

Instructions for submitting Observer reports

Introduction

This document provides the reporting template and instructions for Observers required to report during the **Russian Chairmanship**.

The deadline for submission is **1 December 2022**.

According to the "[Arctic Council Rules of Procedure](#)" (Annex 2), every **two years** Observers are requested to submit to the Chairmanship up-to-date information about relevant activities and their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. Accordingly, the following **19 Observers** from the *Fairbanks Group* are requested to submit their regular report by **1 December 2022**.¹

- Germany;
- The Netherlands;
- Poland;
- Switzerland;
- United Kingdom;
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM);
- OSPAR Commission (OSPAR);
- Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Regions (SCPAR);
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE);
- United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment);
- West Nordic Council (WNC);
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO);
- Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Seas (ACOPS);
- International Arctic Science Committee (IASC);
- International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES);
- International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH);
- Northern Forum (NF);
- Oceana;
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Global Arctic Program (WWF).

¹ The **Fairbanks Group** includes the Observers reviewed for the first time before the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting in 2017, as well as Observers admitted that year. This group of Observers was reviewed for a second time at the Reykjavik Ministerial meeting in 2021.

Role of Observers

The role and responsibilities of Observers, as well as criteria for admission to the Arctic Council, can be found in the “Arctic Council Rules of Procedure” (Annex 2) and the [“Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies.”](#)

The primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Observers contribute to the Arctic Council primarily through engagement at the level of Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Observers are invited to the meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council unless the Senior Arctic Officials decide otherwise. Observers may also propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant.

Report submission

Observer reports should include the relevant information described below and in the template.

- (a) A description of the Observer’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants;
- (b) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s future plans to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants; and,
- (c) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered in the previous sections since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years.

Observer reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: acs@arctic-council.org not later than **1 December 2022**. Please bear in mind while preparing your report that all Observer reports will be published online in the *Observer* section of the [Arctic Council online Library](#) (OAR) after the 2023 Ministerial meeting.

If an Observer fails to submit a report, the Arctic Council will consider this to mean that the Observer **is no longer interested in maintaining its status** as an accredited Observer to the Arctic Council.

Cover sheet

Full name of Observer State or Observer Organization:

Oceana

Date of submission of regular report:

10 April 2023

Observer's website:

www.oceana.org

Information for appropriate contact person

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Oceana

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Observer Report

Please describe in no more than two pages your State's or Organization's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. Please detail any collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

Oceana is a global non-profit organization committed to protecting the world's oceans and the diverse marine life that inhabit them. With its headquarters in Washington D.C. and with a dedicated presence in three Arctic Council countries – the U.S.A., Canada, and Denmark – as well as the European Union, Oceana has been at the forefront of ocean conservation efforts since its inception in 2001.

The organization's mission is to restore and protect the world's oceans by advocating for science-based policies and campaigning for stronger ocean resources protections and improved management. Oceana's campaigns aim to address a range of threats to our oceans, including habitat destruction, plastics pollution, offshore oil and gas drilling, climate change, shipping and overfishing.

At the Arctic Council, Oceana focuses on the work of the Arctic Council's PAME working group where we have significant alignment and interests related to the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment. Oceana participates in the expert working groups for marine litter, ecosystem-based management, marine protected areas, and resource exploration and development, providing staff expertise and our conservation perspective.

Due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Oceana attended and participated remotely in all PAME working group meetings and we attended all virtual meetings of the Senior Arctic officials when they were available. During the pandemic, Oceana also suspended travel activities for staff which made it challenging to participate fully. It is important to note that since March 3, 2022, all official meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies have been paused. Regrettably, remote participation due to the pandemic followed by a full pause of all official meetings created significant challenges and barriers to Oceana's ability to engage with the Arctic Council, including with Permanent Participants and the PAME working group. We sincerely hope that the Arctic Council will soon resume its official meetings and when that happens, Oceana is prepared to engage.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

Oceana remains committed to working with the Arctic Council PAME working group and expert groups focused on marine litter, ecosystem-based management, marine protected areas, and resource exploration and development. Oceana recognizes the critical importance of these issues for the protection of the Arctic's marine ecosystems and to the communities and people of the region.

Oceana intends to contribute to the development of policies and initiatives aimed at addressing the threats posed by marine litter in the Arctic, in particular single-use plastics. The organization is also working to advance the establishment of marine protected areas and 'other effective conservation measures' (OECMs) towards the goal of conserving 30 percent of our oceans by 2030, including in the Arctic Ocean. Oceana is also working to protect our oceans and climate from expanded offshore oil and gas development. In the following section we provide more details on this work, which is supportive and parallel to the work of the Arctic Council and PAME.

Oceana is keenly interested in collaborating with PAME, its expert groups, and Permanent Participants to share information and to help build the foundation for the conservation and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment. PAME provides an exceptional forum for collaboration and information sharing among Arctic states, Permanent Participants and Observers. We see tremendous value in continuing to participate in this forum and going forward we plan to do so.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years

Since official meetings of the Arctic Council and its working groups have been paused for the past year and participation has otherwise been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we wish to provide the Arctic Council additional information on Oceana's recent activities that are parallel to the goals and objectives of the Arctic Council and to PAME.

1. New Seafloor Findings in Arctic Waters of Nunatsiavut, Northern Labrador.

To help support the protection of Arctic waters, Oceana Canada partnered with the Nunatsiavut Government to study the ocean habitat off the coast of Northern Labrador. Three dive sites were selected because of their ecological, social and cultural importance to the region and to Nunatsiavummiut (Labrador Inuit who live in Nunatsiavut). The Imappivut Expedition set out in the summer of 2019, conducting visual surveys of the seafloor off the coast of Hebron, Okak and Nain. After years of analyzing the detailed data and videos of the seafloor, core findings about these areas have now been published in [the journal of Ecology and Society](#). These findings are being shared back to the communities of Nunatsiavut and will contribute to local understanding of what lives on the seafloor and how this connects to Inuit knowledge and usage of these areas.

2. Climate and Energy: Offshore Drilling. In the U.S. Arctic, Oceana has long worked to stop expanded offshore oil and gas drilling. Drilling in the remote Arctic is especially risky, as spills would destroy pristine habitats and be very difficult to contain or clean up. Also, the burning of fossil fuels is the leading source of carbon pollution, which contributes to global warming and ocean acidification. Oceana is proud of the recent withdrawal of over 1.1 million hectares of the Beaufort Sea in the U.S. Arctic Ocean from offshore oil and gas leasing. This action builds on previous decisions to protect the U.S. Arctic Ocean from oil and gas exploration and development and now 99.9% of this region is protected.

3. '30x30': Protecting Important Ocean Habitats. Oceana is working to support and implement the goal of conserving 30 percent of ocean waters by 2030. In the U.S. we are doing this along with a diverse coalition of people and organizations committed to the protection of our ocean ecosystems. And as part of this work, we are pleased to be supporters of the community-based effort to designate a co-managed marine sanctuary called [Alaġum Kanuux̄](#) (the Heart of the Ocean) located in the Pribilof Islands region of the Eastern Bering Sea. If designated, this would be the first National Marine Sanctuary in Alaska.

4. Plastic Pollution: Reducing single-use plastic waste. In June 2022 the Canadian government announced a [national ban](#) on six single-use plastic items. **Oceana Canada** has been advocating alongside thousands of other Canadians to reduce plastic pollution since 2019 and the organization is excited to see this effort become a reality. This is a big victory and marks a significant step towards ending the plastic waste entering our oceans.

4. (...continued) Plastic Pollution: Reducing single-use plastic waste.

In the U.S. we have been working to reduce plastic waste in coastal states, passing various state bans on harmful single-use plastics that are not readily recyclable. When these plastics get into the ocean, they can also be a source of pollution into the Arctic. We have also worked to introduce [national legislation](#) in the U.S. to reduce plastic waste.

In Denmark we advocated for the [complete phase out of single-use coffee cups](#) to prevent marine litter. Disposable cups are among the top ten items most commonly found in Danish nature. In support of those measures, we conducted a poll and found that 75% percent of respondents agreed that cafés should offer customers a reusable solution for take-aways.

In the European Union, Oceana published a series of reports highlighting how plastics are impacting marine biodiversity. In [Underwater dumps: the plastic siege on biodiversity](#) Oceana reviews the impacts of plastic pollution on biogenic habitats like deep-sea coral gardens, sponge aggregations and bivalves. In [Plastic in the deep: an invisible problem](#) Oceana describes how the deep-sea is littered with plastic pollution, including direct observations made from Oceana's at-sea expeditions.