

CAFF Report to Senior Arctic Officials (SAO)

October 1997

I. INTRODUCTION

The following is a summary status report from CAFF. As requested it is structured in two parts: (I) Activities since Alta; and (II) Schedule of Activities to 1998 Ministerial.

The main objective is to brief the SAOs on the most significant products, discussions and recommendations of CAFF VI in Nuuk, Greenland (September 27-30) as well as identifying progress on priority tasks assigned to the program in Alta. These were specified in the SAAO Report to Ministers 1997 and Alta Declaration as:

- to continue the implementation and further development of the “Circumpolar Protected Areas Network Strategy and Action Plan (CPAN)”;
- to assist countries with the implementation of the “International Murre Conservation Strategy and Action Plan” and the “Circumpolar Eider Conservation Strategy and Action Plan” as needed;
- to finish other ongoing projects as feasible and appropriate (only mentioned in the SAAO Report);
- to outline ideas and proposals regarding the conservation and sustainable use of Arctic renewable resources (only mentioned in the SAAO Report), and
- to report on all priority tasks at future Arctic Council meetings (only mentioned in the SAAO Report)
- to develop a long-term Action Plan to give effect to the Co-operative Strategy for Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Arctic Region

Additional tasks assigned to the Program in section 2.2.5 of the SAAO Report were e.g.:

- to develop recommendations on organisational and procedural aspects.

II. ACTIVITIES SINCE ALTA (bullets refer to priority tasks assigned by the SAAOs)

• **Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN)**

At CAFF VI two major CPAN items were delivered: A “Draft CPAN Reporting and Evaluation Guide”, aimed at providing baseline information, standardising progress reporting and providing a mechanism for objective evaluation of the CPAN process; and a major discussion paper on “Global Overview on Conservation of Arctic Migratory Birds”. The latter paper confirms the general trend that the further south Arctic migratory birds travel, the less protection they enjoy and, further, that there are significant gaps in protection of e.g. grassland- and forest dwelling birds. The paper strongly recommends that the Arctic countries consider collectively signing the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and especially its African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

The thrust of CPAN up to the next Ministerial meeting will be on completing the reporting and evaluation guide, on finalising the “Global Overview on Conservation of Arctic Migratory Birds” and present its recommendations to SAO in April 1998, to prepare a paper on jurisdictional responsibilities

for the Arctic marine environment and the existing legal frameworks for its conservation (by May 1998), and to initiate the development of a draft version of a Pan Arctic Protected Areas Registry (PAPAR) (by CAFF VII).

- **Implementation of the seabird (murre and eider) strategies**

Five-year action plans, to implement these strategies, are under development and will be finalised by the end of this year (murres) and by CAFF VII (eiders).

- **Finalising of other ongoing program work**

Significant progress was reported at CAFF VI within most program areas. Highlights are:

- Finland has been working on a “Report on Threats to Arctic Biological Biodiversity”. A final draft will be presented to the SAOs in January.
- The penultimate draft of the “Atlas of Rare Endemic Vascular Plants of the Arctic” was presented. A final version is planned by the end of 1997
- Three seabird reports will be finalised by the end of 1997 and presented to the SAOs in January 1998.

- **To outline ideas and proposals re the sustainable use of Arctic flora and fauna**

A small *ad hoc* group was struck to initiate discussion on this issue. However, at the request of the US National Representative based on directions from the US SAO, the group could not address any substantive issues. Neither was there a consensus for the majority view that the *ad hoc* group should provide advice to the SAOs on organisational aspects of the Arctic Council’s SD initiative and propose a future role of CAFF within that framework. The reason given by the United States was that any substantive advice from CAFF at this point might prejudice the development of Terms of References for the SD initiative. The opposite view, however, was that it would be important for the SAOs to have CAFF’s expert advice on these issues at an early stage in the development of the Terms of References. It was decided that the CAFF Chair would write Ambassador Mary Simon and explain the dilemma CAFF is faced with in receiving conflicting guidance from the SAOs.

- **Development of a long-term Action Plan/Strategic Plan to give effect to the biodiversity strategy**

Workshop on Arctic Biological Diversity Conservation: Perspectives and Structure

As an input to the ongoing analytical work and program review of CAFF, WWF and UNEP held a Workshop immediately preceding CAFF VI. The objectives were to identify main threats, suggest partners and collaborators, review CAFF’s strengths and weaknesses, and to help defining a more focused future framework for CAFF. The initial results are provided in Appendix I and a more complete report will be developed later.

The strengths of CAFF as noted by the workshop are e.g.:

- CAFF is a working group of experienced people which makes effective use of meagre resources

- progress has been substantive and rapid
- CAFF has a good working relationship with indigenous people and organisations.

The weaknesses identified relate mostly to structural aspects, e.g.:

- ineffective communication
- lack of publicity
- lack of authority
- lack of funding or funding imbalance.

Progress at CAFF VI

At the Annual Meeting, *ac hoc* group was struck to (1) develop an outline of a long-term action plan (which during the meeting came to be termed CAFF Strategic Plan), based on the initial framework developed by Iceland and inputs received from the countries, and from the workshop in Denmark; and (2) to review the analytical work conducted so far and further clarify the language of the five highest priority objectives. Then five concurrent sessions set out to identify tentative future action areas under each objective. The preliminary results of these sessions are presented in Appendix II.

Next step is to rework these ideas, and other inputs received during the meeting as well from the Workshop in Denmark and the Report on Threats to Arctic Biological Diversity, into a coherent first discussion outline of a CAFF Strategic Plan. This task will be done by Iceland and the Secretariat. The discussion outline will be ready for country review by November 1. A draft long term CAFF Strategic Plan will then be tabled at the SAO meeting in January as planned.

• **recommendations on organisational and procedural aspects**

Two discussion papers were tabled which considered the organisation of Annual Meetings, document management, sub-group structure and a more formal structure for processing and adopting CAFF projects.

Of a more fundamental nature, the CAFF Program recommends that Working Groups be allowed to establish their own rules of procedure, as required to effectively deliver their work plans, which are not inconsistent with the Arctic Council rules of procedure.

Appendix III provides an example of some of the rules of procedure which a Working Group might adopt.

III. SCHEDULE UP TO THE 1998 MINISTERIAL

• **CAFF Work Plan 1997-98**

A new draft Work Plan which focuses on finishing ongoing projects was adopted with effect until the Ministerial meeting in October 1998 (Appendix IV). A few new items have been added, all of which will be finished before the Ministerial. These are clearly marked in the draft Work Plan.

• **Milestones and CAFF deliverables**

1. SAO meeting in January

CAFF plans to deliver:

- “Report on Threats to Arctic Biological Diversity”
- Draft CAFF Strategic Plan which is intended to give effect to the Co-operative Strategy for Conservation of Biological Diversity and focus program work over the next 5-year period
- Draft recommendations on organisational aspects
- “Atlas of Rare Endemic Vascular Plants of the Arctic Region”
- Reports on Impact of Hunting, Impact of Incidental Take, and Human Disturbance on seabirds in the Circumpolar Arctic
- CAFF further offers to deliver ideas and proposals regarding the conservation and sustainable use of Arctic renewable resources (unless directed otherwise)

2. SAO meeting in April

CAFF plans to deliver:

- Report on “Global Overview of Conservation of Arctic Migratory Birds” and its main recommendations
- endorsement of the draft Strategic Plan will also be sought.

3. National Representative’s/Permanent Participant’s meeting in May

- This meeting will be held in association with the Sustainable Development Conference which is scheduled for 12-14 May in Whitehorse, Canada. The meeting will focus on a review of ongoing program items, such as the Canada’s paper on protection of marine ecosystems and Iceland’s outline of a communication strategy, and preparations for the Ministerial meeting in September.

4. Ministerial Meeting in September

CAFF plans to deliver:

- Report to Ministers on all program aspects
- A final version of the long-term Strategic Plan

CAFF will seek Ministerial endorsement of its products and plans