

**Arctic Council
Sustainable Development Working Group
Anchorage, Alaska, May 3-4, 1999
Meeting Highlights**

The United States welcomed participants to the first meeting of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), which was established pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Iqaluit Declaration. Ray Arnaudo of the United States was selected as chair of the SDWG while the United States hosts the Arctic Council, and Sauli Rouhinen of Finland was selected as vice-chair.

Status Reports on Sustainable Development Projects

Canada gave an update on its project, "The Future of Children and Youth in the Arctic." In the subsequent discussion, Canada was praised for its efforts to date. Delegations agreed to provide Canada with appropriate contacts, including the degree to which they would be prepared to contribute to the implementation of this initiative.

The Saami Council gave an update on its projects on Coastal and Freshwater Fisheries. They proposed holding a seminar to plan implementation of the projects, drawing on experiences from other Arctic countries. This idea was well received.

The United States gave an update on its project on Telemedicine in the Arctic, noting both the potential benefits of telemedicine as well as problems encountered to date. Countries indicated support and promised to provide contact persons to the United States.

Discussion of Pending Proposals

Proposals on cultural and eco-tourism, technology transfer, and national sustainable development strategies were reviewed and discussed. The discussions provided some new ideas to incorporate in revised proposals.

Discussion of New Sustainable Development Proposals

Denmark presented a proposal, "Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic." Discussions indicated that the idea was worthwhile, but that the study would need to be more than an academic exercise.

The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) proposed a project to link the embassies of Arctic countries in Moscow with small communities in the Russian North. Delegations voiced support for the project, asked for more information, and suggested that RAIPON consider jointly with embassies in Moscow the implementation of this project.

Discussion of Possible Priority Areas for the Sustainable Development Program

The United States gave a presentation on health issues, particularly emerging infectious diseases, and presented some ideas for circumpolar cooperation for further consideration.

The United States also initiated a discussion on the provision of humanitarian aid to Russia. Several countries and organizations had provided assistance during the past winter. These efforts were discussed, and the need for aid that can help develop local capacity was emphasized.

Presentations on Top Socio-Economic Problems and Priorities

Each country and permanent participant gave a short presentation on its top sustainable development problems and priorities. Some presentations outlined specific topics and some addressed the more general question of how sustainable development might be approached within the Arctic Council. A majority of the delegations expressed the view that in addition to a project-oriented approach to sustainable development, there was a need to develop a consistent framework to guide activities of the Council in this area. The Chair agreed to prepare minutes of the meeting which will contain a summary of the presentations and note common themes and possible priorities and their relation to the existing projects and proposals before the group. This document will be circulated for review, and for approval at the next SDWG meeting. It may possibly serve as the basis for a conceptual overview of the SDWG's activities.