

Cover sheet

Kingdom of the Netherlands

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

Yes No

Observer Report

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 developments and management of the area. Experienced Dutch Arctic scientists are involved in three working groups (AMAP, CAFF and SDWG), and government officials 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 and human and social sciences. 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. 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. Steenhuisen is co-author of the AMAP Assessment 2015, Radioactivity in the Arctic and several other AMAP reports.

Several Dutch Research Institutes provide input to AMAP assessments, for example the Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research, Utrecht University, (Greenland Ice sheet Report and SWIPA), the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (Ocean Acidification) and Wageningen University and Wageningen Marine Research (Mercury, POP's and micro-plastics). The Dutch researchers Ko van Huisteden and Jorien Vonk (VU Amsterdam) participate in the SWIPA Expert Group.

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 (Taymir and Pechora delta), Svalbard and east-Greenland. Recently the project lead by Thomas Lameris on barnacle geese in Pechora ended, but he started a new project on red knots in northern Russia and became IASC-fellow with special interest in the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI). Jeroen Reneerkens goes on with his project on sanderlings in Iceland and east Greenland and Maarten Loonen and Juke Prop are still working on their more than thirty year data collection on barnacle geese on Svalbard. On the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, Theunis Piersma's team is very active in supporting conservation with scientific data.

As official CAFF representative, Maarten Loonen is active in the CIBIRD working group and contributing with data on arctic tern migration and breeding biology. As a result of the AMBI meeting in Texel in 2016, Wilmar Remmelts (as government representative) has taken the initiative to appoint an AMBI African Eurasian Flyway coordinator at the Common Wadden Sea Secretariate (Sergio Rejado Albaina). 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 feeds directly into management.

The Arctic Biodiversity Congress 2018 in Rovaniemi, was attended by Wimmar Remmelts and Thomas Lameris. The Icewhale Foundation (a Dutch initiative for research on bowhead whales) organized a workshop in close collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund. The Netherlands has financed research projects on arctic vegetation in several arctic countries. At the Netherlands Arctic station on Svalbard have set up monitoring projects on vegetation productivity, insects and limnology, collecting data that are shared with other researchers in CAFF.

SDWG

Annette Scheepstra and Sean Desjardins (both of the Arctic Centre, Groningen) have represented The Netherlands in the SDWG over the past two years. Scheepstra has been participating in the Adaptation Action for a Changing Arctic project for the Barents Area. She is an active participant in the SDWG's Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG). She is also much involved in EU-PolarNet and tries in that capacity to include the voice of SDWG in setting up a new integrated polar research agenda for the EU.

Desjardins, an anthropologist and archaeologist carrying out ethno-archaeological research among Inuit in Arctic Canada, has served as the Dutch SDWG observer since late 2017. He has facilitated cooperation between Dutch experts in the field of sustainable energy and micro-grids and the Arctic Council Permanent Participant organisation Gwich'in Council International (GCI) on the Sustainable Energy Futures Toolkit project, for which the Netherlands is a co-lead. He is also an active participant in the SDWG's Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG).

Future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups.

In the 'Netherlands Polar Strategy 2016-2020' The Netherlands reaffirms its commitment to contribute to sustainable development of the Arctic region. It does so primarily through contributing to scientific Arctic research, promoting international cooperation and supporting the development of sustainable guidelines for Arctic operations. 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 and SDWG, 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.

An important part of the current Netherlands polar policy was the appointment of an Arctic Ambassador. The Ambassador attends Arctic Council 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 (Erik J. Molenaar, Utrecht University) attended several PAME meetings, The Netherlands is currently investigating the possibility of a more consistent participation in PAME. Furthermore, The Netherlands intends to submit its national report on black carbon in 2016, as requested by the Arctic Council.

Contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections.

The Netherlands industry – gathered in the Dutch Arctic Circle (DAC) - has a strong interest in contributing to the sustainable development of the Arctic. In 2019 the DAC and NL MFA are planning a series of events relating to circular economy in the Arctic. The ‘kick-off’ will be the side-event on circular economy in the margin of the Arctic Frontiers Conference in January 2019. A conference in The Netherlands on circular economy in the Arctic is foreseen in course of 2019.

In 2015, the largest ever Dutch polar research expedition visited the island of Edgeøya, Svalbard. On board were 55 scientists, a member of Parliament, four journalists and some VIPs. 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 2nd polar expedition of similar proportions in 2020.