Input from Norway to the Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting in October 2018

PURPOSE:

A meeting of the Arctic Environment Ministers is scheduled for October 11-12 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland as part of Finland's Arctic Council (AC) Chairmanship. To facilitate preparations for the Ministerial each country is asked to:

- Select 1-3 of the focus areas (1. biodiversity conservation, 2. pollution prevention, and 3. climate change;
- Within the selected focus area(s), identify the main environmental challenges and issues that require common solutions in the Arctic.
- Explore best practices and proposals for common solutions for these environmental challenges according to your selection. We encourage you to propose solutions of high Arctic relevance;
- "best practices" - type of solutions at a local level that have potential to be replicated in other Arctic States, and/or
- examples, proposals, initiatives for the regional level cooperation;
- - Pay special attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (17) and Targets (169) when preparing your inputs

This document provides Norway's input to preparations for the Ministerial.

Many of the challenges and proposals described in this document relates to more than one of the three focus areas listed. Some important issues are purely cross-cutting, including how the Arctic Council and its working groups can become more systematic and effective in supporting implementation of recommendations and commitments made in these three focus areas. It could be of interest for Arctic Environment Ministers to discuss and express support to the work done to this end by the Arctic Council. Another general point that should be made by Environment Ministers is a strong support to the important assessment work undertaken by AC Working Groups, and its value for international cooperation under conventions and fora in the fields of climate change, long range pollution and biodiversity.

1. CONSERVATION OF ARCTIC BIODIVERSITY

According to the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, climate change is by far the most serious threat to Arctic biodiversity, exacerbating all other threats. Another key finding is that disturbance and habitat degradation can diminish Arctic biodiversity and the opportunities for Arctic residents and visitors to enjoy the benefits of ecosystem services. Roads, noise, pipelines, dams, drilling and mine sites, destructive fishing practices and other forms of direct or indirect damage to habitats and species are putting increasing pressures on the Arctic environment in some areas. Activities causing these impacts are expected to increase and expand to new areas. ABA concludes that it is necessary to take an ecosystem-based approach to management, and to mainstream biodiversity by making it integral to the Arctic development agenda, inter alia by ensuring that biodiversity objectives are considered in development plans, standards and operations.

It would be of interest for Arctic Environment Ministers to discuss the combined, cumulative effects of habitat degradation, disturbance and climate change, and how to minimise the adverse impacts of expanding industrial activities and infrastructure development on biodiversity and traditional land-use in a region already under pressure from a rapidly warming climate.

Rapid climate change in the Arctic will continue under all emission pathways, and the expansion of industrial development and infrastructure is expected to continue. How to manage the combined, cumulative effects is a key challenge for both terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the Arctic.

The Arctic is characterized by populations of wide-ranging species, and the ecosystems on which these populations depend are often shared by two or more countries. Furthermore, maritime and other activities are often transboundary, or entail transboundary impacts and risks. International cooperation to coordinate action is a key to success.

Best practices and common solutions in this context may span from ecosystem based marine management plans, area based management measures, including development of marine and terrestrial protected areas networks in light of climate change, strategic impact assessments and planning of transboundary infrastructure projects, and methods for regional assessments and projections of combined effects of physical encroachments and climate change.

Ministers could explore needs and opportunities for enhanced cooperation on methods and measures to minimize adverse, cumulative impacts of transboundary plans and development programs, development of protected areas networks, and ecosystem based management of shared populations and ecosystems.

Norwegian solutions that could be considered for replication are our system for ecosystem-based management plans for marine areas, our MAREANO program for mapping of the sea-bed including biodiversity, and our comprehensive conservation measures at the High-Arctic Svalbard archipelago.

Potential areas for enhanced cooperation could be:

- **Mainstreaming of biodiversity into transboundary plans and programs**, in particular related to resource exploitation and infrastructure development, including
  1. Minimizing adverse impacts on shared populations and ecosystems
  2. Minimizing impacts on traditional use
  3. Stakeholder involvement
  4. Impact assessments.

- **Enhanced cooperation on protection of the Arctic marine environment**, including a more active role for the Arctic Council in areas such as;
  1. Development of a marine protected areas network for the Arctic, under the lead of PAME and CAFF
  2. Cooperation on protection of Arctic biodiversity linked to sea-ice, including sea-ice dependent wildlife and its key habitats.

2. POLLUTION

Arctic cooperation has addressed pollution issues since the outset in 1991. Ever since, AMAP has provided reliable scientific assessments of the status of, and threats to, the Arctic environment, and science based advice regarding contaminants from long range transboundary and local sources. This work has been, and still is, of great value for international environmental cooperation under conventions and fora in the fields of chemical contaminants and long range pollution.

The importance of regular Arctic pollution assessments should be underlined by the Environmental Ministers, including "new" chemicals entering the Arctic environment. Cooperation to limit pollution and pollution risks from sources within the Arctic, with regard to contaminants, black carbon and heavy fuel oil, are also topics of interest for Ministers.

Marine plastic pollution threatens marine life, food safety and quality, human health, and coastal tourism, across the world. While this is a global concern, it is an emerging issue in the Arctic as well. There is an urgent need to explore the use of existing international agreements and other relevant fora to address marine plastic pollution, including in the Arctic.

PAME is compiling a desktop study on marine litter including microplastics in the Arctic, in order to provide the current status on this issue. Recommendations on next steps, for instance an outline for a Regional Arctic Action Plan, will be developed based on this study. International cooperation between the Arctic Council and other fora such as UNEP, and support to the leadership role of UNEA in bringing international efforts together, will also be explored.

Environment Ministers may want to explore how enhanced cooperation by the Arctic Council member states could reduce negative impacts of marine litter on the Arctic marine environment, and how this should be linked to other international efforts to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastic.

This could contribute to the implementation of SDG 14.1 where we have committed to «By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution».

Norwegian solutions that could be considered for replication includes Arctic-relevant measures such as the "fishing for litter" projects, efforts to improve waste facilities in harbours, and extensive beach clean-up efforts.

Potential areas for enhanced cooperation could be:

- **Common monitoring and assessments of status and trends for marine litter by the Arctic Council**
- **Coordinated efforts through an Arctic Action Plan to reduce marine litter/plastic.**
- **Support to ongoing global efforts to prevent and reduce marine litter/plastic.**

3. CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is important for sustainable development in the Arctic as well as globally in a number of ways. It is a major threat to Arctic biodiversity and traditional livelihoods. It changes the biological basis for harvesting of living resources, and it opens up new areas for maritime activities and resource exploitation. In addition, Arctic climate change has important global repercussions. Climate risks also includes the effects of climate policies on the use and demand for fossil fuels and potential effects on the economy of the Arctic region.

Since the ACIA report was launched in 2004, the Arctic Council has contributed high-quality assessments of Arctic climate change and its implications for the Arctic and for the world. The latest contributions are SWIPA 2017, and the AACA regional reports on adaptation actions. The latter has expanded the perspective to include resilience and adaptation to Arctic Change in the broader sense, including other drivers of change than climate as such.

The high-quality assessment work is the backbone of climate change activities under the Arctic Council. **Arctic Environment Ministers should underline the importance of Arctic climate change assessments, and its value as a common knowledge base for action, awareness raising and input to global processes under the UNFCCC and IPCC. They should give a strong signal that this assessment work must be given priority also in the years to come.**

The ministers should express support for the expansion of Arctic meteorological cooperation, and the development and integration of climate services as an adaptation tool. Support for further

development of Arctic observation and monitoring systems, including SAON, and the important work on reducing emissions of black carbon and methane, should also be voiced by the ministers.

Economic development has become a core issue for Arctic cooperation, including the Arctic Council. It could therefore be of interest for Environment Ministers to explore how climate change considerations could be better mainstreamed into the Arctic economic development agenda.

The goals of the Paris Agreement requires rapid de-carbonization of energy, industry and transportation worldwide. While the world struggles to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, low carbon technologies and solutions are entering the scene at an accelerating pace, with potentially disruptive impacts on transportation and energy systems, as well as on energy and commodity markets.

Investing in sustainable infrastructure is key to tackling three simultaneous challenges: economic growth, delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reducing climate risk. Sustainability means ensuring that the infrastructure we build is compatible with climate and environmental goals, by limiting greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, promoting resource efficiency and ensuring access to zero- or low-carbon energy and mobility services. It also means infrastructure that supports the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and contributes to enhanced livelihoods and social wellbeing.

Two recent assessments, *The Sustainable Infrastructure Imperative* (New Climate Economy Project 2016), and *Investing in Climate, Investing in Growth* (OECD 2017) have addressed this issue at the general level. So far, there have been little discussions on what low carbon pathways would mean for the Arctic, and for the further development of and investment in infrastructure in the region.

While reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the sparsely populated Arctic would make only a small contribution to the necessary global cuts, the Arctic will have to take part in, and adapt to the necessary global shift towards a low carbon economy. Arctic communities and economies, in general, are energy- and fossil fuel-intensive, and dependent on world commodity markets, including for fossil fuels. These characteristics entails vulnerability, both to policies to reduce the use of fossil fuels for energy and transportation, and to the risk of stranded assets.

It would be of interest for Environmental Ministers to discuss how the Arctic could adapt and contribute to a low carbon future. What particular challenges can be expected for the High North, and what new opportunities could emerge? How could Arctic cooperation contribute to economic development that is resilient not only to climate change, but also to risks posed by changes in climate policies and subsequent changes in global energy use and demand?

In particular, it would be of interest for Environment Ministers to discuss how investment in modern, smart and clean infrastructure in the next decades contribute to sustainable economic growth in the Arctic, and to tackling climate change, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Such a discussion would also address what policies that are needed to support infrastructure development in line with development pathways required to meet the Paris Agreement, and how Arctic cooperation related to economic development and transboundary infrastructure could contribute to this end.

Norwegian solutions that could be considered for replication are our policies for electrification of the transport sector, including sea transport, and the national expert committee established to assess climate related risks to Norway's economy, including to financial stability. With regard to meteorology, Norway's national Climate Service Centre would be an example of potential interest for replication.

Potential areas for enhanced cooperation could be:

- **Assessment of climate risks to Arctic economies and communities, and of how to build resilience.**
- **Assessments of what low carbon pathways would mean for the Arctic, and for the further development of and investment in infrastructure in the region.**
- **Mainstreaming of climate risks into existing fora for cooperation on economic and infrastructure development in the Arctic, such as the EU Arctic Stakeholder Forum, the Barents Cooperation and others.**