

Minutes (draft). Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials Meeting in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, October 12-14, 2005.

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**ARCTIC COUNCIL
MEETING OF SENIOR ARCTIC OFFICIALS
Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia
October 12-14, 2005**

MINUTES

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Chairman of Senior Arctic Officials (SAO), Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, welcomed participants to the SAO meeting in Khanty-Mansiysk. Two new SAOs were introduced – Raymond Arnaudo for the USA and Ragnar Baldursson for Iceland.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The meeting adopted the draft agenda circulated and amended beforehand.

3. APPROVAL OF AD HOC OBSERVERS

The meeting approved Spain as an ad hoc Observer according to its application.

4. REMARKS BY GOVERNOR ALEXANDER FILIPENKO.

Mr. Alexander Filipenko welcomed the participants of the SAO meeting both as Governor and as the Chairman of the Northern Forum. He gave a brief description of the of Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, including its history, economic development, attention to social and environmental aspects, as well as work with issues of indigenous peoples. Yugra has experience in regional and broader international cooperation which may be valuable for the Arctic Council.

5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST SAO MEETING

The draft minutes from the SAO meeting in Yakutsk, Russia, on April 6-7, 2005 were adopted.

6. UPDATE ON THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

6.1. ACAP

The presentation was made by ACAP Chair Bob Dyer. An overview of ACAP activities for the period of six months since the SAO meeting in Yakutsk was presented. Mr.Dyer briefed on the ACAP Steering Committee meeting on 22-23 September 2005 at the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources in Moscow, described the work within the framework of projects on brominated flame retardants, as well as PCB's, obsolete pesticides and dioxins/furans emissions. The cooperation with BEAC on "hot spots" in the Barents Region is under way, with possible special focus on dioxins/furans discharges from pulp and paper industry in Archangelsk Region and Mercury waste in the Nenets and Murmansk Regions. ACAP is also working closely with Raipon and Gwich'in Council International on Community Action Projects.

As to completion of the PCB and obsolete pesticides projects in Russia (NEFCO, USA and Denmark projects), they require development of Centralized or Regional waste storage and destruction facility, and Mr.Dyer called special attention of the meeting to ACAP's opinion that necessary infrastructure is not in place to achieve this goal. In this connection ACAP recommends that the key federal and regional environmental ministries and agencies should provide technical support for preparation of the necessary environmental assessments and certifications for placement and operation of storage and destruction facilities. Russia should participate in co-funding. Rostekhnadzor should identify and address the problems related to regional acceptance of toxic and hazardous wastes from other regions of Russia for treatment and destruction, developing schedules for phasing out the use of PCB-containing equipment and for destruction of PCB and obsolete pesticides stockpiles. Further, incentive-based regulations and economic measures should be developed to encourage meeting of the objectives of the Stockholm Convention and the LRTAP Heavy Metals Protocol. Encouragement of ratification of the Stockholm Convention is needed to mobilize GEF resources for these purposes.

The SAOs noted with no objections the Recommendations proposed by ACAP for the successful completion of the PCB and obsolete pesticides projects in the Russian Federation.

The Russian SAO agreed to bring these recommendations to the attention of the appropriate Russian Ministries, agencies and territorial authorities for action, and report on the status and progress of these recommendations at the next SAO meeting.

At the conclusion Mr.Dyer requested the meeting to consider changing the status of ACAP into a permanent Working group "Arctic Council Action Program", since its provisional status of "Action Plan" expires at the AC Ministerial meeting in October 2006.

The SAOs expressed their positive attitude to changing the status into the permanent WG. High appreciation of ACAP's work was given by the SAOs and

the PPs. RAIPON told the meeting about the RAIPON/GWICH'IN initiative to establish within the framework of ACAP a new Community Action Based Project Steering Committee on indigenous peoples, which is supposed to build a grassroots capacity using a holistic, culturally relevant approach to address pollution issues in Arctic indigenous communities.

6.2. AMAP

AMAP Progress Report was presented by AMAP Chair John Calder, who described major activities within the AMAP expert groups, such as on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Sweden, Canada), Mercury (Denmark, Canada), Human Health (Canada, Denmark), Radioactivity (Norway, Russia), Climate, Ozone and UV (USA, Norway). Mr. Calder also presented the status of the main AMAP deliverables to the 2006 Ministerial: Oil and Gas Assessment (Mid-January – cut-off date for input, late winter/early spring 2006 – national and peer review, 30 June 2006 – final draft submitted for technical editing, Ministerial 2006 – delivery of final printed overview report and pre-print of science report), Acidification and Arctic Haze Assessment (draft for national and peer review – mid-November 2005, final report - at the Ministerial Session, 2006).

The SAOs and the PPs, as well as the World Wildlife Fund expressed their satisfaction at the work done by AMAP and assured of their further support to its activities. Special concern was pointed out by the PPs who stressed the need for closer cooperation with them as regards the description of social and environmental consequences of the oil and gas activities, being included in the Oil and Gas Assessment. The meeting also appreciated the results of the Symposium devoted to the Oil and Gas Assessment in Saint-Petersburg (September 13-15, 2005) and underlined the hope that all the national contributions would be in place in time.

An AMAP/ACAP project within the Barents “hot spots” list was presented by the deputy AMAP executive secretary Mr. Yuri Sychev, who introduced “Remediation of contaminated areas of Frantz Josef Land, feasibility study and model experiment”. The project has two phases – the first envisages feasibility study and detailed analysis of the contaminated areas (appr. 445 000 USD is required), the second – clean-up model in several islands of the Frantz Josef Land archipelago (appr. - 1 500 000 USD is required). Cooperation with different programs, organizations and financial institutions is expected, including BEAC, AMEC, Polar Foundation, NEFCO, Russian Ministry of Natural Resources, Roshydromet. A special meeting to discuss the project is planned for December 2005 (later it was moved to late January 2006). The project proposal received a positive attitude of the SAOs, who expressed their hope that this would have a bearing on other contaminated deserted military sites throughout the Arctic (besides Russia, they are in Greenland, Canada and Alaska, USA).

6.3. CAFF

The presentation was made by CAFF Working Group Chair Esko Jaakkola.

He briefed the meeting about the main CAFF activities, such as launching the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) and Arctic Portal feasibility study (For Arctic Portal see a separate Agenda item 8.2.).

CBMP was launched in Cambridge, UK, September 6-9, 2005 in conjunction with the CAFF Management Board Meeting. A suite of 12 indicator areas to be monitored has been selected and data management strategy has been developed. Remote sensing and community-based monitoring task teams have been established. The Program is well on its way in cooperation with UNEP-World conservation monitoring center, Microsoft Research and strong international support from scientists, majoring in biodiversity in the Arctic. CBMP is also submitted as an IPY project to the IPO. It has been proposed that CBMP produce a 2010 Arctic Biodiversity Assessment. CAFF is going to submit this for consideration by the SAOs and Ministers at the 2006 Ministerial.

Mr. Jaakkola dwelled upon other major accomplishments of the WG, such as CAFF website update, map redraw to include the Faroe Islands, cooperation with other Working Groups in their projects and participation in the work of the ACIA Focal Point (CAFF is planning to submit a list of projects the WG can complete, based on the ACIA recommendations). He also reported the contribution of CAFF to IPY projects carried out by AIA (community based monitoring), University of Guelph (Vulnerability of Human Communities to environmental change across the Arctic), the Netherlands (Health of Arctic Bird populations), University of Alaska (Greening of the Arctic) and Sweden (COMAAR).

Unfortunately, CAFF and Raipon did not manage to raise enough money for the Sacred Sites Workshop, but the work is on.

Progress and further plans were also briefly reported on ECORA, taking into account the recent Steering Committee meeting in Moscow on October 7-8, 2005.

The work of CAFF expert groups (Cbird, CFG, CPAN) were also presented, as well as cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNEP/GRID-Arendal, IUCN.

The meeting noted with appreciation the work done by CAFF for the report period, expressed satisfaction concerning the CAFF cooperation with countries, the PPs and Observers.

The WG was also given the task of considering an Arctic Council side-event at the 8th Conference of the parties of the CBD in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006. CAFF is supposed to get back to the SAOs and PPs with its recommendations.

6.4. EPPR

The presentation was made by EPPR Chair Igor Veselov on the basis of the EPPR annual meeting in Copenhagen on April 20-22, 2005, where the main results of the WG activities and the work-plan for 2005-2006 were reported.

Mr. Veselov described the cooperation within the AC on the mapping project and oil spills challenges.

Since the Russian initiative - an “Agreement between AC Governments on cooperation in the field of emergency prevention and clean-up in the Arctic”, or “Arctic Rescue” was positively noted by the Yakutsk SAO meeting, the EPPR continued its work in that direction and plans a symposium on the level of the WGs to discuss the draft agreement at the end of February 2006. Possible proposals and comments to the existing draft are welcome.

Canadian and US programs in the field of nuclear safety were mentioned, several Source Control Management projects have been completed under the leadership of the US and Russian Federation. A series of ISO 14001 training programs was carried out.

The EPPR actively interacts with the Northern Forum. The results of Flood Workshop were reported, Russia has also proposed a new project on establishment of prevention system on flooding in northern rivers with the ice conditions and risk assessment profile. The Lena River is supposed to be the pilot project, later the experience may be expanded onto other Russian, US, Canadian and North-European rivers.

EPPR Chair thanked Sweden for maintaining the WG website and US for the financial contribution to the activities of the WG Secretariat.

SAOs and PPs expressed their appreciation of the work done by EPPR.

Norway drew attention to the Barents draft agreement, similar to the Arctic Rescue and suggested that the proper coordination between these two documents should be achieved. Sweden and the SAO Chairman pointed out that the Barents agreement deals with land rescue cooperation, so these two agreements can be well harmonized.

6.5. PAME

PAME presentation was made by the Working Group Chair Frank Sonne who reported on the WG meeting (September 19-20, 2005), in Aalsborg, Denmark and on the progress in the WG activities.

He defined the scope for the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA), which includes follow-on to ACIA and AMSP. A deliverable to the AC Ministerial in 2006 would be a snapshot of current Arctic marine shipping, ice conditions and risk assessment, whereas a “final product” (including assessment of environmental and social impacts and recommendations) of AMSA is supposed to be delivered to the AC Ministerial in 2008. In this connection Mr.Sonne briefed about data collection and control by the lead countries for this project (Canada, Finland and USA) and organizational structure of the work. Lead countries are supposed to develop a concept paper with the aim to clarify the nature of the work plan, including the expert requirements.

As to the Ecosystem approaches, Frank Sonne informed about the updating of Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) map, inputs from Arctic Member States concerning the research directions and development perspectives. LME Steering Group is to be established and Terms of Reference are to be prepared for review at the next PAME Meeting.

The WG has also initiated preparations of the assessment of existing measures for port reception facilities for ship-generated waste and cargo residues with Norway leading. Norway emphasized that this work would commence immediately following the September PAME Meeting and provided a summary paper on project description.

As to Regional Programme of Action (RPA) for the protection of the Arctic Marine Environment from land-based activities, agreement has been reached with the content of a draft Work Statement for a proposed follow-up and update of the RPA over the next 2 years (Canada is the lead)

Speaking about GEF/Russian National Action Plan-Arctic, Mr. Morgunov confirmed that the first Steering Committee meeting would be held in Moscow Mid-November 2005 with participation of Klaus Töpfer. An update in writing was provided to PAME by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Russian Federation at the PAME February meeting by a representative of ACOPS. The project document has been further revised and signed by the Russian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and UNEP on July 18, 2005, and the Ministry is defined as the only Executing Agency for the Project, whereas ACOPS and NEFCO have now the status of Partner Agencies.

SAOs and PPs expressed their appreciation of the work done by PAME.

The lead countries for AMSA noted their concern about the schedule of the work and called for intensification of the data exchange. In this connection Russia proposed to include in the first deliverable not only the snapshot of current shipping, ice and risk information, but also data on environmental impacts. But Mr. Sonne reiterated that the environmental and social impacts appear to be a larger task and wouldn't fit into the schedule.

As to Communications to Arctic Marine Strategic Plan, Canada conveyed to SAOs and PPs that it is going to hold a Coastal Zone International Conference in August 2006 in Tuktoyaktuk under the auspices of Coastal Zone Canada and use this opportunity to feature AMSP for broader audience and to make a contribution to the discussions of coastal and ocean management.

CPAR noted that Arctic Parliamentarians pay special attention to Arctic Sea Routes and initiated discussions on binding legal regime in that sphere.

6.6. SDWG and MECHANISM TO IMPLEMENT THE ARCTIC COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN (SDAP)

The presentation was made by SDWG Chair Boris Morgunov who reported on the SDWG meeting (October 10-11, Khanty-Mansisyk).

He informed about the progress in the nine projects of SDWG. These are: 1) Women's participation in Resource Management (Norway), 2) Survey of living conditions in the Arctic, SLICA (Denmark/Greenland/Faroe Islands), 3) Product development and processing in sustainable reindeer husbandary - "Ofelas" (Finland), 4) Future of children and youth of the Arctic (Canada), 5) Circumpolar Infrastructure Task force - CITF (US) and about the north aviation seminar, held by CITF in Khanty-Mansiysk October 5-6, 2005, 6) Ecological and cultural

tourism – SMART (Finland), 7) Telemedicine (USA), 8) Emerging infectious diseases (USA), 9) Economy of the North – ECONOR (Norway). The details of the status are available at the SDWG website (<http://portal.sdwg.org>). Projects 1, 3, 6 and 9 are supposed to be completed in 2005-2006, results delivered to the AC Ministerial in 2006, the other projects will report to the Ministerial 2006 about the ongoing activities.

Finland hosted the Arctic ICT Network Workshop in Yllas (September 7-9, 2005) which developed a plan for the proposed Arctic ICT Assessment (AICTA) and agreed that it should be extensive and cover all the AC member countries. First draft of the corresponding feasibility study should be completed by March 2006 with aim to deliver the assessment by May 2008 (see separate item 8.1.). AICTA would proceed in parallel with concrete projects in the field of ICT development.

As to Mechanism for Implementation of the Sustainable Development Action Plan, the SDWG Chair informed that Russia had prepared a simplified version as recommended by the SAOs, however not all the participants and other AC Working Groups due to communication problems had enough time to study it. It was decided that the document should be commented on by November 11, 2005, further agreed via e-mail and reported at the next SAOs meeting.

SDWG is also finishing a special document, aimed at a more detailed description of procedures for endorsing SDWG projects.

There were two projects proposals - Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North and Health Preservation of Migrant and Indigenous Arctic Population. The latter is to gather further recommendations, whereas the first one requires endorsement by the SAOs.

SDWG Chair informed that the WG is going to hold a seminar in 2006 in addition to its regular meetings in order to make a contribution to the comprehensive discussion and solution of the sustainable development problems in the Arctic. The dates and venue will be agreed and circulated later.

Canada made an announcement that it is hosting a World Urban Forum III in Vancouver (June 19-23, 2006) as a vehicle to explore possible collaborative projects with UN-Habitat relevant to the Arctic. Canada proposes that during the Forum the AC convenes either a networking event (includes panel discussions) or an AC reception. The corresponding materials are to be circulated among the meeting participants in order to make a decision which alternative is best.

Iceland and Denmark expressed their satisfaction at cooperation with other AC Member countries concerning the SDWG projects, in particular AHDR follow-up, SLICA etc.

Finland and RAIPON noted that alongside the research activities which are quite necessary, SDWG projects should be more action oriented, good examples are SMART and OFELAS.

SAOs and PPs noted with appreciation work done by the SDWG. SAOs and PPs endorsed the project proposal named Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North.

7. ARCTIC COUNCIL'S PREPARATION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR (IPY)

The presentation on behalf of the IPY International Program Office was made by its Director David Carlson, who briefed the meeting about the main purposes and the preparatory work within the framework of the IPY. The main task is to draw scientific and public attention to polar regions, as regards to environmental status, past and future changes, linkages to global processes, legacy of information and systems, as well as social and cultural dynamics and resiliency. For the time being IPY has received about 1000 expressions of interest and 200 coordination proposals, which are presented in the general IPY Preliminary Plan (available on www.ipy.org). The Plan contains these proposals, sorted out geographically (Arctic, Antarctic, both), and according to themes, focusing on earth, land, people, ocean, ice, atmosphere, space. The proposals also cover such directions as data and outreach & education. As to the partnerships, IPY coincides with other research programs, like International Heliophysical Year and Electronic Geophysical Year, exchanging projects with them, and cooperates with GEO head-quarters in Geneva concerning the earth observations planning. The Arctic Council is a very important partner, speaking about scientific and social component of the IPY. An encouraging word from the AC to its nations would heighten the awareness of the significance and contribute to resource gathering for the progress of the IPY. AC is invited by the IPY Joint Committee to its meetings.

The Sao Chair expressed Arctic Council appreciation of having been granted the Observer status of in the IPY Joint Committee.

Russia has informed the meeting about the national work done by the National Organizational Committee on IPY (Roshydromet) and IPY Research Centre in the Research Institute of Arctic and Antarctic (Saint-Petersburg). Russian initiatives cover main IPY targets, such as human health, history and culture, protection of the Arctic marine environment, sustainable development and protected areas. Russian main priorities are hi-latitudes research activities, monitoring systems, research activities on Spitsbergen, social and economic studies. In particular, special attention was drawn to an IPY project proposal - Joint atmospheric Climate Observatory in Tiksi (Russia, USA, Finland). The meeting endorsed this Russian "Tiksi initiative" as another IPY initiative of the AC.

IASSA shared the enthusiasm expressed by IPY IPO concerning the AC support. IASSA is satisfied with emphasis on indigenous and human issues in the IPY. Next international IASSA event would be an IASSA congress on opportunities and challenges for the social sciences (Greenland, 2007 or 2008), which is endorsed by the JC as an IPY project.

Denmark informed about the Seminar in Greenland devoted to Nordic Research Cooperation within the Social Sciences (April 28-May 2, 2005), initiated by the Greenland IPY Committee and funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Proposals from the Seminar in data, media, economics are to be included in the IPY planning process.

Sweden informed about the preparatory work done in the framework of its IPY initiative – Coordination of Observation and monitoring in the Arctic for Assessment and Research (COMAAR) and the Abisko meeting. One of the major results of the meeting was that Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) was identified as a major undertaking at the global level of high relevance to the further development of COMAAR.

Sweden stated that the quantity and quality of data gathering could be improved through better coordination of observation and monitoring. The AC should provide a permanent forum for such coordination involving also the international Arctic science community (IASC and IASSA), AC Observer states and NGOs after the IPY is over. This could be done through integrating the AC into GEOSS by establishing an “Arctic GEOSS”. The GEOSS work is organized on the basis of 9 societal benefit areas, relevant to AC objectives and WGs.

1. Disasters - (EPPR)
2. Human health - (SDWG, AMAP)
3. Energy - (SDWG, EPPR)
4. Climate - (AMAP, CAFF, SDWG, PAME, EPPR)
5. Water - (AMAP?)
6. Weather - (EPPR, SDWG?)
7. Ecosystems - (CAFF, PAME, SDWG)
8. Agriculture - (SDWG)
9. Biodiversity - (CAFF)

As to the way forward, Sweden suggests that the AC should apply for GEO’s status of “participating organization”. Upon getting this status during GEO Plenary meeting in December 2005, the proposal for how to organize the “Arctic GEOSS” could be prepared to AC Ministerial in October 2006. Possible outcomes, produced by COMAAR/ ”Arctic GEOSS” could be:

1. Improved coordination of and access to long term data sets collected through observation and monitoring in the Arctic;
2. Technical workshops to enhance observing system design, data quality, system integration and coordination, including discussion of blending of community-based observations with scientific observations;
3. Web-based delivery of data products, along with links to original data and metadata, and derived information (delivered through a planned Arctic Portal);
4. Web-based discussion fora (Arctic Portal).

The meeting agreed that coordination of observation is necessary. SAOs expressed their support for studying possible ways of integrating its work into global observations, but the issue of actual joining GEOSS needs to be looked into more carefully (later on it was agreed that this matter is put on the Agenda of the next SAO meeting in Syktyvkar April 26-27, 2006).

PPs expressed concern about the lack of their involvement in the COMAAR initiative.

Iceland informed about its IPY initiatives, pointing out the glacier research.

Speaking about the financial input into IPY, Canada informed that it is allocating 150 mln. Can. dollars to IPY activities for the period of 6 years.

Norway informed about its national work within the IPY and about its initiative to create an IPY sub-office in Russia to facilitate research in the Arctic. Norway considers it to be possible to discuss this in the course of ICARP II meeting in November 2005 in Copenhagen (Russia, USA, Nordic countries have supported this idea before).

AAC informed about the Arctic Leaders Summit in December 2005 in Canada (Montreal and Hey River), devoted to the sustainability of living conditions of indigenous peoples (further information is to be circulated).

USA, with reference to its IPY initiative on Arctic Human Health, underlined that the human dimension of the IPY is strongly supported by the AC.

The UK urged the AC to continue promoting its IPY initiatives as a very important component of the international scientific cooperation.

7.1 ACCES TO RUSSIAN ARCTIC WATERS

In the light of the expected strengthened cooperation in the framework of the International Polar Year Sweden expressed overall concern in connection with “prohibitively” high tariffs for Russian ice-breaker and pilotage services in the Northern Sea Route. The main reason for discussion was that no discounts or exclusions are made for international scientific activities, which are aimed at studies in this area of the Russian Arctic. In particular, the expedition Beringia-2005 had to cancel a part of planned research being unable to honor high tariffs. At the same time, in spite of using a Swedish ice-breaker “Oden”, the Swedish expedition was not allowed into the Northern Sea Route without Russian ice-breakers accompanying it.

Sweden, with reference to the support of other nations (in particular, Germany), which are eager to do research in the Russian Arctic, believes that such a strict legal regime for the access to Russian Arctic waters poses particular threat to cooperation paces, and that something is to be done about certain exclusions for the scientific community.

Sweden noted that there is also a need for facilitating the regime of sampling and moving the samples across national borders of Russia and other AC member states.

Canada supported the need for the AC attempt to remove as many obstacles as possible for the IPY regarding both access to the Arctic and sampling and samples export regime, since the restrictions are there not only in Russia, but in other states as well.

Russia explained that due to international legislation Russia bears the responsibility for environmental control and security in Russian Arctic waters. There are no artificial obstacles, clear corresponding national rules and regulations

were adopted by the Russian Government and are conveyed to foreign research partners (to Sweden as well).

The meeting requested Russia to look into the matter and study possible ways of simplifying scientific access to the Russian Arctic, especially in the context of the upcoming IPY.

8. ICT ISSUES

8.1. PROGRESS OF ICT NETWORK

Mr. Ben Ellis reported about the second workshop on Arctic Council ICT Network in Ylläs, Finland (September 7-9, 2005), focused on the aims of sharing information on best practices and promoting beneficial usage of ICT in the Arctic. During the Workshop participants developed a plan for the Arctic ICT Assessment, identifying two major stages: Snapshot of the ICT in the Arctic and In-depth analysis and recommendations. The overall goal of the assessment is to increase the human and social capital in the North and to improve opportunities for living in the Arctic. Possible content areas are:

- Public services: e-government issues
- Social well-being: social care and e-health issues
- Education sector: distance learning and ICT in education
- ICT Industry and e-business in the Arctic
- Tourism and adventure industry
- Logistics, transportation and rescue development
- Sustainable resource utilization
- Infrastructure
- Application development

Next ICTN meeting is planned for March 2006 for drafting the feasibility study. The aim is to prepare the assessment by May 2008.

Sweden expressed its skepticism about to the idea of ICT Assessment as such and its actual results.

Russia made a presentation about the positive legislative changes in the Russian Federation, which make it easier to provide better ICT services, in particular, in the North. Russia also briefed the meeting about the development of telemedicine technologies.

The SAOs and PPs agreed that they expect the ICTN to continue its work towards the Assessment, working in parallel with concrete projects in the field of ICT development.

8.2. ARCTIC PORTAL.

The presentation on the Arctic Portal was made by the Icelandic SAO Ragnar Baldursson. The main goal of the Portal is to serve as a gateway to Arctic-related

information as it relates to the AC, its WGs, PPs and Observers. It can be extended to include other organizations and institutions.

Mr. Baldursson informed about the preparatory work (CAFF organized a workshop in Cambridge June 9-10, 2005, with the support of an informal expert group "ICEPORT"). The IPY JC has expressed its interest in having the Arctic Portal submitted as an IPY project. The Feasibility study (FS) is the next actual step. The SAOs and PPs agreed that the corresponding proposal is to be presented to the next SAO meeting on the basis of the FS, prepared by Icelandic experts in consultation with CAFF secretariat. Input by AC WGs and all the others to the preparation of the FS is welcome. Upon the decision of SAOs at their meeting in April 2006 the Arctic Portal can be submitted to the IPY JC.

8.3. POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SOCIETY (TUNIS, NOVEMBER 2005)

As proposed by the Chairman of SAOs, the SAOs and PPs decided to draft a paragraph with reference to the AC documents and developments in the field of ICT to be included to the summit presentation of the Russian Federation as chair of the Arctic Council.

Later it was agreed to include the following language:

"Russia is currently chairing the AC which has begun to explore ways and means to improve basic ICT services in the Arctic, particularly in the most rural areas, especially in support of education and health services. A "connected Arctic" is believed to be the foundation of sustainable development and improved social opportunities in the Far North. The Arctic Council is also exploring the possibility of setting up the Arctic Portal which would serve various Arctic Council activities, but also the interests of broader Arctic and world communities".

9. COOPERATION OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WITH THE NORTHERN FORUM (NF).

Mrs. P. Wohl, Executive Secretary of NF, made a presentation about NF mission, its programs and participation in the international fora (the presentation was circulated among the participants of the meeting).

The current Chairman of the Northern Forum (NF) – Governor of Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomus Okrug – Yugra Mr. A. Filipenko informed the meeting about the cooperation of NF with AC. He described the beneficial prerequisites for such an interaction, particularly, common goals, spheres of activities, organizational similarity.

Both organizations are aimed at sustainable development of the North, protection of the environment and society and have co-projects in circumpolar infrastructures, telemedicine, reindeer management, sustainable tourism in the Arctic.

Governor of Lapland Mrs.H.Pokka, vice-chair of NF, noted the common work, done by the regions of the member-states of AC and NF in order to achieve the abovementioned common purposes.

The SAOs and PPs supported the need for intensification of the cooperation with NF, both in the existing areas of interaction and exploring new possibilities.

10. EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC (UArctic)

Member of the UArctic Board of Governors Mary Simon informed that the Board of Governors welcomes the interest of the Arctic Council and will encourage the engagement of the Arctic Council as well as that of the authorities responsible for evaluation of Higher Education in the member states in the evaluation process - and have made a decision to:

- launch an (internal and external) evaluation of UArctic focusing on the extent to which the university has fulfilled its mission and met its goals,
- welcome the initiative of the Finnish Government regarding this matter,
- carry out this evaluation insofar as possible in collaboration with the Arctic Council member states
- conduct the evaluation as quickly as possible, without compromising the quality or integrity of the result.

The evaluation will be carried out in a two-step process: internal and external (preferably 2007).

Executive Director of the UArctic Mr. Lars Kullerud reported on the latest news of UArctic activities, including the preparation for the IPY (New UArctic IPY education and outreach office established, UArctic IPY proposal on cluster for Higher Education in the Arctic submitted).

SAOs and PPs expressed their support to the evaluation idea.

Sweden expressed its view that cost effectiveness of the UArctic operation needs to be included in the evaluation.

Finland noted that the responsibilities for and the outcome of an external evaluation are to be shared, hence the financial burden is supposed to be shared among other Arctic nations as well.

The SAOs and PPs highly appreciated work done by the UArctic and welcomed the idea of the internal evaluation first. The AC will study the internal evaluation results in order to make a decision whether or not to launch an overall, collective AC external evaluation.

Finland promised to prepare draft documents for the UArctic external evaluation, covering budget and administrative issues, to be presented at the next SAO meeting in the spring of 2006.

11. STATUS OF THE PROJECT SUPPORT INSTRUMENT (PSI)

Managing Director in the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) Mr. Harro Pitkanen recalled that at the SAO meeting in Yakutsk (April 6-7, 2005), the SAOs and PPs approved the PSI guidelines for the pilot phase and NEFCO as the Fund Manager. In Khanty-Mansiysk most of the AC member states confirmed their interest to participate in the PSI, provided Russia will make its contribution as well (Norway and Iceland have already made transfers, Saami Council is ready to allocate 100 thousand Norwegian Kroners, Finland, Sweden and Denmark are waiting for final clarification on the Russian side). So the immediate task is to gather a critical mass of money to start operation of the PSI. H.Pitkanen also welcomed the possibility to use the PSI for contributions into the project on Franz Josef Land remediation.

Russia confirmed its positive attitude to the PSI initiative, informed about the progress in consultations with various Russian authorities in order to get an appropriate decision by the Russian government. Further information will follow.

12. POSSIBLE ARCTIC COUNCIL CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD WATER FORUM (WWF - MEXICO CITY, MARCH 2006)

Chair of AMAP Mr.J.Calder stated that AMAP is ready to prepare AC participation in the WWF, should the AC issue such an instruction, but apparently, assistance from other WGs and others is needed.

Mr.Calder explained that the previous WWF was purely scientific, and AMAP participated on behalf of the AC, introducing AMAP assessments. The WWF in 2006 is devoted to policies, risk assessment and local management, and that is beyond AMAP mandate.

The Northern Forum informed about the work on the river ice conditions, floods and risk assessment, which is carried out together with EPPR. This could be relevant to the WWF.

The discussions showed that there is support for AC participation in the WWF in general. The SAOs and PPs decided that the AC will rely on AMAP and EPPR which in cooperation with the NF will draw a scenario of participation. Other WGs are welcome to provide input fitting into the theme.

A "message of interest" sent by the AC secretariat is already registered at the WWF.

13. FURTHER DEFINING THE SCOPE OF COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH PURSUANT TO THE DECLARATION FROM THE MEETING OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL MEMBER STATES ON JUNE 9, 2004

Denmark informed that the process of cooperation in education and research was launched in the AC at the Nordic Council of Ministers initiative (NCM). Denmark as Chair in the NCM took over the responsibility to drive forward this

initiative. Priority areas in the cooperation in education and research remain to be quality of life, resource management, sustainable development.

The plan of action is that the NCM is prepared to establish a special organizational structure to facilitate the cooperation, as well as to arrange a conference in spring 2006, but this requires a clear AC signal to the NCM.

The SAOs and PPs decided to note with appreciation Denmark's report on this matter and encourage Denmark to lead in this process. The Arctic Council cooperative work in research and education is to move on with a strong support and organizational role of NCM.

15. FOCAL POINT UPDATE

Mr. J. Calder presented FP progress report after 3 meetings since Yakutsk and its plans which include revitalizing the ACIA website with a database of national projects that address ACIA recommendations and gaps (a new host and manager for the website is needed), WGs' plans on appropriate ACIA follow-on tasks, recommending specific actions to the AC, continuing the dialogue with all AC members, PPs, observers and the broader community.

All the WGs put their efforts in ACIA follow-on process, establishing expert groups, holding workshops, preparing their deliverables and programs with ACIA findings taken into account (AMSA, Arctic Rescue, CBMP etc.). IASC is responsible for organizing ICARP-II in order to gain broad community view on Arctic research priorities, including ACIA-follow-on, and is carrying out planning for International Study on Arctic Change (ISAC), a major ACIA follow-on conducted by Arctic and other countries.

A major climate assessment for 2012 (Arctic Climate Impact Response Assessment) is proposed which could reflect results from IPY and emphasis on social science and "observing system" for Arctic societies.

FP agreed to meet during the ICARP-II, to hold an "open forum" during ASSW 2006 (Potsdam) (AMAP/CAFF/IASC are to organize it).

As proposed by Sweden, the FP would think of the criteria for national projects to be included in the ACIA database.

The Northern Forum also mentioned the "Snow-Change" workshop in Anchorage (Alaska, USA) which was devoted to climate change issues and consequences of it for the indigenous peoples.

The SAOs and PPs noted the usefulness of the FP which main task is to deliver to the Ministers recommendations focused on what is to be done in the context of the ACIA report. The meeting agreed that AMAP/CAFF/IASC would coordinate the ACIA web-site revitalization.

Dr. Robert Corell officially presented the scientific version of the ACIA report which had been completed and the full text is on the CD as published by Cambridge University Press (Oct 2005). He presented latest research data on continuation of sea ice reduction in the Arctic and changes in the temperature of oceans, confirming evidence of anthropogenic input in the global warming. He also briefed about recent activities as follow-on to the Assessment, among them an

Intergovernmental Dialogue on Climate Change, A Royal Colloquium on Climate Change in the Arctic, many scientific presentations (at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, UK Scientific Symposium on Stabilization of Greenhouse Gases).

Dr. Corell thanked the AC for tremendous support to the ACIA. The meeting in turn expressed appreciation of the personal work of Bob Corell.

15.1 ARCTIC COUNCIL AND THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (UNCCC) – COP XI, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2005, MONTREAL.

Hosting the UNCCC COP XI in Montreal (November 28 – December 9, 2005) Canada informed about its plans for an Arctic Council side event (panel discussions) and the Arctic Day parallel event (broader presentation event on the 6th of December). Canada is working with various NGOs, indigenous groups and others to ensure well-balanced events with interesting and stimulating discussion. Participation of AC members would certainly help to highlight the importance of the Arctic and the effect of the climate change.

Any ideas, suggestions and contributions are welcome.

UNEP pointed out the importance of the ACIA for the world community. UNEP is actively cooperating with the AC on climate change, especially on Article 6 of Climate Change Convention (Education, training and public awareness), and, together with Canada, contributing to arranging the “Arctic Day” in the course of COP XI.

Raipon informed that all the PPs would take part in the “Arctic Day” – Arctic Leaders Declaration is supposed to be presented there.

The SAOs and PPs appreciated the work done by Canada in this connection.

16. COOPERATION OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WITH THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (NCM)

Mr. Nokolaj Bock (NCM) presented Arctic Cooperation Programme and other spheres of cooperation which have close ties to the activities of the AC. In particular, he briefed about the budget of NCM for 2006, which posts 1,3 mln Euro to participation in the EU’s Northern Dimension, cooperation in the Barents region and cooperation with the voluntary sector in the North-West Russia, and 0,9 mln Euro - to Arctic cooperation.

Political objectives in the Arctic Cooperation Programme include developing and improving the quality of life for the population and the ecological and economic preconditions for continued habitation in the Arctic area, contributing towards and supporting the social and cultural development of the Arctic population, contributing towards the protection of the Arctic nature and ensuring sustainable use of the region’s resources. The instruments for cooperation are projects and co-financing, priority is given to the joint Nordic interests, creating added value, in particular within the AC.

Denmark added that one of the priorities of Danish chairmanship in the NCM is coordination and synergy between the regional bodies. That is why Denmark has arranged the meeting between chairmen of senior officials committees of NCM, AC, BEAC, and CBSS. The Chairman of SAOs informed that in 2006 it is the AC's turn to arrange such a meeting in Russia.

The SAOs and PPs thanked Mr. Bock for the presentation, which gives a clear picture of the future interaction with NCM.

17. COOPERATION OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mr. A. Parenti (European Commission office in Moscow) highlighted the EU Northern Dimension (ND) as the main instrument of cooperation with the AC. Prior to the ND Ministers meeting in Brussels (November 21, 2005) the European Commission considers the following priorities for a renewed ND policy: expression of EU-Russia partnership, along with existing ties with Iceland and Norway, enforcement of regional cooperation in the North, avoiding duplication of AC, BEAC, CBSS and NCM activities. The ND is supposed to be based on these regional formats, not trying to replace them. A stronger focus will be put on structural and implementation aspects. Financing will continue through TACIS, INTERREG and EU Member States contribution, mainly supporting the cross-border issues. The ND policy used to be a consultative policy, the objective is to strengthen its effectiveness and the AC support in this connection would be highly appreciated.

Finland conveyed its priorities of the EU presidency, among them an important role of the ND in the regional cooperation, which is supposed to further develop interaction between EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia. The existing ND Partnerships on environment and health and social well-being proved to be effective measures, their experience could be expanded onto the sphere of transport and logistics. Finland believes that it's time to arrange a meeting between the AC and the EU to discuss all the relevant issues.

The Northern Forum pointed out an unbalanced situation, when BEAC, CBSS, ND and NCM are using tremendous funds for their tasks, whereas the Arctic region, much larger in its territory and scope of problems, is not enjoying the same support. The NF called on the countries to reconsider this state of things.

The PPs expressed their appreciation of ND taking into account the indigenous issues. At the same time they conveyed their concern about access to the support from the EU. The real implementation of the ND principles on indigenous people is to be improved.

The Chairman of SAOs assured that the interests of the AC would be duly presented at the Brussels ND Ministerial in November by the AC Chair - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. As to the Finnish suggestion about the AC visiting the European Commission, the SAOs and PPs agreed that such a step would be more effective at a later stage, when the ND guidelines are determined.

18. FINANCIAL SITUATIONS OF SECRETARIATS OF AC WORKING GROUPS

ACAP (Secretariat in the US), AMAP (Secretariat in Norway), EPPR (Secretariat in Russia), SDWG (secretariat in Canada, running costs of Russian SDWG Chairmanship are covered by Russia) did not ask for any additional money and thanked the contributors. At the same time the WGs highlighted the necessity for the lead countries to provide due financing for their projects. In the absence of support increase the AMAP Secretariat will continue to search for other alternatives for its outreach activities.

IPS has referred to financial problems which are to be discussed separately with AC Member States and PPs.

CAFF and PAME (Secretariats in Iceland) have a more acute situation and request to increase the annual country contributions, pay them in Icelandic Kroners, and allocate additional money for closer cooperation between the WGs (required by SAOs).

The SAOs and PPs urged the countries which support CAFF and PAME secretariats, to raise their contribution by 15-20 %. The meeting has also asked the countries which are not making their input, to consider the possibility of voluntary contributions.

Observer States pointed out that a mechanism for their participation and involvement in the AC activities needs to be separately discussed. In this dialogue a matter of their contributions to the secretariats and projects can also be on the agenda.

19. POSSIBLE ARCTIC COUNCIL EVENT AT THE PERMANENT UN FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES (NEW YORK, MAY 2006)

Raipon (Pavel Sulyandziga – Vice Chairman of the Permanent Forum) briefed about the Permanent UN Forum on indigenous issues. Its next session will be held in New-York in May 2006. The suggestion is to arrange an Arctic Council side event during this session and to deliver a presentation, highlighting the successful experience of cooperation between the Arctic States and indigenous peoples.

The meeting entrusted the Chairman of SAOs together with PPs to work out particular proposals for this presentation. The application is to be delivered to the Permanent Forum by March 2006.

20. POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE ARCTIC (NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2006). BRAINSTORMING SESSION.

The idea to arrange such a conference is connected with the AC tenth anniversary in 2006. September is mentioned because the conference could be a side event for the Ministerial segment of the UN General Assembly. Substance is supposed to be focused on relations between Arctic States and their common

successes in promoting the sustainable development, AC participation in the preparations for the IPY, protection of environment and climate change issues. The conference may result with an Arctic Declaration, praising the role of Arctic Council in the regional cooperation.

The meeting decided that such a conference would be superfluous, taking into account that it would be just prior to the AC ministerial meeting in October 2006, hosted by Russia.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Denmark and Iceland suggested that an item for the follow-on to Arctic Human Development Report should be included in the Agenda of next SAO meeting.

- Spain thanked the AC for granting it an ad hoc Observer status at the SAO meeting in Khanty-Mansiysk – Spain hopes to become a full-fledged Observer in the course of the AC Ministerial meeting in October 2006.

- Documentary on Arctic Cooperation. The presentation was made by former Canadian SAO Mary Simon, who introduced the idea of making a documentary about the Arctic Council and in general, cooperation in the Arctic, titled “Arctic ties”.

“Arctic Ties” will document the unique relationship and partnership that has developed between the indigenous peoples of the circumpolar world and the eight Arctic States in which they live. The program will show the vast contrasts in culture and climate; it is supposed to explain the philosophy behind the efforts of the Arctic Council and the Permanent Participants to combat the social, economic, health and environmental challenges that confront.

Participation in the project is open. The meeting welcomed this initiative and expressed its overall support.

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The Chairman announced that next SAO meeting is planned to take place April 26-27 in Syktyvkar (Russia).

The Chairman thanked everyone for participation in the meeting, specially thanked the Khanty-Mansiysk hosts for all possible assistance and cultural program and announced the meeting adjourned.