

Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea

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Observer's website, if appropriate:

www.acops.org.uk

Information for appropriate contact person

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Is your state or organization still interested in continuing as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

Yes

Observer Report

Please describe in no more than 2 pages your state 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. If applicable, please include mention of collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

ACOPS values Observer status and confirms that it wishes to continue to be an Observer to the Arctic Council. We note the Nuuk criteria (and the Arctic Council Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies) and we are pleased to submit our report of up-to-date information on work that is relevant to the Council, including recent activities and contributions. ACOPS made a report in 2014 to the Arctic Council and has made the following contribution to Arctic issues within the past 18-24 months.

Interest in Policy and direction

Lord Julian Hunt of Chesterton (President of ACOPS) was a member of the UK House of Lords Select Committee on the Arctic appointed by the House of Lords on 12 February 2014 'to consider recent and expected changes in the Arctic and consider their implications for the UK and its international relations'. The Select Committee report, HL 118, published on 27 February 2015, entitled 'Responding to a Changing Arctic' is an extensive (138 page) evaluation of Arctic issues and the UK's relationship as a near-Arctic state. The report envisages 'stepping-up' the UK's Arctic engagement and ACOPS supports such interaction and recognizes the UK's long-standing political, economic and cultural ties with States and peoples of the region. ACOPS attended a meeting at the UK Royal Society sharing the report's findings and has actively engaged with the Polar Regions Department of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. ACOPS notes that recommendations of the report included greater focus on and coordination of Arctic affairs as well as full and effective UK representation on Arctic Council bodies.

For the past few months ACOPS has taken an interest in and participated in a UK All Party Parliamentary Group on the Arctic.

Professor David Johnson (Chairman of ACOPS) attended the Arctic Ministerial Meeting in 2015 under the Canadian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. ACOPS appreciated the opportunity for meetings with Permanent Representatives and the chance to network with Parties and other Observer delegations Professor Johnson (former Executive Secretary to the OSPAR Commission) has also engaged with NGO discussions for further consideration of an Arctic Regional Sea Convention or similar based on his previous experience with Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. This has included informal discussions with NRDC (Brooks Yeager) and others following the statement by

Senator John Kerry in Iqaluit. Professor Johnson has subsequently had informal discussions with government representatives of Finland (biodiversity and shipping) regarding the incoming Finnish Presidency of the Arctic Council.

Professor Johnson has also advised UNESCO on their interest in marine World Heritage potential in the Arctic. From wildlife found nowhere else to unique ice features and polynyas, participants at a workshop in Paris discussed exceptional Arctic features that could potentially merit inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list for their natural value. The work was done in partnership with IUCN and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Finally, ACOPS has made every effort to follow the initiative led by the United States to propose an Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean. ACOPS welcomes positive reports from negotiations held in April 2016.

Interest in Shipping

ACOPS is an Observer to the International Maritime Organization where we continue to follow considerations for Arctic shipping and Polar Code and we have expressed interest in EPPR Work Plan.

Interest in Biodiversity

Professor Johnson attended the CBD Arctic Regional Ecologically or Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) Workshop (March 2014), and has supported further work on EBSAs in context of CBD SBSTTA and COP. Through his current role as Coordinator of the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, Professor Johnson facilitated expert meetings in Berlin (February 2016) on EBSAs and MPAs that included relevance of traditional knowledge (e.g. Inuit TK). He also chaired an expert meeting in New York on biodiversity in coldwater areas and acidification (April 2016).

Most recently, Professor Johnson attended the meeting of CBD SBSTTA 20, 25-30 April 2016. Of particular interest to ACOPS in this context is discussion on a possible future Arctic MPA network. ACOPS noted the proposal by WWF to develop a common methodology for the scientific design of a resilient network of MPAs across all Arctic nations and the intention to create the scientific framework for a resilient network of MPAs in the Russian Arctic. ACOPS strongly supports this initiative and considers it fits well with the objectives of the Arctic Council, leading to adequate representation of a suite of biological and seascape diversity, taking into account the ongoing climate changes and socio-economic development of the region.

Interest in Climate change

Interest in climate change and ocean/climate interaction is another focus of ACOPS, hence we are closely following Arctic Council work on black carbon. Professor Johnson was present at the Oceans at COP21 event in Paris in December. Professor Hunt works with climate research groups in Singapore and Malaysia.

If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state 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.

ACOPS plans to attend the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in 2017.

We hope to continue informal bilateral discussions with Finland and will make every effort to follow progress towards an Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean.

If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state 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.

Through Observer status to the OSPAR Convention, ACOPS is following and supporting the proposal for an OSPAR High Seas Arctic MPA proposal. This proposal is currently subject to further technical refinement by expert groups within the OSPAR Commission and the scientific case will be considered by OSPAR Contracting Parties in June 2016.

Professor Johnson participated in the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for a binding legal instrument to sustainably manage biodiversity in ABNJ (High Seas). He intends to participate in the three further meetings proposed in 2016/2017.

ACOPS has made plans to attend CBD COP13 December 2016 and IMPAC4, Chile, September 2017.