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EPPR-II 2020 Working Group meeting

Expert Group meetings 12-14 January, plenary meeting 19-20 January 2021

EPPR held its second meeting of 2020 online exceptionally in January 2021, due to Covid-19 related postponement of the EPPR-I 2020 meeting. The plenary meeting was attended by 95 participants from all eight Arctic States, four Permanent Participant organizations (AAC, AIA, ICC and GCI), five Observer States (China, Italy, Japan, Singapore and United Kingdom), and five Observer organizations (IMO, UNEP, ACOPS, IASC, UArctic and WWF). Representatives from the Arctic Coast Guard Forum attended as invited guests.

Marine Environmental Response Expert Group (MER EG), Search and Rescue Expert Group (SAR EG) and the Radiation Expert Group (RAD EG) each met on 12-14 January for one day meetings preceding the plenary meeting. A Head of Delegation meeting was held 18 January. In total the events during the week gathered 121 participants.

The next EPPR plenary meeting is planned to take place in June 2021 most likely online. The EPPR-II 2021 is planned to take place in December, hosted by Russian Federation, circumstances allowing.

Ongoing work

The plenary meeting had a more of an administrative nature as the focus was on finalizing EPPR deliverables for the upcoming Arctic Council Ministerial meeting, developing the work plan for 2021-2023 further and on other administrative issues. Russian Federation provided an overview of the priorities for the upcoming Chairmanship of the Council, and on EPPR related events that are planned for the term. Two new project proposals in development were presented, “Enhancing maritime surveillance capacity through international cooperation” by Canada and “The Arctic Risk Management Network, ARMNet” by AAC. EPPR Research and Development (R&D) Initiative guiding document was approved during the MER EG readout. The Chair gave a short update on the Council’s work on Covid-19 with SDWG as the designated leading coordinator, while Norway provided a presentation on national implications of Covid-19 from a northern emergency preparedness perspective.

Marine Environmental Response Expert Group and MOSPA Agreement

The MER EG met 12 January for a five-hour meeting. The meeting began with an update on the planning of the EPPR-ACGF Joint exercise Arctic Guardian, that will take place in April 2021, but will be designed to be held in an online format. The After-Action Report from the Joint Tabletop Exercise in October 2020 was discussed and will be finalized for EPPR approval in time for submitting it as a Ministerial deliverable. The recent MOSPA Appendix IV Operational Guidelines 2020 update was on the agenda. As the Research and Development Initiative guiding document was up for approval in the EPPR plenary meeting, it was presented and discussed. Updates on ongoing projects were presented, and administrative issues and communications were discussed.

Search and Rescue Expert Group and SAR agreement

The SAR EG met 13 January for a five-hour meeting. A full agenda covered relevant recent activities and project updates. The Joint Tabletop Exercise with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum in October 2020 highlights were discussed from SAR perspective, and Russian Federation provided an update on the sinking of a fishing vessel at the Barents Sea in December. Covid-19 implications for SAR community were discussed. The translation of the Viking Sky incident after action report to English is finalized by the U.S. Administrative issues and communications were also discussed.

Radiation Expert Group

The RAD EG met for a working meeting on 14 January, as the focus of the RAD EG is on EPPR-I meetings, but timing coincided well for the finalizing of the Risks project and for reviewing the projects and timelines for the Ministerial meeting. New upcoming project proposals and focus areas were also discussed.

Ministerial deliverables 2021

- Arctic Risk Assessment Guideline Web-based tool
- Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis Phase II Web-based tool
- Prevention, Preparedness and Response in Small Communities Phase III movie
- RADSAR Report
- RADEX 2019 TTX Report
- RAD EG Risks Project Summary Consensus Report
- EPPR-ACGF TTX After Action Report
- Research and Development Initiative Bodo 2019 Workshop Report

Current projects continuing under the upcoming AC Chairmanship of the Russian Federation

Prevention, Preparedness and Response in Small Communities Phase III

A working group consisting of AIA, Canada, Norway, and US representatives, along with a production company finalized a second movie on oil pollution risk and impact to small communities that was launched in December 2020. Third movie is planned to be produced as the project continues.

Risk assessment methods and metadata Phase III

The project is a part of the follow-up of the AC Framework Plan for Oil Pollution Prevention (FPOPP). The web-based guideline tool was finalized in spring 2020. Continuation of the project is planned with a Phase III.

Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis (COSRVA) Phase III

The Circumpolar Response Viability Analysis resulted in a comprehensive technical report that summarized the background, methodology, input data and results from the project. Phase II of the project developed a web-based tool based on the report and updated metocean dataset. Continuation of the project is planned with a Phase III.

Arctic Rescue

The focus of this ongoing Russian Federation-led project is to elaborate best practices, recommendations and key elements of the emergency risk assessment system and the system for improving safety of potentially hazardous facilities. The next conference is planned to be organized in conjunction with the EPPR meeting in December 2021.

Safety Systems in the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural Projects

The goal of this ongoing project of Russian Federation is the improvement of industrial and environmental safety related to economic and infrastructure projects. In support of this project, SAR and oil spill response exercises are undertaken annually.

Research and Development Initiative

The objective of the initiative is to enhance collaboration between research, operations and policy. EPPR endorsed the initiative to continue under the MER EG and a guidance document to help steer its work was approved in the plenary meeting. The initiative is co-led by Norway, Canada and US.

Circumpolar Wildland Fire

The Circumpolar Wildland fire project was approved in January 2020 intersessionally. The project formed a steering committee which drew a lot of interest, including from AC Observers, and had their first online call in June to plan future work. The project has now confirmed project resourcing and the next teleconference will be held in February.

New Low-Sulphur Fuels – Fate and behaviour in Cold Water Conditions

A series of initiatives and regulatory developments over the past several years have given rise to the importance of studying low-sulphur fuel oil in cold sea temperatures, which led to a project proposal that was formally approved by EPPR and PAME in 2020. The project is led jointly by representatives from EPPR and PAME promoting collaboration on a subject that intersects the mandates of both Working Groups. Work is currently ongoing.

NEPTUNE

The NEPTUNE project was approved intersessionally in June 2020 and is investigating how expedition cruise vessels might be used as a resource in Arctic oil spill preparedness and response. The project was carried through with AECO and comprised of survey and an online tabletop exercise. The project leads are drafting the final report of the project.

Lessons Learned Arena

Arctic Lessons Learned Arena project was approved intersessionally in June 2020 aiming to build an easy-to-use database of best practices and experiences for emergency preparedness and response entities, relevant stakeholders and academia, by sharing after action reports, identifying key capability gaps and best practices, assisting in evaluation and planning of exercises and providing a tool for analysis. A demo version of the Arena has been built, and the work in moving forward.