

Statement on behalf of the State Observers. Svolvær SAO Meeting: 23-24 April 2008.

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Arctic Council State Observers

Arctic Council Secretariat

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Svalvaer SAO Meeting: 23-24 April 2008

Statement on behalf of the State Observers

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen

As stated on previous occasions, the State Observers would like to renew/reiterate their support for the work of the Arctic Council and continue to look for and work on common goals and interests.

State Observers are pleased to see that the Arctic Council is proactively discussing the roles and level of engagement of both State Observers and other Observers. We are looking forward to seeing the results of these discussions at the next SAO meeting in November and to have an opportunity to react.

As State Observers, we were also greatly encouraged by the recent words of the Norwegian Foreign Minister when he said that *addressing major challenges in the Arctic has to include non-Arctic states*.

There are many Arctic issues that have wider political and global consequences that can be more effectively dealt with, with the involvement of non Arctic States.

The Arctic and its surrounding areas of interest continue to move up the agendas of both the State Observers and numerous global fora.

The State Observers met again recently to discuss our interactions with the Arctic Council. We agreed that we thought it would be useful if we gave a few positive examples of how we are engaging in the Arctic region, both at home and abroad.

Therefore, in no particular order, I would now like to read out some examples of the positive work some State Observers and *ad hoc* State Observers have been taking forward on Arctic issues:

UK

Recently, the UK's Natural Environment Research Council published its science strategy, which highlighted the Arctic as a key area for future study. The strategy split the UK's scientific interests over 7 themes (climate, biodiversity, sustainable use of natural resources, natural hazards, environment, pollution and human health, earth system science and technologies) and recognised that the Arctic is fundamental to most, if not all of these. It is therefore clear the UK science community will focus heavily on the Arctic in the future.

In March 2008, the UK held a National stakeholders conference to discuss its engagement in the Arctic in terms of science, commercial activities and policy.

The conference was very constructive, and concluded that the UK should continue to engage strongly on Arctic related issues, particularly on those issues where the UK has the most interest and expertise. The UK Government also has plans to carry out a project on strategic Arctic issues.

Netherlands

The Netherlands has been a State Observer to the Arctic Council since the Council was set up in 1996. Dutch researchers have so far been involved in almost all Arctic Council working groups and programmes: in ACAP, in AMAP, in ACIA, in CAFF and in the SDWG. The Dutch contributed knowledge, scientific data, expertise in data processing and analysis and funding.

Poland

51 years ago Poland established a permanent year round research station in the Hornsundfjord on Spitsbergen. The station focuses on research in the fields of geology, seismology, glaciology, meteorology, atmospheric electricity and space physics. The station cooperates with 25 Polish and 35 foreign scientific centres.

Each summer since 1987 the Polish research vessel Oceania has been conducting oceanographic research in the Norwegian Current, Westspitsbergen Current and Svalbard fjords. The main goal of the research is to determine volume, heat and salt transport by the Atlantic waters to the Arctic Ocean. Such a long-lasting research effort is unique, and contributes significantly to global climate change research.

This year, Poland is hosting COP 14 in Poznan. The Polish Government wants Arctic climate change issues to be discussed substantively at the meeting.

Italy

In the Arctic, Italy operates a station in Ny-Alesund and other observatories in Greenland (Thule, Zakemberg). The general strategy of the Italian station at Ny-Ålesund is oriented to atmosphere and climatology, adaptation and evolution, upper atmosphere physics and oceanography.

Italian teams are also coordinating and cooperating with a number of IPY projects. The Italian station supports transnational projects within the FP6 ARCFAC V Programme in the fields of Atmosphere Physics, Marine Biology, Microbiology and Upper Atmosphere Physics. Italy leads work packages and tasks in the ESFRI project ERICON Aurora Borealis, and is fully involved in the European Polar Consortium (Europolar) and in the European Joint Call on Climate Changes, as well as into the new FP7 INFRAPOLAR proposal. Furthermore, Italy chairs the European Polar Board.

France

France has been working in cooperation with a number of Arctic States in the Arctic for decades. This year, more than 20 French Arctic projects are being carried out, covering a wide range of scientific fields. These projects are mainly being undertaken in Spitsbergen and Greenland. French scientific interests are increasing across the board, however, mainly in ice dynamics and flora and fauna disciplines

China

The Peoples Republic of China started its Arctic scientific programme in the 1990's, carrying out two marine scientific research projects, and establishing one Arctic research station in Sptisbergen. Being a member of IASC, China has cooperated with relevant countries on Arctic research, held an Arctic science summit week and takes an active part in IPY programmes.

Spain

Spanish researchers are currently working in collaboration with other countries in the fields of climate change, glaciology, ecology, geology and the ozone layer.

During its last campaign, the Spanish polar Oceanographic vessel HESPERIDES worked for two months in the Greenland / Svalbard area in a programme of marine biology, ecology, climate change and marine geology, in the framework of IPY.

Mr Chairman, this concludes our joint statement. Thank you very much.