

Instructions for Observers subject to review

Introduction

This document provides the reporting template and accompanying instructions for Observers to be reviewed during the **Icelandic Chairmanship (2019-2021)**.

The deadline for submission is **1 June 2020**.

According to the "[Arctic Council Rules of Procedure](#)" (Annex 2), every **two years** Observers are requested to submit to the Chairmanship up-to-date information about relevant activities and their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. Every four years, from the date of being granted Observer status, Observers will be reviewed at the Ministerial meeting. The following **20 Observers** will be reviewed at the next Ministerial meeting, and are requested to submit their review report by **1 June 2020**:¹

- Germany;
- The Netherlands;
- Poland;
- Switzerland;
- United Kingdom;
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM);
- OSPAR Commission (OSPAR);
- Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Regions (SCPAR);
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE);
- United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment);
- West Nordic Council (WNC);
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO);
- Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Seas (ACOPS);
- International Arctic Science Committee (IASC);
- International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES);
- International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH);
- Northern Forum (NF);
- Oceana; and,
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Global Arctic Program (WWF).

¹ These include the Observers reviewed before the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting in 2017 as well as Observers admitted that year.

Role of Observers

The role and responsibilities of Observers, as well as criteria for admission to the Arctic Council, can be found in the “Arctic Council Rules of Procedure” (Annex 2) and the “[Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies](#).”

The primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Observers contribute to the Arctic Council primarily through engagement at the level of Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Observers are invited to the meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council unless the Senior Arctic Officials decide otherwise. Observers may also propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant.

Report submission

Observer review reports should include the relevant information described below and in the template.

- (a) A description of the Observer’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants;
- (b) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s future plans to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants; and,
- (c) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered in the previous sections since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years.

Observer review reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: acs@arctic-council.org not later than **1 June 2020**. Please bear in mind while preparing your report that all Observer reports will be published online in the *Observer* section of the [Arctic Council online Library](#).

If an Observer fails to submit a report during the review process, the Arctic Council will consider this to mean that the Observer **is no longer interested in maintaining its status** as an accredited Observer to the Arctic Council.

Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

Swiss Confederation

Date of submission:

29.05.2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

<https://www.fdfa.admin.ch/eda/en/home.html>

Information for appropriate contact person

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Job Title: Scientific Officer

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Is your state or organization interested in continuing as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

Yes **No**

Observer Review Report

Please describe in no more than two pages your state's or organization's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. Please detail any collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

Since 2017, Switzerland is an Observer State to the Arctic Council. The Observer status fosters Switzerland's long-lasting and reliable commitment to research excellence and to peaceful international cooperation with Arctic nations, ranging from a large number of joint research projects with Arctic partners to a strong engagement in sustainable development in the region through multilateral bodies.

The principles of promoting shared well-being, sustainable development, internal cohesion and cultural diversity, which are enshrined in the Swiss Federal Constitution, converge with the Arctic Council's overall objective of inclusiveness. As a country with outstanding research facilities, and as one of the most innovative countries worldwide, Switzerland is willing and able to provide valuable scientific contributions that could enhance the work of the Council.

Switzerland's high degree of involvement in the Arctic finds its motivation in the characteristics of Swiss landscape which has been shaped – like the Arctic – by the ice ages, and is composed of mountain ranges consisting of many glaciers, among them the largest ice flow of the Alps. Scientific exploration of the Arctic has consequently always been of particular importance to Switzerland.

Swiss partnerships include a long track record of initiatives with partners from all Arctic Council Member States. Over the past decade, Swiss researchers have participated in several international Arctic projects involving multiple Arctic Council Member States and Observers. Switzerland's strong commitment to international polar research cooperation has led to fruitful scientific exchanges. The Swiss Committee on Polar and High Altitude Research (SCPHAR) of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences acts as an exchange and coordination platform for Swiss scientists at various international research institutions, and specifically coordinates participation in the scientific work of the Arctic Council and of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC).

Switzerland's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council

Since being granted Observer status at the Arctic Council, Switzerland has been represented at every Senior Arctic Officials Meeting at the Ambassador level. Swiss representatives took part in all the formats offered to observers and were able to contribute with interventions to the different activities (Observer special sessions, Observer breakfasts, etc.). Following the invitation of Poland, Switzerland was also represented at the 6th annual Warsaw Format Meeting of Arctic Council Observer States in September 2019. This format represents a key channel between the Arctic Council and its Observer States and allows Switzerland a focused direct involvement in a smaller interest group of states with the same status.

Swiss representatives attended several meetings organized within the scope of the Arctic Council including the third meeting of the Arctic Council's Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum in London on 3-4 June 2019 and the meeting on implementation of the latter Best Practices on 11 March 2019 in Helsinki.

Switzerland has also strengthened and fine-tuned the participation of Swiss contributions to the work and the objectives of the different Arctic Council's Working Groups and Expert Groups. (Please find hereafter a non-exhaustive list):

Working Groups

AMAP

Switzerland operates several regionally representative monitoring stations whose data can be used to validate the models used for the AMAP scientific work. The data are freely available. Prof. Konrad Steffen, WSL/Swiss Polar Institute, contributes to AMAP.

Dr. Julia Schmale, Assistant Professor for Extreme Environments at Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, regularly participates in the AMAP Expert Group (EG) on Short-Lived Climate Forcers. One of her specific contributions in this EG is to establish the link between the EG and PACES, the international initiative on "Arctic air pollution: Climate Environment and Society" hosted by IASC and the International Global Atmosphere Chemistry Community. Dr. Schmale attended in 2020 the MOSAiC expedition, where she studied how airborne molecules and particles influence cloud formations in the Arctic.

CAFF

Dr. Gabriela Schaepman-Strub, Associate Professor at the University of Zurich, joined in March 2018 the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) as a representative of Switzerland. She contributes to the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) and to the Arctic Vegetation Archive Expert Group of CAFF. In 2019 she reviewed the draft vegetation subchapter of the State of the Arctic Terrestrial Biodiversity Report (CBMP START). In 2020, she delivered comprehensive information about the Arctic Vegetation Archive to the CAFF secretariat to update the related website (<https://www.caff.is/flora-cfg/ava>). Dr. Schaepman-Strub is acting as a link between CAFF and IASC Terrestrial Working Group for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning aspects.

SDWG

Between October 2017 and February 2019, Switzerland, through the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, covered this group with the aim of identifying areas/topics in which Switzerland could contribute. Since September 2019, Prof. Yvon Csonka, anthropologist and former president of the International Arctic Social Sciences Association, is representing Switzerland at the SDWG, with a particular dedication to fostering solidarity with Indigenous peoples and inhabitants.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your state's or organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

The Arctic Council is for Switzerland the leading intergovernmental forum to achieve its Arctic related policy goals. Observer status allows Switzerland to support the work of the Arctic Council and to put its expertise at the service of the various Working Groups, particularly in the field of interdisciplinary research related to the environment. Switzerland will continue to promote international collaboration and synergies in Arctic research within the framework of international scientific projects in connection to the Arctic (predominantly from the eight Member States, Permanent Participants, Organizations and Observers of the Arctic Council). Switzerland's commitment allows for a better understanding of the main challenges, particularly in relation to climate change, and thus promotes dialogue between science and diplomacy.

As mentioned above, Swiss experts regularly contribute to the various groups of the Arctic Council. Switzerland strives to ensure continued expert participation in Working Groups and are always exploring new possibilities to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council.

- In partnership with relevant Swiss institutions, Switzerland is ready to host meetings of the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies. For example and depending on the evolution of the health crisis related to COVID-19, one idea would be to host in Switzerland an AMAP Expert Group (EG) meeting on Short-Lived Climate Forcers.

- Switzerland will continue to work with the Swiss scientific community to provide information on the Working Groups. Switzerland welcomed the work carried out during the Observer-Working Group Session on 19 November 2019 in Hveragerði Iceland. These Working Groups are tools and mechanisms, which are useful for Observers to initiate discussions between Working Groups and Observers about potential partnerships moving forward. Switzerland showed interest in the following Working Group Projects:

AMAP: Climate Change: Trends and Impacts; CAFF: Mainstreaming Arctic Biodiversity; Traditional Knowledge and Local Knowledge; SDWG: Gender Equality in the Arctic III; One Arctic – One Health

- Depending on the opportunities that arise, Switzerland intends to nominate new scientist/experts in the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups.

- Switzerland wants to improve its contribution to the Arctic Council's initiatives on black carbon and methane emissions reduction. In May 2020, Switzerland submitted to the EGBCM the biennial report on Black Carbon and methane emissions.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your state's or organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.

Switzerland is currently working on a “Swiss Polar White Paper”. Overall, this document is a further confirmation of Switzerland’s multilateral commitment to a stable planet, be it in the geopolitical, climatic or in the human dimension. Moreover, the white paper will aim to institutionalize and acknowledge the long-lasting work of Swiss research institutions already active in the Arctic. In its typical bottom-up approach, Switzerland endeavours to support existing scientific initiatives by providing a clear political framework.

Switzerland has also intensified its commitment in the field of cryosphere. Together with partner countries and organizations – most of them members of the Arctic Council – Switzerland is establishing an operational and practical link between science and the political decision-making process on climate action and its respective multilateral negotiations. Switzerland is planning a major commitment at COP26 (2021), including Switzerland as the main partner of a Cryosphere Pavilion coordinated by *International Cryosphere Climate Initiative* (ICCI). Opportunities for synergies with the Arctic Council exist. In collaboration with ICCI, Switzerland will host the next “High Urgency” Meeting: The “High Urgency” process brings negotiators and IPCC scientists together on a regular basis to discuss policy implications for the climate negotiations of recent IPCC reports and cryosphere research. The meeting brings together scientists and representatives of committed States, including several Member and Observer States of the Arctic Council.

Through the international involvement of researchers in projects involving Indigenous participants and communities, and Swiss representation on the International Whaling Commission (IWC), as well as through the contacts of Swiss museums with Arctic artists and communities, Switzerland has set itself the objective of maintaining and developing good relations with Indigenous peoples while respecting their values, interests, traditions and culture.

In order to promote exchanges and international cooperation among all the stakeholders, Switzerland participates regularly to meetings, platforms, conferences and fora such as “Arctic Circle”, “Arctic Frontiers”, “Arctic Science Ministerial Meeting” and “The Arctic: Territory of Dialogue”.

The *Swiss Polar Institute* (SPI) was founded in 2016 by a consortium of Swiss universities in order to offer new opportunities and funding to all researchers based in Switzerland who work in the Polar Regions. It works to support the bottom-up nature of polar science performed in Switzerland and the multi-institutional approach covering many polar research areas. The SPI is currently preparing *the GreenLand Circumnavigation Expedition* (GLACE), a major expedition that will represent an unprecedented complete circumnavigation of Greenland in a single expedition lasting for an over 2-month period. The expedition will provide access to the remote territories– and as yet critically understudied – of Northern Greenland and provide a unique opportunity to investigate the marine, terrestrial, atmospheric, and cryospheric environments of the Arctic.

Switzerland intends to continue its commitment to peaceful international cooperation and to research excellence. To find solutions to common challenges, Switzerland is willing to collaborate and work with all the Member States, Permanent Participants and other Observers of the Arctic Council.