

IASSA BIODIVERSITY STATEMENT

Mr. Chair, SAOs, PPs and fellow colleagues,

My name is Andrey Petrov, and I am the President of the International Arctic Social Sciences Association. I would like to begin by thanking Finnish and Saami people for hosting us in their lands and Finnish chairmanship for supporting active observers' contribution and engagement.

IASSA brings together social science and humanities experts who work in the Arctic, and that includes many Indigenous scholars and knowledge holders.

Biodiversity is about people. The nature of Arctic social-ecological systems is such that changes in the natural environment, including biodiversity, cannot be examined or understood in isolation from social dynamics in Arctic communities. Humans and social systems are critically important at both ends of the environmental change: they are often a driving force behind it and, at the same time, the main recipient of its impacts. Similarly, conservation of flora and fauna in the Arctic is not meaningful or attainable without engaging Indigenous peoples and local residents as stewards, experts, and stakeholders.

IASSA members have participated in various biodiversity-related studies under Arctic-Council supported platforms and projects. For example, for many years IASSA experts have been contributing to the CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment Network (CARMA) working with biologists, climatologists and Indigenous reindeer herders, hunters and knowledge holders to improve our understanding of the complex and dynamic Rangifer-human systems and develop platforms for co-management that would preserve biodiversity while supporting local communities. IASSA scholars have also been instrumental in developing frameworks for community-based biodiversity monitoring and meaningful engagement of Indigenous knowledge systems throughout the Arctic. IASSA members have been in the forefront of creating and co-producing methodologies for assessing impacts of biodiversity change on human wellbeing, health, and livelihoods of the Indigenous peoples. Biodiversity and human-nature relations topics will be featured in the next ICASS X in Arkhangelsk in 2020.

Biodiversity is a foundation for food security in the Arctic. Thus, biodiversity is key for ensuring wellbeing and resilience of Arctic communities and residents. Social implications of maintaining or losing biodiversity is an important element of planning needed to foster sustainable development in the Arctic. As an observer, IASSA is committed to supporting this and other fields of biodiversity research at the Arctic Council through our multidisciplinary expertise. More interdisciplinary, international, knowledge-system-bridging, and equitably-funded research is needed in the forthcoming years to understand, predict and prepare for a change in biodiversity. Arctic countries are well positioned to accomplish this task by supporting the work of the Arctic Council, its PPs, working and expert groups. The conclusion of the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation is an important step towards this success.