

# Sustaining Arctic Observing

Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting, 11-12 October 2018

## Summary

Current changes in the Arctic have serious impacts both inside and outside the Arctic. Improved monitoring of the Arctic to better understand the changes and their effects require partnership at all levels. The need for comprehensive, sustained and interdisciplinary Arctic observations and data management was recognized at the initiation of the Arctic Council.

## Challenges and issues that require common solutions in the Arctic

Climate change, contamination, biodiversity loss and changes to the physical environment of the Arctic have serious impacts both inside and outside the Arctic. Trends indicate that the severity of the impacts is projected to increase, subjecting Arctic countries and their peoples with new environmental, economic and societal challenges. Global activities affect the Arctic environment while changes in the Arctic environment have global consequences. The need for comprehensive, sustained and interdisciplinary Arctic observations and data management has frequently been recognized.

The vision of the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) is a connected, collaborative, and comprehensive long-term pan-Arctic observing system that serves societal needs. This will require the expertise and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge systems. While the Arctic Council is well-positioned to coordinate state level priorities and actions, effective implementation requires partnerships. These partnerships include, but are not limited to, collaborations with policy-makers at all levels, Arctic Indigenous Peoples organizations, non-Arctic states, academia, civil society and the private sector, as well as engagement from other multilateral/international groups.

SAON works to promote and facilitate international collaboration towards a pan-Arctic Observing System. It works to promote and facilitate international collaboration to establish free, ethically open, sustained, and timely access to Arctic data through easily accessible and interoperable systems. It finally seeks to develop a strategy for long-term financial commitment in Arctic observations and to lobby funding agencies and states to ensure sustainability of Arctic observing.

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These efforts supports Sustainable Development Goals

13 (“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”),

14 (“Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development ”), and

15 (“Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”).

The Arctic Environmental Ministers Meeting (Rovaniemi, 11-12 October 2018) could include a focus on ensuring that

- 1) Long-term environmental monitoring is sustained
- 2) Observational and monitoring data are submitted to appropriate established archives for their domain or discipline and that resources are provided for coordination to ensure that these archives and systems can work together at some level. Meteorology is a key to enhanced and coordinated observing systems and interpretation of data, as well as development of future methods for observing the Arctic atmosphere and cryosphere.

## About SAON

The Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) is a joint initiative of the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee that aims to strengthen multinational engagement in pan-Arctic observing. The SAON process was established in 2011 at the Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council (AC) via the Nuuk Declaration. This declaration recognizes the “importance of the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) process as a major legacy of the International Polar Year for enhancing scientific observations and data-sharing.” The declaration also defines the SAON governance structure and Terms of Reference, which were formally approved in 2012<sup>1</sup>. The SAON Strategy<sup>2</sup> was approved by the SAON Board in January 2018.

## SAON Vision

SAON's vision is a connected, collaborative, and comprehensive long-term pan-Arctic Observing System that serves societal needs.

## SAON Mission

SAON facilitates, coordinates, and advocates for coordinated international pan-Arctic observations and mobilizes the support needed to sustain them.

## SAON Goals

The SAON Strategy is organized around three key goals:

1. Create a roadmap to a well-integrated Arctic Observing System;
2. Promote free and ethically open access to all Arctic observational data; and
3. Ensure sustainability of Arctic observing.

Addressing these goals will require the expertise and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge systems.

## SAON Implementation

SAON works through its Board and two Committees to achieve the described goals. Detailed information about the implementation is provided in the *Implementation Plan*; this includes description of timelines, cooperation with external organisation and resource/funding requirements<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Terms\\_of\\_Reference/saon-terms-of-reference.pdf](https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Terms_of_Reference/saon-terms-of-reference.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.arcticobserving.org/strategy>