

Instructions for Observers subject to review

Introduction

This document provides the reporting template and accompanying instructions for Observers to be reviewed during the **Icelandic Chairmanship (2019-2021)**.

The deadline for submission is **1 June 2020**.

According to the "[Arctic Council Rules of Procedure](#)" (Annex 2), every **two years** Observers are requested to submit to the Chairmanship up-to-date information about relevant activities and their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. Every four years, from the date of being granted Observer status, Observers will be reviewed at the Ministerial meeting. The following **20 Observers** will be reviewed at the next Ministerial meeting, and are requested to submit their review report by **1 June 2020**:¹

- Germany;
- The Netherlands;
- Poland;
- Switzerland;
- United Kingdom;
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM);
- OSPAR Commission (OSPAR);
- Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Regions (SCPAR);
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE);
- United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment);
- West Nordic Council (WNC);
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO);
- Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Seas (ACOPS);
- International Arctic Science Committee (IASC);
- International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES);
- International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH);
- Northern Forum (NF);
- Oceana; and,
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Global Arctic Program (WWF).

¹ These include the Observers reviewed before the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting in 2017 as well as Observers admitted that year.

Role of Observers

The role and responsibilities of Observers, as well as criteria for admission to the Arctic Council, can be found in the “Arctic Council Rules of Procedure” (Annex 2) and the “[Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies](#).”

The primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Observers contribute to the Arctic Council primarily through engagement at the level of Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Observers are invited to the meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council unless the Senior Arctic Officials decide otherwise. Observers may also propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant.

Report submission

Observer review reports should include the relevant information described below and in the template.

- (a) A description of the Observer’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants;
- (b) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s future plans to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants; and,
- (c) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered in the previous sections since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years.

Observer review reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: acs@arctic-council.org not later than **1 June 2020**. Please bear in mind while preparing your report that all Observer reports will be published online in the *Observer* section of the [Arctic Council online Library](#).

If an Observer fails to submit a report during the review process, the Arctic Council will consider this to mean that the Observer **is no longer interested in maintaining its status** as an accredited Observer to the Arctic Council.

Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Date of submission:

29 May 2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>

Information for appropriate contact person

Full name: Christine Kelly

Email: christine.kelly@fco.gov.uk

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7008 2725 or +44 (0) 7432 076405

Organization or department: Polar Regions Dept., Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Job Title: Arctic Policy Officer

Full mailing address:

Polar Regions Department,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
King Charles Street,
London, SW1A 2HA
United Kingdom

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

X Yes No

Observer Review 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.

The United Kingdom has a long historical association with the Arctic and our interest in the region remains just as strong today. We are the Arctic's nearest neighbour, changes in the Arctic environment are affecting the UK, just as activity in the UK is affecting the Arctic. Our Arctic Policy Framework "Beyond the Ice", published in 2018, sets out our commitments to the Arctic.

Commitments include addressing global climate change; supporting cutting edge scientific research that aims to advance global understanding of how changes in the Arctic environment will have global consequences; helping protect the fragile Arctic environment through our work at the Arctic Council and through other multilateral organisations; ensuring that British nationals who visit the region can do so safely, and that British business interests conduct their activities in a sustainable and responsible manner so that the people whose livelihoods rely on the Arctic can do so for generations to come; and working in partnership with Arctic nations to keep peace and stability in the region.

The UK's enduring engagement with the Arctic is reflected in our being one of the original Observers to the Arctic Council in 1996, having previously been accredited at the first Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy meeting in 1991. Officials from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office have represented the UK at each of the Senior Arctic Officials and Ministerial meetings of the Council since 1996, and continue to provide constructive engagement with the Council's work in accordance with Arctic Council Rules of Procedure and criteria for Observers.

In the **four years since the last full review of the UK's role as an Observer State** we have continued to be an active and engaged participant in the work and objectives of the Arctic Council, its working groups, expert groups and task forces, for example:

- With increasing numbers of British visitors to the Arctic we want to ensure that they can do so safely and responsibly. The UK is a co-sponsor with Iceland and Canada of the current PAME project **Arctic Marine Tourism: Development in the Arctic and enabling real change**. FCO funded, the British Antarctic Survey has provided technical and analytical support, assessing tourism statistics to better understand developments and identify gaps in the data.
- The UK Hydrographic Office shared relevant experience and feedback for the **Guidelines for Marine Risk Assessment** when they joined a workshop convened by EPPR, September 2019.
- As a strong proponent for safe passage for ships in Arctic waters the UK was active in discussions at the IMO and at PAME through the development of the Polar Code. Consequently, UK industry hosted the inaugural and subsequent **Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum** in 2017 and 2018. Participants from UK government agencies, the UK maritime industry and business services sector all contributed to advancing understanding of the Polar Code and the best practice website launched in London in May 2018. In FY 2019/20 the FCO provided **a financial contribution to support the ongoing development of the website**.
- Consistent implementation of the Polar Code is critical to its success in the Arctic. As such, the UK provided a submission in 2019 to Norway for its **PAME project on the Interpretation of the Polar Code**. As part of Finland's chairmanship we also worked closely with their Embassy in London **to hold a seminar on maritime safety and security in the Arctic**.

- The UK has a strong record of high quality, high impact and collaborative Arctic research and is a committed member of the International Arctic Science Committee. **UK institutions and researchers have co-authored and contributed to working group publications**, such as AMAP's Snow, Water Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (2017) report. Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) also work closely on the AMAP project on Arctic Ocean Acidification. **PML spoke about the effects of ocean acidification** at the Arctic Council / AMAP COP 25 breakout session in Madrid in December 2019.
- The UK Centre for the Environment, Fish and Aquaculture (Cefas) continue to actively engage on ways to address marine litter in the Arctic. They contributed to the PAME **marine litter desktop study** and are involved with the development of the **Regional Action Plan**, most recently joining the Marine Litter expert group meetings at PAME on 3-4 February 2020. Representatives of Cefas and The Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) were also on the **Steering Committee for the Intl. Symposium on Plastic in the Arctic and sub-Arctic**.
- As a strong supporter for action to reduce global emissions of black carbon and methane **the UK submitted a national report on black carbon and methane emissions in 2018** for inclusion in the framework on Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions. **The UK ratified the UN Minamata Convention on Mercury on 6 April 2018**. Safeguarding the environment from unnecessary pollutants and chemicals is essential to ensure a healthy, safe and productive Arctic.
- The UK Government's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) continues to **share through CAFF data on populations of Arctic breeding bird populations which occur on UK territory**. The UK continues to engage with both the Circumpolar Seabird Group, holding a mutually beneficial visit to the British Antarctic Survey in February 2018, and the African-Eurasian Flyway Steering Committee of the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative. The JNCC and many other UK based researchers and interest groups also shared their valuable work the 2018 Arctic Biodiversity Congress.
- Research conducted by the UK Met Office Hadley Centre **has contributed to understanding of changes in Arctic weather patterns and the impacts of climate change on the region**. By attending the Arctic Meteorological Summit held in March 2018 in Kittilia, Finland under the Finnish chair of the Arctic Council, the Met Office built on existing partnerships and developed new connections with institutions that will deepen knowledge and further enhance meteorological cooperation. The UK is also a committed member of the World Meteorological Organisation, a fellow observer.

The UK believes that the Permanent Participants provide a unique and essential contribution to Arctic Council discussions. Only by learning about the use of traditional and local knowledge from indigenous and local communities themselves can Arctic change be properly understood. UK based researchers are committed to listening to, and working in partnership with, indigenous and local communities, to set joint priorities and incorporate traditional and local knowledge to ensure the best outcomes for communities and for science.

At the end of 2017, researchers from across the UK took part in a series of multi-day events involving local community and indigenous representatives from the Yamal-Nenets region in Northern Siberia with the aim of building capacity to monitor, understand and predict extreme weather events in the Arctic. At the same time, UK parliamentarians heard directly from people from Sami, Gwich'in and Inuit communities about the impact of changes in the Arctic and the need to support sustainable development in the region. We will continue to find ways that we can have constructive discussions with indigenous and local communities to ensure that we are benefiting from the full range of information available.

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.

Cooperation and collaboration, whether sharing research capability and infrastructure or collaborating on research projects, helps to deliver better solutions and builds people to people links. The UK reiterates its commitment to support the work of the Arctic Council, and its subsidiary groups, and to finding ways to improve coordination and information sharing.

We welcome the efforts of successive Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials' Chairs and the Secretariat to identify common issues and goals that would make it easier to more directly and substantively contribute to working groups. The UK has joined thematic discussions with working groups on plastic pollution in the Arctic and welcomed the invitation by the current SAO Chair to join a panel discussion at the **SAO Marine Mechanism on Regional Coordination of Marine Issues and Global Commitments**. Despite the meetings postponement, we hope still to participate when it is reconvened.

"Beyond the Ice" sets out what expertise the UK can offer to help meet some of the long term challenges facing the Arctic region and to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come, including through the Arctic Council and its subsidiary groups, for example:

- The UK is convinced of the importance in establishing a strong and coherent set of regulatory requirements for ships operating in the Arctic region. We therefore intend to continue to work with PAME and through the IMO in its work to ensure effective pan-Arctic implementation of the Polar Code and proposals to extend the Polar Code for non-SOLAS vessels; measures to mitigate the impact of heavy fuel oils in Arctic waters, acting as chair for the PPR sub-committee; and, to develop low and eventually zero emission shipping.
- The UK will continue to collect and share data on populations of Arctic breeding bird populations which occur in the UK, building on the 70 years of data already collected, primarily through the JNCC-coordinated Wetland Bird Survey. JNCC will continue to remain engaged with CAFF, in particular AMBI and CBird. The UK intends to explore additional ways of engaging with CAFF including supporting domestic and international implementation of the AMBI Workplan.
- Together the UK and Germany have invested £20m in the 5 year (2017-22) Changing Arctic Ocean programme to understand the implications for marine biology and biochemistry. UK-based researchers were also active participants in the MOSAiC programme. Collectively the findings will help refine regional decision making and will be applicable to AMAP, PAME and CAFF projects. We will continue to seek ways to strengthen engagement and cooperation with these groups.
- As joint hosts of COP26, we want the meeting to be ambitious and inclusive. We will work with the Permanent Participants to find ways in which their voices can be heard through the event. Also, in collaboration with Arctic communities, the British Museum will host an exhibition that explores the creativity and resourcefulness of the circumpolar Indigenous People, to celebrate their ingenuity and resilience throughout history.

We continue to seek out further opportunities to work with the other working and expert groups. Government backed UK and Canadian institutions, and Indigenous Peoples groups, are discussing new approaches to joint multi-disciplinary work that aims to further understand the Canadian Arctic. We hope that future collaborations will provide valuable information for SDWG and other Arctic Council projects.

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.

The UK remains committed to hosting an ambitious and inclusive COP26 in 2021. It is vital that the world comes together and takes renewed action to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. We urge every country to come forward with ambitious new nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that will help us meet the commitments set out under the 2015 Paris Agreement, including long-term strategies which mark a course to net zero emissions. As the world recovers from COVID-19 it is important that we build back greener to lay the foundation for sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth.

As strong advocates of the international rules-based system, the UK recognises the importance of negotiated and consensus driven agreements through multilateral organisations, treaties and conventions such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) of which we are a part. Such arrangements continue to provide an additional platform for cooperation and collaboration between Arctic States and the wider international community.

Another example of good cooperation is the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean. We look forward to the Agreement coming into force. Moreover, the UK is looking at joining the Agreement in its own right as an independent coastal State, now it has left the EU. We are committed to working with our Arctic partners to ensure future sustainable fishing in the region.

Over 70 institutions across the UK are engaged in Arctic research, and in 2021 the UK research station at Ny-Ålesund, Norway will celebrate its 30th anniversary. The UK also has a strong record of producing high quality, high impact and collaborative Arctic research – we are fourth after the US, Russia and Canada in terms of volume of publications. The UK participated in the inaugural and subsequent Arctic Science Ministerial Meetings, is a committed member of the International Arctic Science Committee, and has five institutions that are members of the UArctic.

The UK Arctic Office supports the UK Arctic research community, and along with the Science and Innovation teams in our overseas missions in the eight Arctic States, they build connections that contribute to important research and innovation collaborations across the Arctic region and to the Arctic Council and its subsidiary groups, this includes UK representation at relevant Arctic meetings such as the Arctic Science Summit Week, the UArctic Congress, Arctic Circle Assembly and Arctic Frontiers to name a few.

The Agreement on Enhancing Scientific Cooperation has begun to enhance collaboration between Arctic and non-Arctic states. Our Memoranda of Understanding with Canada and Norway, and our bursary schemes with Canada and Russia, are good examples of UK bilateral cooperation building on the Agreement. The 2018 State of the Polar Oceans report jointly produced by UK and Norwegian researchers, helped understand the impacts of climate and environmental change on the Polar Oceans, and was a product of the MoU.

Building further on the agreement, the UK NERC Arctic Office and UK Research and Innovation Council have developed a programme with Canadian partners, including indigenous groups, to further understand the Canadian Arctic. At a local level, Indigenous Peoples will be actively involved in developing project proposals. Additionally, since 2018 the UK Arctic research community has fostered greater collaboration between UK and Russian institutions to increase the volume and value of science projects in the Russian Arctic and to develop early career collaborations through APECS.

The UK Maritime & Coastguard Agency is also participating as practitioners in the Arctic and North Atlantic Security and Emergency Preparedness Network (ArcSAR) and have registered interest in the Automatic Vessel Anomaly Detection in the Arctic (AI-ARC) project, both under the EU's Horizon2020 programme.

The UK considers that raising awareness, education and outreach will ensure a new generation of Arctic researchers and champions. We have promoted the valuable work of the Arctic Council and the UK's position as an observer in several parliamentary debates and inquiries into the Arctic, and the education resource www.discoveringthearctic.org.uk provides education tools and learning materials for schools and teachers, we have also taken part in Model Arctic Council initiatives in Greenland, Italy and the UK.