

Arctic Council Secretariat

# Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference of the Arctic Council  
Secretariat





## Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Scope .....	4
3. The Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS).....	5
4. Director of the ACS.....	6
5. Staff members .....	8
6. Legal personality of the ACS.....	8
7. Budget .....	8
8. Amendments to these Terms of Reference .....	9

# TERMS OF REFERENCE of the Arctic Council Secretariat

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## 1. Introduction

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 as a high level intergovernmental forum to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States with the involvement of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants. The Arctic Council Chairmanship rotates every two years. The work of the Arctic Council is conducted by the Senior Arctic Officials (hereafter referred to as SAOs) in consultation with Permanent Participants between the Ministerial Meetings.

In order to strengthen the capacity of the Arctic Council it was decided at the 2011 Ministerial meeting in Nuuk to establish a standing Arctic Council Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the ACS). The ACS will enhance the work of the Arctic Council through the establishment of administrative capacity and by providing continuity, institutional memory, operational efficiency, enhanced communication and outreach, exchange of information with other relevant international organizations and to support activities of the Arctic Council.

The scope of the ACS's work, in addition to the organizational setup and the financial arrangements, are described in these Terms of Reference.

The location of the ACS will be Tromsø, Norway.

In order to further strengthen the work of the Arctic Council and the participation of the Permanent Participants the Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the IPS), as recognized in the Ottawa declaration, will become an entity within the ACS as decided by the Permanent Participants and reaffirmed at the 2015 Ministerial meeting in Iqaluit.

## 2. Scope

**2.1** The ACS shall perform secretarial and administrative service within the framework set forward in these Terms of Reference, and such other functions in support of the Arctic Council that are entrusted to it by the Arctic Council. The ACS's budget (hereafter referred to as the ACS budget) will be subject to the Financial Rules of the Arctic Council Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the Financial Rules) and any applicable provisions of these Terms of Reference.

**2.2** The ACS is to perform the following functions:

- i. Administrative and organizational support, including: arranging and servicing meetings as required; transmitting reports to and from Arctic States, Permanent Participants, Working Groups and Task Forces, other subsidiary bodies and Observers; assisting the Chair in drafting meeting documents including final reports; providing services to Permanent Participants and

Working Groups without a secretariat; administrative services concerning general correspondence; and archiving of records.

- ii. Communication and outreach, including:
  - operating the Arctic Council digital media channels, including the main Arctic Council website and web pages for ACAP, EPPR and other subsidiary bodies as requested as well as the Council's presence on social media platforms;
  - facilitating and improving the quality and availability of information on the Arctic Council and sharing this information with the general public and the target audiences in line with the Arctic Council communications strategy;
  - responding to expert and information requests and forwarding requests as appropriate to authorized spokespeople according to subject-matter of the inquiry; recording, maintaining and posting, as appropriate, the records of the Arctic Council;
  - facilitating the exchange of information among the Arctic States, Permanent Participants and Observers; assisting in representing the Arctic Council in external fora and hosting visitors to the secretariat in consultation with and pursuant to the approval of the Chairmanship; and,
  - at the request of SAOs and Permanent Participants, developing and implementing strategic communication and outreach plans and other documents and work closely with the subsidiary bodies to align communication activities under the direct supervision of the Chair, in support of the Arctic Council.
- iii. Finance and Human Resources, including: managing budgets; recruiting staff; contracting for services and related activities; and liaising with the Host Country.
- iv. Other services and functions as may be required and directed by the Arctic Council and its Chair.
- v. Recognizing that English is the working language of the Arctic Council, the ACS may possess the capability to translate important Arctic Council documents and communications and outreach material to and from the Russian language, but the resources necessary to fund such a capability must be provided outside the ACS budget as established by the Arctic Council.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. The Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS)**

- 3.1** The IPS, as recognized in the Ottawa declaration, is an entity within the ACS with its own Board. The IPS's budget is separate from the ACS budget and is subject to the Financial Rules. The IPS is to perform the following functions, which shall be carried out within the framework of these Terms of Reference and in accordance with Procedural Guidelines of the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat:

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<sup>1</sup> Norway will provide resources necessary for Russian translation.

- i. facilitate the participation of Indigenous Peoples' organisations in the work of the Arctic Council, assist and provide secretariat support functions to the Permanent Participants primarily in Arctic Council activities, facilitate and assist the Permanent Participants to prepare and submit proposals relevant to the work of the Arctic Council, facilitate the presentation of the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in the Council's Working Groups and in meeting of Senior Arctic Officials and Ministers;
  - ii. enhance the capacity of the Permanent Participants to pursue the objectives of the Arctic Council, assist the Permanent Participants develop their internal capacity to participate and intervene in the Arctic Council, and assist the Permanent Participants in the furtherance of their activities in relation to participation and full consultation within the Arctic Council, and assist them in how to best make contributions to the Council's work,
  - iii. facilitate dialogue and communications among the Permanent Participants and among Permanent Participants and other Arctic Council and related bodies, provide opportunities for co-operative and co-ordinated activities among the Permanent Participants and IPS, facilitate meetings and communication between the Permanent Participants, and facilitate the translation of the communications between the Permanent Participants as far as possible;
  - iv. support the Permanent Participants in carrying out actions to maintain and promote the sustainable development of Indigenous Peoples cultures in the Arctic;
  - v. gather and disseminate information on and provide and list sources of different forms of knowledge; and
  - vi. contribute to raising public awareness of Arctic Council issues through a regularly updated web site and regularly produced newsletters and other publications.
- 3.2** The ACS's work plan shall include a work plan for the IPS as approved by the Board of the IPS. Changes to the work plan for the IPS require the consent of the Board of the IPS.
- 3.3** The terms and conditions for employment of staff to the IPS shall be in accordance with these Terms of Reference, the Staff Rules, the Financial Rules and the Procedural Guidelines of the IPS.
- 3.4** A Professional staff member designated as Executive Secretary shall head the IPS. The Director appoints the Executive Secretary with the approval of the Board. Appointment of other staff designated to IPS shall be done by the Director with the approval of the Chair of the Board of the IPS.
- 3.5** The costs relating to functions of the IPS shall be provided outside the ACS budget as detailed in the Financial Rules.

## **4. Director of the ACS**

- 4.1** The ACS shall be headed by a Director who shall be appointed by the SAOs from among candidates who are nationals of Arctic States. The procedure for the selection of the Director shall be determined by SAOs.
- 4.2** The Director is the legal representative of the ACS in Norway and will perform the duties of the Director in the Council's interest and independently of any government or authority other than the Arctic Council.

- 4.3** Under the direction of the SAO Chair as authorized by the SAOs, the Director coordinates the work of the ACS. The Director will be responsible for the overall management of the administration of the ACS and the performance of the tasks referred to in the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure (hereafter referred to as the Rules of Procedure); these Terms of Reference; the Arctic Council Secretariat Staff Rules (hereafter referred to as the Staff Rules); the Financial Rules; the biennial work plan of the ACS; the Arctic Council Indigenous People’s Secretariat Procedural Guidelines as appropriate; and such other tasks as directed by the SAO Chair,
- 4.4** The Director reports to the SAOs through the SAO Chair. The Director shall receive tasks from and be under the direction of the SAO Chair. The Director shall consult the SAO Chair in all matters of importance.
- 4.5** The Director shall be responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the ACS and will represent the ACS externally when directed by the SAO Chair.
- 4.6** The Director shall be authorized by the SAO Chair to sign a Host Country Agreement with the Government of Norway. The Director shall also be authorized to sign any subsequent amendment to that Agreement as approved by the SAOs.
- 4.7** The Director shall:
- i. lead and manage the work of the ACS, overall coordination of core and specialized assignments of the ACS;
  - ii. prepare and submit to SAOs a biennial budget and work plan and report on activities of the ACS;
  - iii. implement the biennial budget and work plan as decided by the Arctic Council;
  - iv. prepare and submit financial and other reports to SAOs as requested;
  - v. manage the ACS’s human resources, including recruitment, dismissal, and professional development;
  - vi. consult with the Board of the IPS to provide overall management and coordination of actions related to staff designated to the IPS and the work plan and budget of the IPS;
  - vii. manage outreach and communication efforts as directed by the Arctic Council Communications strategy and the Arctic Council Communications and Outreach Guidelines;
  - viii. enter into and manage contracts regarding acquisition of goods and services as required to perform the functions of the ACS;
  - ix. liaise with Arctic States and Permanent Participants; chairs of Arctic Council subsidiary bodies, including working groups, task forces and expert groups; and Arctic Council observers;
  - x. assist, consult and coordinate with the Arctic Council Chairmanship on Arctic Council activities; and
  - xi. perform such other functions as may be required and directed by the SAOs and its Chair.
- 4.8** The Director will be considered Professional staff under relevant provisions of the Staff Rules.

## **5. Staff members**

- 5.1** The ACS shall be staffed commensurate to its tasks.
- 5.2** The Director, in consultation with the SAO Chair, shall appoint Staff members essential for the carrying out of the functions of the ACS. A geographical balance among the Arctic states should be taken into consideration when hiring the Staff members. The Director and other Staff members shall serve in accordance with the procedures, terms and conditions in the Staff Rules.
- 5.3** Should the Director determine that he/she requires a Deputy Director, the Director shall draft a detailed position description with specific duties included, and shall submit it to the SAOs for their consensus agreement. Once the Director selects a candidate, he/she consults with and seeks the advice of the SAOs through the SAO Chair before the appointment is made.
- 5.4** Appointments for Professional staff members, as defined in the Staff Rules, shall be offered for a period of up to four years, with a six month probation period, and with the possibility of prolongation for up to four years if in the interest of the Arctic Council. SAOs may decide, in exceptional circumstances and upon request by the Director, to approve a proposal to extend the contract of a Professional staff member for a period of up to two years in order to secure the ACS's operational requirements.
- 5.5** General staff members, as defined in the Staff Rules, shall as a main rule not be given or offered fixed term contracts.
- 5.6** The ACS may host secondments from Arctic States. Acceptance of seconded personnel is subject to the condition that the sending government, regional administration or sponsoring institution covers all the expenses except the use of office facilities, which are covered by the ACS. Seconded personnel are considered legally employed by the sending entity.
- 5.7** Internships may be offered to young professionals or other individuals, in particular from Permanent Participants.

## **6. Legal personality of the ACS**

- 6.1** The legal personality of the ACS in the Kingdom of Norway and the privileges and immunities necessary for the exercise of the functions of the ACS and its Staff members and their families shall be defined and provided for in the Host Country Agreement.

## **7. Budget**

- 7.1** The ACS budget will cover the operating costs of the ACS, including inter alia, salaries, travel costs, website related costs and, if applicable, the costs of the Permanent Participant intern(s) and is to be established and be determined every second year by the Ministerial meeting. Other costs are to be borne by the Chair as per current practice and the Rules of Procedure, including rooms rented for meetings and interpretation at meetings of SAOs, Deputy Ministers and Ministers.



**7.2** The Host Country contribution shall be 42,5 % of the ACS budget and this contribution shall at no time exceed USD 739 130 unless otherwise agreed to by the Arctic States. The balance of the ACS budget will be shared equally by all Arctic States and shall at no time exceed USD 1 million unless otherwise agreed to by the Arctic States. Costs of secondments by Arctic States will be provided outside the ACS budget. In addition to contributions to the ACS budget, an Arctic State may make additional contributions to support approved functions of the ACS.

**7.3** Funding for operations of the IPS shall not be covered by the ACS budget.

## **8. Amendments to these Terms of Reference**

**8.1** The Terms of Reference may be amended by decision of the SAOs.

**8.2** The overall operation of the ACS will be reviewed, unless otherwise decided by the SAOs, after 6 years from the date it is operational.

### **Overview of amendments**

1. Approved at the SAOX meeting in Oulu, Finland on 24 October 2017:  
Added the following sentence to Rule 5.2; “Should the Director determine the he/she requires a Deputy Director, the Director shall draft a detailed position description with specific duties included, and shall submit it to the SAOs for their consensus agreement. Once the Director selects a candidate, he/she consults with and seeks the advice of the SAOs through the SAO Chair before the appointment is made.”.
2. Intersessionally approved on 29 September 2020:  
Added the following to Rule 5.4; “SAOs may decide, in exceptional circumstances and upon request by the Director, to approve a proposal to extend the contract of a Professional staff member for a period of up to two years in order to secure the ACS’s operational requirements.
3. Approved at the SAOX meeting on 11 November 2020:
  - a) Alignment of language when referring to budgets to clearly distinguish between the ACS budget and the IPS budget.
  - b) Amendment of scope
  - c) Replacement of “Secretariat with “ACS” and other non-substantial language amendments throughout the document for the purpose of consistency with the other governing documents of the ACS.
  - d) Amendment of 2.2 to better reflect ACS communication and outreach
  - e) Amendment of 3.1 to distinguish between ACS budget and IPS budget
  - f) Include and encompass the provisions of the document “Roles and responsibilities of the ACS Director” to rule 4. The document “Roles and responsibilities of the ACS Director” has been repealed.
  - g) Include consultation and coordination with chairmanship as an ACS activity under rule 4.
  - h) Added rule 4.8 to clarify that the Director is considered Professional staff under the relevant provisions of the Staff Rules.
  - i) Added “if in the interest of the Arctic Council” to rule 5.4.
4. Added an overview of amendments in May 2021.