



Arctic Council SAO plenary meeting (eDocs code: ACSAOUS203) 5-6  
October 2016, Portland, Maine, U.S.A.

Document Title

Excerpt from Fairbanks 2016 SAO meeting report - 6.5 Open  
discussion of climate change and resilience work in the  
Arctic Council

Agenda item number

5.4

Submitted by

U.S. Chairmanship

Document filename

EDOCS-3776-v1A-  
ACSAOUS203\_Portland\_2016\_5-4\_Climate\_change\_discussion-  
Excerpt\_from\_Fairbanks\_SAO\_meeting\_report.PDF

Number of pages, not including this cover sheet

3

Type (e.g. report, progress report, etc.)

Excerpt from SAO meeting report

## 6.5 Open discussion of climate change and resilience work in the Arctic Council

### Background and discussion

After showing a short film on climate change featured at the GLACIER conference in August 2015, the SAOC asked delegates to consider what the AC should do to address climate change issues in the next 5-10 years, beyond what it is already doing. The SAOC noted the clear need to continue with monitoring and assessment of climate change, addressing adaptation and resilience to climate change, and grappling with emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, but asked whether there is more that should be done.

The U.S. then presented its discussion paper on climate change and the future work of the AC, noting in particular the AC's potential role in educating the world about the Arctic and climate change. Sweden supported this point strongly, arguing that the AC could focus more on strategic communication and asked as well whether the AC's ongoing work on BCM could be a model for other ambitious work on further issues related to climate change. As three possibilities, Sweden suggested further work on wetlands (in addition to the biodiversity aspect already covered by CAFF), regional implementation of [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and reductions in flaring. Sweden also suggested that it is important to follow-up the concrete proposals and this discussion at the next SAO meeting. Finland addressed regional implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 as an important contribution the AC could make. Iceland noted the possibility of using the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a "hook" to draw global attention to climate change within the Arctic, and expressed a wish to see a substantive AC presence at future Climate Change COPs.

Canada wanted to see more AC work on renewables and closer cooperation with other groups and advocated an approach that would ensure the AC is working in areas in which it can add unique value and consider stopping work on those activities that are not aligned. This would free up resources for priority work, and making strides in implementation, not just sharing of best practices. Canada also addressed communications as one area in which the AC can contribute, but noted two distinct themes on (1) the Arctic generally, and (2) the work of the AC in particular. Furthermore, Canada emphasized the importance of communications to northern communities and to "the South," and highlighted AC statements to COP meetings as one helpful effort. Russia expressed support for the points made by Canada, and added that it would be valuable to communicate about the work of regional and local governments towards adaptation and resilience; this idea in particular was supported by Norway. The Kingdom of Denmark expressed support for the idea of expanding the AC's communications work on climate change, resilience and to work closer with AC Observers in international organizations.

ICC noted the urgency of addressing the impacts of climate change for local communities in the Arctic, many of which face imminent environmental, economic, and social challenges. ICC

pointed out that many of these local-level issues “belong” to national governments to address. SC called upon states to show leadership in transforming their economies to renewable energy sources, the Arctic Council to take the lead in developing and adopting specific action plans for mitigation of carbon dioxide emissions, and states to conserve existing land-use.

The U.S. focused on the potential for impact by working through other fora (e.g., the Montréal Protocol, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and the International Maritime Organization) and noted that it would also be worthwhile to cooperate with industry-focused ministries to reduce the cost of new technologies. AMAP provided final remarks, noting that current commitments are insufficient, and that interventions will be needed to reach mitigation goals; AMAP suggested that the AC might explore intervention techniques.

[Click here to see the supporting document](#)

### **Summary / Conclusion**

The SAOC summarized the discussion at some length, including the following points.

- The AC should focus on those efforts in which it can truly add value.
- The AC is in a unique position to engage with peoples of the Arctic region, and should make efforts to engage local/regional organizations and governments.
- The AC has limited time, resources and capacity. Any future initiatives must take this into account. It is important not to lose what we are already doing well in the AC.
- Specific areas for work might include wetlands, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gas flaring, and strategic communications. The latter might include a call for attention to the consequences of climate change.
- The next five years between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the AC could be a significant time to work more on renewable energy, and on engagement with stakeholders outside the AC “family”.
- The AC should work not just on big-picture issues, but also on the urgent issues facing communities in the Arctic.
- The AC – the Arctic States and Observer states, working together – could do more to push together and work as an “Arctic caucus” of sorts in other fora, such as the IMO, the UNFCCC, CCAC and the Montreal Protocol.
- The Arctic States are united in a desire to encourage Observers to work alongside them on these issues, for example by joining the CCAC, developing BC reports and working with the EGBCM.
- AMAP will present to the Arctic States on what the Paris agreement, if fully implemented, would mean for the Arctic cryosphere over the next century. Some suggested that we consider a presentation on climate change during the 2017 Ministerial meeting.

SAOs agreed to follow-up this discussion specifically with these actions:

- Delegates agreed to an enhanced presence at COP22 in Marrakech. Iceland, the U.S. and the Chairmanship will work to think more about specific proposals for AC involvement in COP22.
- The U.S., with the C&O group, was charged to work on a plan for strategic communications on climate change issues. The U.S. noted a focus on educating the COP on the Arctic writ large, and not necessarily on the AC's work in particular. A conference call among SAOs and PPs may be needed to further discuss climate change communications in preparation for the October 2016 SAO meeting.