

Arctic Council Task Force on Oil Pollution Prevention

5th Meeting, Helsinki, November 24-25, 2014

Summary two-pager

Introduction

At its fifth (and, it is expected, final) meeting, hosted by the Finnish Meteorological Institute (Helsinki), the Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention (TFOPP) focused on finalizing the Task Force's deliverable, which will be presented for the consideration of ministers of Arctic states at the upcoming Ministerial meeting in 2015 in Iqaluit, Canada. The latest version of the TFOPP document, reflecting all the changes made at the previous meeting in Nuuk, was distributed in advance of the meeting, as were several new addenda and comments contributed by the state delegations and others.

The meeting was co-chaired by Else Berit Eikeland (Norway) and Vladimir Barbin (Russian Federation). In their introductory remarks, the co-chairs underlined the need to produce a more concise and concrete document, and encouraged the delegates to be consensus-oriented and avoid getting too caught up in debating any particular detail.

Representatives from all Arctic States attended the meeting. Two Permanent Participant organizations (the Aleut International Association and the Inuit Circumpolar Council) and one Arctic Council Working Group (EPPR) were present. Accredited observers attending the meeting included six states (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore) and two organizations (CCU, WWF). In addition, there were invited experts from IOGP (The International Association of Oil & Gas Producers), Neste Jacobs and Lamor Corporation.

Discussion of the Deliverable

Although a decision on the preferred legal status of the document had been taken by TFOPP delegates in Nuuk, the question of the document's title remained open prior to the Helsinki meeting. In Helsinki, heads of the delegations reached an agreement on the title "Framework Plan," feeling that it best represented the nature and purpose of the non-binding document better.

During the two days of the meeting, the Task Force moved deliberately through multiple rounds of revision in order to find compromises and wording that could be accepted by all the participants. Many issues were addressed in plenary, while some items required more thorough consideration within *ad hoc* "reference groups". These reference groups were tasked with leading the development of consensus language for the introduction, final provisions, objective and scope of application of the document. Other subjects addressed by different reference groups included, *inter alia*: impact assessments and protection of the Arctic marine environment; implementation of the Framework Plan; promotion of the measures in regards to petroleum operations; enhancing cooperation on maritime risk assessments; improved meteorological and oceanographic forecasts; and prevention of

marine incidents. The texts developed by the *ad hoc* reference groups were presented at the plenary and accepted by all delegations.

By the conclusion of the meeting, the document had been agreed upon in almost every detail. The Task Force also developed a clear nomenclature and harmonized the language of the headlines across the document.

As part of the discussion devoted to the follow-up activities, the US delegation informed the Task Force about the meeting in Houston devoted to the development of an Arctic Offshore Regulators' Forum.

Presentations by the hosts and invited experts, comments from the observers

The days' discussions were punctuated by brief presentations from the hosts and from invited experts, as well as brief remarks from Arctic Council observer states and organizations.

The Finnish Meteorological Institute, the host of the meeting, provided an overview of its activities, research and developments that are relevant to the Task Force's subject matter. Two Finnish companies – Neste Jacobs and Lamor Corporation – also had an opportunity to inform the Task Force delegates about their activities, which include development of engineering and management solutions in the field of marine oil pollution prevention and response.

On the second day of the meeting, accredited observer states and organizations shared their impressions and ideas on the negotiated document. Accredited observers in attendance indicated their support of the Framework Plan and the negotiation process, as well as special interest in some of the sections of the document, though some observer organizations also expressed a wish to see stronger language in the document.

Next Steps

The "clean" new version of the Framework Plan was provided to the Task Force members on November 27. Although much of the language in the new version represents carefully-negotiated text agreed upon by the delegates at the meeting, the delegations were asked to shepherd the document through their own national review processes. Feedback from the delegations will be expected during December, the final deadline being January 10, 2015, as the final national review process prior to the Ministerial meeting in April, 2015 may take up to three months.