

Instructions for submitting Observer reports

Introduction

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

The deadline for submission is **1 December 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. The following **19 Observers** are requested to submit their report by **1 December 2020**:¹

- France;
- Italian Republic;
- Japan;
- People's Republic of China;
- Republic of India;
- Republic of Korea;
- Republic of Singapore;
- Spain;
- International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC);
- Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO);
- North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO);
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
- Arctic Institute of North American (AINA);
- Association of World Reindeer Herders (AWRH);
- Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU);
- International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA);
- International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA);
- University of the Arctic (UArctic), and;
- International Maritime Organization (IMO).

¹ These include Observers admitted at the 2019 Rovaniemi Ministerial meeting, who will be reviewed for the first time during the Russian Federation's Chairmanship (2021-2023).

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 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 reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: acs@arctic-council.org not later than **1 December 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, 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:

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Date of submission:

1. December 2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

www.ifrc.org

Information for appropriate contact person

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Observer 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.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the largest humanitarian network in the world, with 192 National Societies and 16 million volunteers.

IFRC has an observer status in the Arctic Council since the Barrow ministerial in 2000. In the past few years, increase in natural disasters around the world (e.g. floods, earthquakes, storms and drought) has demanded increased attention of the IFRC. Wide-spread conflicts, especially in the Middle-East, epidemics such as Ebola in West Africa and now COVID-19 worldwide, along with a dramatic increase in the number of people forcibly displaced worldwide (79.5 million at the end of 2019 according to UNHCR) demands an increased attention by humanitarian organizations worldwide, including the IFRC.

IFRC is present in the Arctic through its member National Red Cross Societies in all the Arctic Council member states. The Red Cross National Societies in the members states are the United States, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Those National Societies conduct activities and provide services within their countries, including through their branches in the northern parts, building capacities for response in the Arctic, including well-being of Northern communities and their resilience.

Red Cross activities in the Arctic are relevant to the context of the Arctic Council as their work and everyday activities fall under the main themes of the Arctic Council, e.g. building community resilience, disaster management and climate change along with other challenges facing the Arctic.

The Red Cross National Societies in the Arctic have an auxiliary role to their government in disaster management services and serve as key actors in social and humanitarian work throughout the Arctic region. They also work in close cooperation with other relevant actors, e.g. non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders. They contribute to a varying degree to their respective national disaster management frameworks, in some contexts having a large formal role while in others, a less defined role. In all contexts, their presence and contribution are based on a robust network of trained local volunteers with extensive knowledge and capabilities in operating in the Arctic region conditions, and to a varying degree, national deployable groups and staff. Their programs vary between National Societies but include, Arctic First Aid, Emergency Survival kits, relief trailers with emergency shelter supplies for Arctic conditions, operations of mass care shelters, avalanche search and rescue, and long-term social support programs, including during emergencies.

In recent years, the Red Cross National Societies have been active in engaging in Arctic questions through projects and cooperation, both with national authorities and different actors. The Finnish Red Cross has been actively engaged in Arctic Disaster Management projects along with Finnish authorities and other actors with a focus on maritime safety in the Arctic, mass evacuations and mapping of capacities of National Societies in responding to major accidents in the Arctic.

Following an Arctic Disaster Management seminar held by the Finnish Red Cross in Finland in 2018, with representatives from seven National Societies (United States, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Estonia), an Arctic network of National Societies was established to share information, experiences and best practices related to Arctic questions. The Arctic network of Red Cross National Societies cooperates in developing new ways of increasing the level of preparedness, i.e., through training, capacity building, planning, and exercise in the Arctic.

During the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva in December 2019, the Red Cross National Societies of Canada, Denmark (on behalf of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States of America, signed a pledge on Disaster Preparedness in the Arctic Region covering the years of 2020-2024. The National Societies pledged, in positive synergy with the work of the Arctic Council, to strengthen the sharing of knowledge and experience, cooperation, and coordination in the field of disaster management in the Arctic region; deepen the cooperation of the Red Cross Arctic National Societies and the IFRC with regard to the work done by the Arctic Council, and further develop community preparedness and resilience initiatives for the Arctic region related to emergencies and disasters by exploring effective solutions to reduce and minimize potential vulnerabilities caused by climate risks and hazards in the Arctic region.

The Pledge establishes further the informal Arctic Disaster network representing National Societies and the IFRC aiming to strengthen internal collaboration and the IFRC Observer role at the Arctic Council and its working groups. The National Societies aim to assess vulnerabilities and capacities with selected communities prone to disasters and emergencies and find ways for increased cooperation on Arctic preparedness and response, and/or develop preparedness and response tools, i.e. early warning systems, contingency plans, and protocols in cooperation with authorities and; harmonize National Societies' disaster response tools and protocols for Arctic and remote areas to support local action and regional cooperation.

During the Red Cross Red Crescent conference, the Icelandic Red Cross also signed a separate pledge with Icelandic national authorities with the aim of strengthening cooperation and coordination in disaster management in the Arctic region, increase community preparedness and resilience for Arctic-region related emergencies and disasters and seek solutions to reduce and minimize potential vulnerabilities caused by climate risks and hazards in the Arctic region.

As Iceland became chair of the Arctic Council in 2019 a decision was taken in summer 2020 that the Icelandic Red Cross would replace the Finnish Red Cross as the IFRC Observer representative at the Arctic Council on behalf of the IFRC until spring 2021, when Iceland hands its chairmanship over to Russia. The IFRC Observer follows two Working Groups; the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) and the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR). In the past, the IFRC Observer has both shared information on the Red Cross Movement and its activities in the Arctic region within relevant working groups of the Arctic Council.

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.

IFRC plans to continue and maintain an active participation as an Observer at Arctic Council working group meetings with support of the Arctic Red Cross National Societies. During the final half of the Icelandic chairmanship, the Icelandic Red Cross will represent the IFRC in its observer role and participate in relevant meetings. The IFRC and the Arctic National Societies will work together to ensure the continuation of an active observer role for the upcoming chairmanship in spring 2021.

IFRC Observer engagement in the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) and the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR) will continue as well as in other Arctic Council events relevant to the Red Cross mandate.

The work of the IFRC and the Red Cross National Societies can provide as useful tools of expertise for the Arctic Council. The Arctic National Societies network started its work in relation to the Pledge on Disaster Preparedness in the Arctic Region signed between the Arctic Red Cross National Societies during the Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference in Geneva in December 2019. The aim of this cooperation is not only to strengthen internal collaboration between the Arctic national societies and the IFRC observer role at the Arctic Council, but also to map out vulnerabilities and capacities of selected communities in the Arctic prone to disasters to increase their resilience, preparedness and response. The findings of this work will be shared with the relevant Arctic Council forums as well as any other relevant work the National Societies may undertake in relation to their established cooperation capacity.

The Red Cross Movement hopes to further strengthen its network and cooperation with Member States, Permanent Participants and other Arctic Council observers. The expertise the Arctic National Societies hold in the field of disaster management, community resilience, emergency health, social emergencies, search and rescue in difficult conditions and mass-evacuations, including field medical capacities will hopefully provide for an opportunity to explore further cooperation with the Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council.

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.