

May 16th 2001
Final

Report from the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) to the SAO meeting in Rovaniemi on 12-13 June 2001

1. Introduction

Since the last SAO meeting meeting in Barrow (October 2000) the SD working group has had a meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, on April 5th-6th 2001. The meeting was attended by delegations from all the Arctic States as well as from several Permanent Participant and observer organizations.

2. Status of the ongoing SDWG projects

2.1 Children and Youth

The aim of the health component of the Children and Youth project is to promote the health of all children and youth living in the Arctic, with special emphasis on underprivileged regions, populations and groups. Data relevant to the priority areas, which are: psycho-social health/suicide prevention; maternal and infant health; alcohol and substances; respiratory and other common infectious diseases, are being gathered. The data will then be analyzed and provide a basis for conclusions and recommendations for actions. An inventory of Best Practice Models of effective programs to address the health problems is also planned. The culmination of the data analysis, conclusions and recommendations, and the inventory of related Best Practice Models will form the material of a symposium, proposed for the autumn of 2001 or early in 2002.

The goal of the internship component is to enhance the awareness of northern sustainable development issues among future circumpolar leaders and help them acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to address these issues in their communities. This is to be achieved through facilitating the exchange of youth between circumpolar countries in order to provide them with practical work experience abroad in areas related to sustainable development. A directory of current international research and work experience opportunities for youth is under development, as well as a directory of potential host organizations. To facilitate the internship program an Internship Co-ordination Committee is being established.

The networking component is designed to engage and empower youth on issues of sustainable development. The website "On top of the world" provides a mechanism for children and youth to register as part of the network. The website is constantly being improved. In the summer of 2002 the Saami Council will arrange a one-week summer camp, providing the opportunity for two youth representatives from each Arctic State and Permanent Participant organization to share the experience of living on the land and the traditional knowledge of the Saamis. An International Networking Committee, compiled of one elder and one youth from each member country and Permanent Participant organization, is being established to facilitate the management of the networking component.

In addition to this, a meeting of governmental officials responsible for youth policies in the AC member states will be held in Rovaniemi, Finland on September 13th-16th, 2001.

2.2 Freshwater Fishery Management in the Barents Region

The project on freshwater fishery management is currently on hold as the Saami Council has not been able to find a person to work on it.

2.3 Co-management of Marine Resources in Arctic Areas, with Reference to Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The Saami college has sent an application for funding of the project to the Saami Parliament in Norway and to Landsdelsutvalget for Nord Norge. They are still waiting for answers.

2.4 Ecological and Cultural Tourism

Most Alaska tourism businesses use the web and/or e-mail in their work. A survey shows that what these companies need are: business marketing tools; information on best practices, and a network to facilitate their exchange. To address the first need, marketing tools for sustainable businesses, Alaska has, in partnership with WWF and the Northern Forum, developed and started the promotion of the Links program. By voluntarily adhering to the WWF "Principles and Codes of Conduct for Arctic Tourism" a company can join the Links program. It is hoped for that other countries and institutions will become interested and join the project.

A complementary initiative to map out ongoing regional and national projects focusing on sustainable tourism development and to collect best practices is being initiated by the Northern Forum. Using information technology, the results of the project should be: a database of initiatives, best practices, projects etc; a handbook on sustainable tourism development for tourism operators; and an extranet used to collect and create the tools as well as disseminate them. The initiative is in its second phase and money is being asked for from the EU Interreg program. A second workshop within this project was held in Rovaniemi in April, in conjunction with the SDWG meeting.

2.5 Sustainable Reindeer Husbandry

The aim of the project is to assess circumpolar reindeer herding and husbandry in relation to economic and social/cultural sustainability. This will be done by carrying out a thematic survey and assessment of reindeer husbandry in the arctic region. One person has been designated to work full time with the project for 2001 and 2002 at the Centre for Sami Studies in Tromsø, Norway. In addition to Norway, Russia is represented in the steering committee of the project at the moment. The US (Alaska), Finland and Sweden are about to join. A project workshop is scheduled to be held in June 2001 in connection to the 2nd World Congress of the Association of World reindeer herders. In April 2002 a second workshop will be held, where the findings of the project will be discussed. The final report from the project will be presented at the Ministerial Meeting in Inari 2002. Links could be developed between this project and an existing Northern Forum project in reindeer processing, marketing and education.

2.6 Sustainable Development in the Northern Timberline Forests

The aim of the project is to gather the latest information on the northern timberline forests gained in numerous research and cooperation projects carried out. The main focus is to arrange an international workshop in May 2002. The workshop will prepare conclusions and recommendations for the upcoming Ministerial meeting. The scope is to take into account all the different aspects of the use of the timberline forests and to increase the networking between existing and new research projects.

2.7 Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic, SLICA

SLICA is designed for comparative investigations of the living conditions of the Inuit and Saami populations in the Arctic and the indigenous peoples of Chukotka and the Kola peninsula. The aim is to better understand the dynamics of living conditions in the Arctic. The main data collection on the social and cultural living conditions of the populations of Inuit and Saami will be done in September 2001. The project will be finished in 2002.

2.8 Telemedicine

As a follow-on to the Telemedicine project, whose final report and recommendations were accepted at the Barrow Ministerial meeting, an international steering committee will be formed for discussions on telemedicine evaluations. The purpose is to share past and current evaluations, identify lessons learned and plan future telehealth evaluation initiatives of interest to the Arctic region. The first face-to-face meeting of the Steering Committee will be held in Anchorage, Alaska on September 12-15, 2001.

2.9 Emerging Infectious Diseases

The goal of the project is to establish an integrated International Circumpolar Surveillance (ICS) system for infectious diseases through a network of hospital and public health laboratories and authorities throughout the Arctic. By collecting and sharing data that describes the prevalence of infectious diseases, the prevention and control strategies can be formulated. Health officials in seven of the eight Arctic states are now actively involved in the development of the ICS. So far, data on diseases caused by *Streptococcus Pneumoniae* from the US, Canada and Greenland has been collected. Finland and Sweden are about to join the project. The ICS might in the future be used to address other, non-infectious, health issues in the Arctic region.

3. New proposals

These three project proposals were put forward at the SDWG meeting in April in Rovaniemi. No decisions on whether to engage in them or not were taken at the meeting, as this kind of decision needs to be taken by the Ministers. The presentations of the project proposals were merely seen as a possibility for the parties putting forward the proposals to explore the interest in the projects among other Arctic Council parties.

3.1 Arctic Health Disparities Research Dissemination Network, AHDRDN

A proposal was put forward by the US to establish an "Arctic Health Disparities Research Dissemination Network". The idea is to facilitate the interaction between Arctic health research communities and also to provide the general public with research and health information. The network would be a linkage of nodes (existing websites) located in each Arctic state. A workshop will be held in Anchorage, Alaska on September 13, 2001. At the moment the US is exploring the

interest in the project among the other Arctic countries, and identifying possible contact persons, as well as websites that might become part of the network.

3.2 Accessible Health Care for Indigenous Peoples of the North in the Russian Federation: A strategy for survival

RAIPON introduced their project proposal, the aim of which is to improve the standard of living among the Russian indigenous peoples. One of the main focuses is on the development of public health care, and one idea is to establish a health center for indigenous peoples.

3.3 Environment and Health among the Inuit

ICC presented their project proposal, the aim of which is to study the significance of the environment, diet, and living conditions on the development of chronic disease among the Inuit. The study will focus on cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The basic study design is a cross-sectional baseline survey of appr. 10,000 Inuit born before 1950 and currently living in Alaska, Nunavut, Nunavik, Greenland and Denmark. A follow-up survey of incident diseases and register based follow up of deaths will be conducted after 10 years and again after 20 years.

4. Other SDWG issues

4.1 Selection of vice-chair for 2001-2002

The SDWG meeting (April 5th-6th 2001) selected Mr Hugi Ólafsson from Iceland for vice-chair for the period 2001-2002. At this occasion a proposal was made by Denmark, for the consideration of the SAOs, to have a second vice-chair for the SDWG, who would represent the Permanent Participants.

4.2 Capacity building workshop

An international workshop on capacity building will be held on November 1st -2nd 2001 in Helsinki, Finland. The principal aim of the workshop is to develop a capacity building strategy for the Arctic Council; in addition, the workshop will seek to: build understanding about the importance of capacity building in the Arctic Council's activities; share best practices among countries, working groups and other participants; identify processes to build capacity in the Arctic Council; and identify areas where capacity needs are greatest. The workshop will have a practical focus and put forward recommendations to the SDWG and the other Working Groups. Canada will shortly be contacting member states, Permanent Participants and observers to identify contact points and seek their input into the planning process.

4.3 The Operating Guidelines

The attached (annex 1) Operating Guidelines were adopted by the SDWG meeting.

4.4 Work plan for 2001-2002

The attached work plan (annex 2) has been adopted by the SDWG.

4.5 The circumpolar coverage of the SDWG projects

The Terms of Reference for a Sustainable Development Program state that projects undertaken should involve more than one Arctic state. As the idea of the AC is to foster circumpolar co-operation, not only bilateral, and as more and more projects are being proposed, the SDWG meeting has decided to prioritize projects involving a minimum of three Arctic states. This might in the future lead to a need to amend the wording in the Terms of Reference for a Sustainable Development Program.

4.6 Preparations for the WSSD

At the SDWG meeting the AC preparations for the World Summit in Sustainable Development 2002 were discussed. Based on the comments and ideas put forward at the meeting the SDWG Chair will submit a plan on how to proceed to the SAOs (see the SAO meeting agenda, item 10).

4.7 Transportation and Infrastructure

At the SDWG meeting US shortly presented its proposal for an Arctic Council Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force. The US reported on telecommunications developments in telehealth and distant education in Alaska and on the use of new aviation systems to provide instrument flight based on the global positioning satellites now being tested in the US under the project name CAPSTONE. Development continues on the proposal for a Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force with meetings scheduled for September and November in Finland and at the Northern Forum meeting in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in August. (Further discussion on this issue will occur under agenda item 13 at the SAO meeting.)

4.8 Next meeting

The next SDWG meeting will be held in Espoo, Finland on November 5th 2001.

5. Actions by SAOs

The SDWG feels that the SAOs **should discuss** how to deal with the fact that there are several projects within the SDWG that link to and partly overlap with projects going on in other AC working groups. The same problem of course also exists within and between the other working groups. Some kind of means to address this problem is needed.

Based on this report the SAOs are kindly asked to:

- **approve** the Operating Guidelines for the Sustainable Development Working Group
- **endorse** the selection of Vice-chair for 2001-2002
- **endorse** the work plan for the Sustainable Development Working Group for year 2001-2002
- **consider** to have a second vice-chair for the SDWG, who would represent the Permanent Participants
- **take note** of the state of the ongoing projects
- **take note** of the planned workshop on capacity building

- **take note** of the decision made by the SDWG meeting to prioritize projects involving a minimum of three Arctic states