

Report from the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) Working Group to the SAO Meeting - Selfoss, 4-5 May 2004

The following report summarizes EPPR Working Group activities since the October 2003 SAO meeting.

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1. Developments Since the October 2003 SAO Meeting

1.1 EPPR 2004 Meeting in Inuvik, Canada

The EPPR Working Group met in Inuvik, Canada 20-22 April 2004. The meeting was attended by delegations from Canada, Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the US, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), the Sami Council, and the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat.

Ms. Laura Johnston of Canada was Chair, Mr. Kjell Kolstad of Norway was the Vice-Chair, and Ms. Vicki McCulloch was the Secretary. The host country arranged several tours during the meeting. Highlights of the meeting were the tours to Aklavik (a local community) along the ice road, and to the Amundsen (a research icebreaker). The agenda, record of decision (including updated tables summarizing the EPPR work plan for the period 2004-2006) can be found on the EPPR website (<http://eppr.arctic-council.org/WhatNew.html>). The detailed draft meeting report will be available in mid-May.

The EPPR Working Group wishes to extend its gratitude and congratulations to the Joint Secretariat for the Inuvialuit Resource Management Committees, the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada, Environment Canada, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for hosting a most informative and interesting meeting.

1.2 Election of New Chair and Vice-Chair

The election of the new Chair and Vice-Chair was deferred pending a decision on the chairmanship of the Arctic Council for 2004 - 2006. If Russia is the next chair of the Arctic Council, it is anticipated that Russia will also chair the EPPR Working Group and provide the Secretariat.

1.3 2005 EPPR Meeting

The date and location for the next EPPR meeting, anticipated to be held in Denmark/Greenland, is forthcoming. Finland has agreed to host the 2005 meeting in the event that Denmark/ Greenland is unable to do so.

2. Ongoing Activities

2.1 Status of EPPR Projects

For additional information on the status of EPPR projects, please refer to the record of decision from the 2004 EPPR meeting (<http://eppr.arctic-council.org/pwpa/canada/index.html>). The EPPR work plan tables have been updated to reflect discussions at the Working Group meeting, and are included in the record of decision. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, following the decision of the SAO's regarding EPPR's recommendation on expansion of the mandate to include natural disasters.

2.1.1 Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology (SCAT) Manual

The Working Group adopted the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology (SCAT) manual. The next steps are to: print the manual; provide translation into Russian and possibly other languages; and prepare and deliver training courses on use of the manual.

2.1.2 Interactive Maps and Environmental Information from Arctic Council Programmes on the Web

The EPPR Working Group agreed to move forward on a pilot study with GRID Arendal to develop an interactive web-based map series. The pilot project will include radiological source data developed by GRID Arendal, the Norwegian Radiation Protection Agency, and AMAP. Based on the results of this pilot study, a workshop will be held and recommendations made at the next EPPR meeting.

2.1.3 Arctic Rescue

Russia noted that under the 'Arctic Rescue' initiative, three stations are proposed for Russia (Murmansk, Dixon, and Chukotka). Russia has invited other interested countries to identify potential sites for inclusion in a network. The project to develop international nuclear emergency response capabilities will be presented as an example of a building block for the Arctic Rescue initiative (see 2.1.7, below).

2.1.4 Source Control Management

A revised 'working draft' of the 'Refined Risk Assessment Methodology' Report has been prepared. ISO14001 training for the Federal Agency for Atomic Energy, EMERCOM, and other Russian ministries is planned for September/October in Russia. A new source control management project, the third pilot project on risk assessment, is being undertaken in the Murmansk Region.

2.1.5 Community Radiation Information Project – Kola Area

The materials for the Community Radiation Information project for the Kola area have been completed. The booklets are currently available in Russian and the English version is anticipated shortly.

2.1.6 Proposal for a Table Top Emergency Exercise Conducted by Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) Partners

The US provided information on an upcoming tabletop emergency exercise to be conducted by the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) partners. The EPPR member countries are invited to participate. The exercise will occur in the Murmansk region, but the scenario has not yet been finalized.

2.1.7 Developing International Nuclear Emergency Response Capabilities

The US provided information on an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) initiative to develop international response capabilities to address 'nuclear events' including small radiological incidents. The EPPR member countries are invited to help shape the Arctic component of this ongoing IAEA project via the development of the nuclear response component of the Arctic Rescue initiative.

2.1.8 Radioactivity in the Arctic – Map and Information

The Working Group agreed to develop a map of the known locations of radioactivity in the Arctic. The Working Group requested that the EPPR lead (Norway) for the circumpolar map and the AMAP Secretariat conduct a pilot project to make an interactive web-based map that will include the AMAP data on radioactivity sources.

Based on comments received on the pilot project, a path forward will be determined.

2.1.9 Community Information Project

The US presented information on the preparation of a Community Information booklet to provide radiological response information for government officials in Russia.

2.2 EPPR Web Site

The Working Group gratefully accepted Sweden's offer to host the EPPR web site for a period of five years. The EPPR information on the Arctic Council web site will be updated by the Secretariat, in consultation with the project leads.

2.3 Administrative and Financial Matters

The Secretariat support for EPPR during the period 2002-2004 is being provided by Canada. The cost of Secretariat support is estimated at \$40,000 US per year. The EPPR website will continue to be maintained at the Arctic Centre in Finland until the conclusion of the current Chair's term in November 2004. The estimated cost is \$7,000 US per year.

3. Future Activities and Plans

3.1 Coordination and Cooperation

3.1.1 With Other Arctic Council Working Groups

AMAP

With respect to the Petroleum Hydrocarbon Assessment project, two chapters are of particular interest to EPPR: 'Oil and Gas Activities in the Arctic' and 'Sources and Inputs of Petroleum Hydrocarbons, PAHs...' In response to the request from the AMAP Secretariat, members are to provide nominations for key or contributing experts to the EPPR Chair by May 17, 2004. The Working Group also noted the upcoming Oil and Gas Conference (2005), and countries have been asked to nominate participants to represent EPPR.

PAME

The Working Group has reviewed the most recent draft of the Oil Transfer Guidelines being developed under PAME. Draft text of recommended changes is included in Appendix A of the meeting record of decision, and will be transmitted to PAME. The Working Group discussed potential means for distributing the completed guide to communities in order to test their effectiveness in the field.

Arctic Marine Strategic Plan

The Working Group discussed the March 2004 draft of the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan. Countries noted the need to strengthen the emergencies preparedness and response component of the current draft. Suggested wording is included as Appendix B of the record of decision for the meeting, and will be transmitted to PAME.

Sustainable Development Working Group

The Working Group reviewed the current draft of the Sustainable Development Working Group's Capacity Building Overview, and found that all relevant EPPR projects were included. The EPPR Secretariat and Chair will revise the EPPR portion of the document based on the comments received from the Working Group and advise the SDWG.

3.1.2 With Other Organizations Outside the Arctic Council

Northern Forum

The Working Group noted the Chair's updated report (March 2004) on potential cooperation with Northern Forum, specifically the response to the April 2002 Severe Cold Climate Workshop recommendations. The Northern Forum has confirmed their interest and support to undertake work on 4 of the 8 recommendations with respect to oil spills.

University of the Arctic

In response to a request from the University of the Arctic, EPPR named two contacts in the Working Group (from the US (University of Alaska at Fairbanks) and the Russian Federation (IBRAE)) who will work with the U Arctic International Secretariat or the chairs of program departments to identify areas of common interest and to propose practical means to implementation.

3.2 EPPR Recommendation re: Expanded Mandate

The SAO Report to the Arctic Council Ministers (October 2002, Section 2.2.3) noted that ... that EPPR in the future should give more emphasis to prevention, preparedness and response to accidents involving radiological and other hazardous materials, which fits within the present mandate of EPPR. The SAOs further propose that it could be appropriate to expand the mandate of EPPR to include also prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters." In this regard, the SAOs recommended that the Ministers "...request EPPR to complete the inventory of past natural disasters in the Arctic to determine if the mandate of EPPR should be expanded to include also prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters."

Finland presented the results of the survey of past natural disasters and a discussion of the implications for EPPR. It was the consensus of those countries present to recommend to the SAOs that natural disasters be added to the mandate of the EPPR Working Group. If this recommendation is accepted, the first steps will include: clarification of the specific goals; exchange of information; and the addition of natural disasters to the risk assessment matrix.

4. Question to SAOs

1. Based on this report, the SAOs are kindly requested to take note of the EPPR Working Group's recommendation regarding the expansion of its mandate to include natural disasters, and to provide further direction in this regard.