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Plan for SDWG Adaptation work mandated by Ministers

Adaptation to climate change in the Arctic represents a significant challenge for the region given the predictions in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) as well as subsequent reports.

The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was at the Salekhard Ministerial given a mandate for further work on adaptation to climate change. It is important that the Working Group discuss how to follow up on this at our forthcoming meeting. Norway would like to offer some first ideas and proposals for a possible way forward.

1. Salekhard mandate

In the Declaration from the 2006 Salekhard Ministerial Meeting the ministers:

Request the SAOs to direct the SDWG, drawing on the expertise of other Working Groups, experts and stakeholders, to identify and share adaptation expertise and best practices and possible actions, unique to the needs and conditions of the Arctic, so that indigenous and other residents can better adapt to climate change, and to report on the status of this activity at the 2008 Ministerial meeting, and to make publicly available any results or lessons learned from this undertaking.

2. Work done on adaptation to climate change – Oslo workshop 2006

At the SAO meeting in Syktyvkar, April 2006, it was decided to convene a workshop hosted by Norway, to focus on adaptation efforts and activities in the Arctic. The workshop was held 26-27 June 2006 in Oslo, and a workshop report has been made available.

A first overview of Arctic adaptation programmes and measures taken in the Arctic states was given by the SDWG to the Oslo workshop (Appendix 2 in the Workshop report).

3. A proposal from Norway

To address this mandate Norway would like to propose the following approach: Firstly we propose to carry out a scoping study aiming at identifying and making available Arctic wide expertise, knowledge and research on adaptation and vulnerability to climate change.

Secondly, and based on the scoping study, it is proposed that SDWG, in cooperation with the other relevant working groups, arrange a workshop that convenes experts and stakeholders to discuss further steps in order to identify and share best practices and possible actions.

The proposed work will build upon the Oslo workshop, other Arctic Council projects, adopted strategies and programs.

A) Scoping study: Overview of existing knowledge, expertise and research on adaptation and vulnerability to climate change in the Arctic

Much has been said about vulnerability and adaptation in the Arctic, but we do not have an overview of the status of previous and current research, local or governmental assessments or reports on vulnerability and adaptation, and we therefore do not have a clear sense of the gaps in knowledge. A number of research projects are currently underway, some as part of the International Polar Year 2007-2008. The proposed project will provide an overview of current status, expertise and gaps in knowledge on vulnerability and adaptation in the Arctic.

Proposed project development:

Step 1

Establish a network of researchers and policy makers from each of the eight Arctic countries and the Permanent participants (PPs). Each of the Arctic countries and PPs should nominate at least one contact person to this network who will be contributing to step 2 of this proposal. A project coordinator will be mandated to coordinate the input and contributions from the contact persons.

Step 2

Collect information from the other Arctic countries and other available sources on existing adaptation measures and strategies as well as previous and ongoing projects and research on vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in the Arctic. This information should include:

- i. issues addressed
- ii. approach
- iii. level of indigenous/local knowledge integration
- iv. results presented/expected
- v. who is the target of the research/reports/projects
- vi. what is missing from the projects
- vii. what are the challenges identified in the projects
- viii. what are the gaps in knowledge

Step 3

Publication of the findings in a database that will be made available on the internet and regularly updated. Based on the above information, some key challenges for future work on adaptation to climate change in the Arctic will be identified. This will be presented at the expert/stakeholder workshop (see below).

Output

- An online database with overview of the expertise and existing and ongoing research on adaptation to climate change in the Arctic.
- Background document that identifies key challenges for future work on adaptation to climate change in the Arctic.

Timeline: September/October 2007.

Budget: NOK 400 000

Responsible working group: SDWG

The budget includes work of a project coordinator, publishing on the internet and production of a background document, and will be funded by Norway as lead country.

Each Arctic state and PP will have to cover their own costs related to contributions to the scoping study (as in kind contributions).

Norway will designate a project co-ordinator.

B) An expert and stakeholder workshop

It is well known that climate change will pose significant challenges for, among others, indigenous communities, biodiversity conservation and local and regional development. It is, however, also a fact that the nature of the risks involved is poorly understood, and we have yet to pinpoint the most effective means of dealing with the challenges.

As a first step towards identifying best practices and possible actions to reduce negative impacts of climate change, it is proposed that SDWG takes the lead in convening experts and key stakeholders to a workshop in November 2007.

The findings of the “scoping study” will provide a common and updated starting point for discussions at the workshop and should be circulated to the participants in advance. SDWG should also invite the other working groups to participate in the organisation of the workshop.

An important objective of the workshop will be to identify and recommend areas where further work by the Arctic Council may be appropriate. Areas for consideration could include adaptation strategies for Arctic indigenous communities, management of Arctic biodiversity and local and regional infrastructure development. Depending on the recommendations from the workshop, further work could include the production of one or more reports that would identify best practice and recommend adaptation measures for these or other issues.

The conclusions from the workshop will be reported to SDWG and the other WGs involved.

Output

- International workshop with world leading experts and key stakeholders
- Workshop report with recommendations for next steps

Timeline: November 2007.

Budget: NOK 600 000

Responsible working group: SDWG in cooperation with AMAP, CAFF and possibly other WGs

The budget includes organisation of the workshop and writing and printing of the workshop report with recommendations, and will be funded by Norway as lead country

Each Arctic state will have to cover their own costs related to their contributions to the workshop (as in kind contributions). The participation of the PPs should be encouraged. Norway is supporting the Saami Council and Raipon with general travelling funds.

4. Conclusions

The SDWG was at the Salekhard Ministerial given a mandate for further work on adaptation to climate change and to report on the status of the activity at the next Ministerial meeting.

Norway proposes a two-phase climate change adaptation project to address this mandate. The intention of the proposal is to facilitate a process involving all Arctic states and the PPs that both will contribute to better adaptation to climate change in the Arctic and give us the report the ministers have requested.

Phase one is a scoping study that will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise among the Arctic countries, PPs and other stakeholders.

Phase two is an expert and stakeholder workshop that will provide recommendations for further work in order to identify best practices and possible actions that will reduce vulnerability to climate change. SDWG should invite other WGs to take part in the project. It will be an Arctic wide project where each country and PP should contribute with their expertise. Norway is prepared to be a lead country.