EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS presented to the Arctic Council’s Sustainable Development Working Group and SAO-meeting by Sauli Rouhinen, Chair of the Arctic Council Capacity Building Workshop. November 5 and 6, 2001 Espoo, Finland.

Rouhinen, Sauli

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Arctic Council’s Sustainable Development Working Group and SAO-meeting
by
Sauli Rouhinen, Chair of the Arctic Council Capacity Building Workshop
November 5 and 6, 2001
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INTRODUCTION

The Barrow Declaration welcomed the introduction of a capacity building focus to the work and activities of the Council. Capacity Building, as recognized in the chapeau of the Sustainable Development Program, is a necessary element for achievement of Sustainable Development and must be taken into consideration in the projects developed under the Program. The Sustainable Development Program and other Programs of the Arctic Council aim to increase capacity at all levels of society.

Canada offered to host a workshop on capacity building during the period 2000 to 2002 to explore practical ways to implement a capacity building focus. A two-day workshop, co-hosted by Canada and Finland, was held last week in Helsinki and attracted about 70 participants from among the member states, Permanent Participants, Observers and Arctic Council Working Groups. Several Working Group Chairs and SAOs also attended.

At the start of the workshop a few people questioned the need for a discussion on capacity building at this time. However, by the conclusion of the workshop there was broad consensus that capacity building is relevant to the Arctic where the rapid changes of globalisation, climate change, and transitional economies require the development and application of new approaches and new solutions.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the workshop was to prepare a capacity building strategy for implementation by the Arctic Council. The stated objectives were:

• Priorise the capacity-building needs that are most critical in achieving progress toward sustainable development;
• Share best capacity-building practices among countries, working groups and organizations;
• Design strategies to incorporate capacity building into the activities of individual Arctic Council Working Groups;
• Devise cross-cutting capacity building strategies for all Arctic Council activities that form part of the criteria for project development and selection;
• Develop recommendations for presentation to the SAO meeting in Espoo that will have tangible short-term and long-term impacts on the well-being of residents of the Arctic.

PROCESS
There were three speakers and a panel discussion featuring the perspectives of indigenous peoples. The participants engaged in twenty two breakout sessions. These were focussed on:

• Identifying priority capacities required to augment sustainable development in the Arctic;
• Identifying approaches that would achieve those objectives;
• Improving capacity building activities within and between the Arctic Council Working Groups;
• Improving the capacity of the Arctic Council to be effective with its several audiences; northern residents, its constituent members and other relevant international organizations.

FINDINGS

The workshop was very successful and identified numerous capacities that were needed to increase the power to achieve sustainable development in the Arctic. There were several over-arching themes. These include:

• Making use of existing capacity by retrieving best practices and available human talent, working with existing structures, and making practical use of existing research and experience;
• Finding practical measures for coordination, building on work already done, and identifying new ways to apply existing knowledge;
• Recognizing that communities want local leadership and control for determining priorities and appropriate responses to changing circumstances;
• Recognizing that capacity building tools are not ends in themselves. They can be used for different purposes.

Recurring capacity-building themes included:

• Communication: The Arctic Council should promote the expansion of communication networks at the local and international levels, and also within the Arctic Council itself.
• Project Guidelines: The Arctic Council should formulate ethical and accountable capacity building specifications for its projects.
• Indigenous Participation: Permanent Participants should have enhanced participation in all levels of the Arctic Council’s work.
• Leadership: Strong leadership is required at all levels of the Arctic Council to increase relevance and timeliness of the Arctic Council interventions; and enhance governance capacity at the local, working group, and international levels
• Partnerships: The Arctic Council should promote and support partnerships between communities, between public and private sectors, and between communities and international research organizations that would empower Arctic communities to have greater control over their own destiny.
• Human and Environmental security: The circumpolar world has geopolitical significance as both a source of industrial resources and a sink for pollution. The Arctic Council should continue to take a lead in building awareness of this fact and in promoting human and environmental health and security.
• International networking: The Arctic Council should continue to expand its discussions with groups like international financing institutions, the EU, the WTO, and Leaders’ Summits, and to facilitate understanding between NGOs where impasses block needed action in the North.
• Learning: This included the facilitation of local learning through electronic learning (for
example, “Top of the World”); plain language dissemination of research results, the development of practical action guides (adaptation to climate change, sustainable community survival guides in a global economy); enhancing SAO technical understanding of issues so that they could provide policy direction; finding better ways to balance local/traditional knowledge with contemporary science.

• **External project endorsement**: The Arctic Council needs to continue promoting relevant capacity building projects and institutions like the University of the Arctic.

• **Access to resources**: Utilise existing funding mechanisms, such as foundations and endowments, to increase the capacity of the Arctic Council and create new funding instruments.

I am pleased to report that the workshop achieved most of its objectives and engaged the full-spectrum of participants in broad-based and animated discussion. Although the objectives and anticipated outcomes of a capacity building strategy were identified, the detailed strategy and action plan still need development.

**NEXT STEPS**

Recommendations about the next steps include short-term and medium-term actions.

**Short-term**

The Workshop recommended that a capacity building component be added to the ‘Arctic voice’ at the WSSD in Johannesburg that includes the following points:

• The Arctic Council, created in 1996, is a high level political forum addressing environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic. As a regional governance model, it provides for the permanent participation of international organizations representing indigenous peoples in the North. This unique institutional framework creates new social capacity to facilitate solutions for addressing Arctic issues of sustainable development.

• Consistent with Agenda 21, the Arctic Council recognizes that capacity building is a necessary element for achievement of sustainable development. Therefore, capacity building must be taken into consideration in the projects and activities of the Arctic Council, and should aim to increase capacity at all levels of society.

• The Arctic Council has been instrumental in building capacity in the Arctic through its assessment programs and through its subsequent actions to support international fora, nation states and local communities to take preventative, mitigating and adaptive action as required.

The Workshop recommended that the capacity building component of the ‘Arctic voice’ take several forms. The Workshop supported the SAO Chair’s suggestion to produce relevant fact sheets, and suggested that these be included in a brochure about the creation and accomplishments of the Arctic Council.

In addition, the Workshop suggested that the Arctic Council sponsor an exhibition of its Sustainable Development accomplishments using existing materials. This is consistent with the Finnish Chair’s program for 2000-2002 to raise “the Arctic Council’s profile as a promoter of Arctic issues of global significance in relation to other international institutions” and to present the Council’s sustainable development activities at the WSSD.
Medium-term

For the next SAO meeting in Finland, Canada has offered to:

• prepare workshop proceedings, and
• in consultation with Arctic states, Permanent Participants, Observers, and Working Groups, write a draft strategy and action plan for incorporating capacity building into all Arctic Council activities.

Subject to consideration and approval by the SAOs, a draft capacity building strategy and action plan could be available for final consideration at the Third Arctic Council Ministerial. The draft strategy and action plan will include practical actions toward tangible results.

With the approval of the SDWG, it is requested that the “Next Steps” of this report be approved and submitted to the SAOs at their meeting here in Espoo tomorrow.