI	Gwich'in Council International
HoD	Head of Delegation
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
ICES	International Council of the Exploration of the Seas
IMO	International Maritime Organization (UN)
INAO	Icelandic National Audit Office
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPS	Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat
JMS	Joint Ministerial Statement
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MEMA	Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities (PAME, SDWG)
MFA	Ministry of/for Foreign Affairs
MOSPA	Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NCM	Nordic Council of Ministers
OSPAR	The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic



PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (1 of 6 Working Groups)
PBA	Polar Bear Agreement
PBRs	Polar Bear Range States
POP	Persistent Organic Pollutant
PP	Permanent Participant
PSI	Project Support Instrument
RADEG	Radiation Expert Group (EPPR, 2019)
RAIPON	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
ROC	Record of Observer Contributions
SAO	Senior Arctic Official
SAOC	SAO Chair (Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials)
SAOX	SAO executive meeting
SAR	Search and rescue
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (UN)
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group (1 of 6 Working Groups)
SLCP/F	Short-Lived Climate Pollutants/Forcers
TF	Task Force
TFAMC II	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation II
TFICA	Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic
TK	Traditional knowledge
TKLK	Traditional knowledge and local knowledge
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme (Observer)
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme (Observer)
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
WG	Working Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organization



WP            work plan