

**Interventions by Victoria Gofman on behalf of the Aleut International Association  
First Deputy Ministerial Meeting Copenhagen, Denmark, May 27, 2010**

Dear Deputy Ministers, representatives of Permanent Participants,  
Observers, esteemed guests:

On behalf of the Aleut International Association, I would like to thank Denmark for organizing the first Deputy Ministerial meeting and express our hope that it would be an excellent opportunity to deepen the discussion on important issues of concern for AC Member States and Permanent Participants.

Arctic Council leadership is now recognized by the international community in such global issues, as understanding, predicting and responding to climate change; identifying ways for sustainable development in the Arctic and for the improvement of social and economic wellbeing of Arctic residents. Arctic Council has pioneered the inclusion of indigenous organizations representing Arctic indigenous peoples in high level policy shaping and decision making process and opened the doors to direct participation in a cutting edge research.

As the Arctic Council matures, it is necessary to evaluate how the Council can accommodate this new emerging role: a role of the leader in addressing emerging challenges in the Arctic. We believe that the Council is well suited for this role and that there is a sufficient good will around the table to equip the Council with all necessary tools so it can handle the task.

Several current initiatives can serve as good examples of the increasing complexity of the work the Council is undertaking. As a Permanent Participant, the Aleut International Association sees these initiatives are opportunities. While limited resources, both financial and human, do not always allow us to take part in all activities of interest to us, by focusing our available resources and expertise on one or two initiatives, we have been able to be engaged at a meaningful level.

I would like to mention just one example.

Over the last seven years, AIA's focus has been on developing community based observations as part of a comprehensive arctic observing system. Our contributions include, first of all, our flagship project, the Bering Sea Sub Network, where local residents in several Russian and US coastal communities gather observations on the environment and their harvest. AIA led in another important effort, the Community Based Monitoring Handbook that will be released soon. All these activities have been undertaken under the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group and contribute to the development of community-based observation component of SAON. It would not be an overstatement to say that the Arctic Council leads the way in this field.

If I were not myself a member of the SAON Steering Group I would have already expressed a great appreciation for the good progress made by the Steering Group in the tedious task of defining this very complicated process and moving it to the next stage, which is supposed to be the implementation. But since I am in the Steering group I have to leave the accolades to SAON to other speakers.

Obviously, a perennial issue for us is how to provide opportunities for Permanent Participants to participate in this program. It is very important that this is addressed from the onset. One of the proposals that AIA would like to offer is to recommend to SAON national representatives, current and future, and to the Permanent Participants in their countries to build partnerships and alliances for joint activities, so that when national funding for SAON becomes available, Permanent Participant organizations have been already included in relevant activities. These partnerships can also lead to better discovery of existing data that may be stored or generated in various local organizations though out the Arctic, but especially in North America.

We appreciate and welcome the US initiative to move forward with SAON development and contribute half a million dollars contingent on other pledges to contribute. We would like to encourage other countries to step forward. AIA will continue to support SAON, both on a political level and through our project activities.

While AIA has not been active with the Search and Rescue and Short Lived Climate Forces, we do support these initiatives and I would like to make several important points. Search and Rescue is important to us at least for two reasons: The Aleutians have one of the heaviest marine traffic in the world and are unfortunately a place of many catastrophic accidents. The second reason is that this would be the first AC legally binding agreement and it may pave the way for others.

Regarding the Short Lived Climate Forces, I would like to say that we have a particular interest in the Black Carbon Initiative. In addition to mitigating climate change, this could bring tangible results to many Arctic communities by helping reduce the health risks associated with black carbon.

I would like to conclude that despite some opinions that AC does not provide sufficient leadership in arctic matters, AC activities point to the opposite. That said, some improvements are needed to strengthen AC's work and we, the Arctic Council Member States and Permanent Participants will proceed with devising and negotiating these changes on our terms and within our timeframe.