

SDWG Work Plan for 2009-2011

Overview of the SDWG Mandate

The goal of the sustainable development program of the Arctic Council is to propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic, including opportunities to protect and enhance the environment and the economies, culture and health of indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve the environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

Following on the mandate given to the SDWG by the *Iqaluit Declaration* (1998), the *Sustainable Development Framework Document*, adopted by the Ministerial meeting in Barrow in 2000, outlined the elements of the SD Program and identified six subject areas of special importance under the heading of sustainable development:

- Health issues and the well-being of people living in the Arctic
- Sustainable economic activities and increasing community prosperity
- Education and cultural heritage
- Children and youth
- Management of natural, including living, resources
- Infrastructure development.

Responding to Ministerial Priorities and Directions

Unlike other Arctic Council Working Groups, until the *Salekhard Declaration* (2006) the SDWG carried out its mandate based on specific projects approved by Ministers, rather than in accordance with a broad program mandate. This structural difference was alleviated to some degree by the adoption, at the Salekhard Ministerial, of a mechanism to allow SAOs to approve new SDWG projects intersessionally.

In light of the broad range of topics and issues covered by the SDWG, and because the rapidly changing conditions in the Arctic require flexibility and ability to respond in accordance with priorities and directions of Ministers and SAOs, the SDWG requests that SAOs be given an ongoing mandate by Ministers to approve SDWG projects consistent with the overall work and priorities of the Arctic Council:

Responding Intersessionally to SAO Priorities and Directions

In their Report to Ministers on the Review of the Arctic Council Structure endorsed by Ministers in the *Inari Declaration* (2002), SAOs noted, *inter alia*, that:

- The SDWG should continue to assist the SAOs in developing and implementing the Sustainable Development Program of the Arctic Council;
- The SDWG should further strengthen its role as the expert Working Group on the social, economic and cultural dimensions of sustainable development;

- The SDWG should continue to give priority to issues such as health, social affairs, education and training, children and youth as well as sustainable economic development, including tourism, infrastructure as well as information and communication technology;
- The SDWG should work closely with all Working Groups to promote the integration of a capacity building focus into the activities of the Arctic Council.

In the *Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP)*, approved by Ministers in Reykjavik in November 2004, priorities were identified for the activities of the Arctic Council on the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development related to the SDWG, including:

- In relation to the Economic dimension of sustainable development: Sustainable economic activity and increasing prosperity of Arctic communities; Sustainable use of natural, including living, resources; and Development of transport infrastructure (including aviation, marine and surface transport), information technologies and modern telecommunications.
- In relation to the Social dimension of sustainable development: Health of the people living and working in the Arctic; Education and cultural heritage, including language; Prosperity and capacity building for the people of the Arctic, in particular for children and youth; Gender equality; Enhancing well being, eradication of poverty among Arctic people.

The SDWG will continue to pursue issues and priorities identified in previous Reports of Senior Arctic Officials and Ministerial Declarations.

Cooperation with other Working Groups and Expert Bodies

In addition, the SDWG is increasingly required to contribute to Arctic Council priority areas being carried out by other working groups and subsidiary bodies. The SDWG continues to seek more input from existing and new expert groups on issues and activities within its mandate. Further development of such relationships with expert bodies can contribute to the work of the SDWG and will be pursued in the period 2009 - 2011.

SDWG Work Plan 2009-2011

The purpose of the SDWG Work Plan below is to provide a framework for the work and priorities of the SDWG during the period 2009 – 2011 that complements the existing Ministerial Declarations, *Sustainable Development Terms of Reference*, *SDWG Operating Guidelines*, *The Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP)* and other emerging priority issues.

A. On-going Projects and Activities:

The SDWG will continue activities in relation to existing approved projects and activities as follows:

- Arctic Energy Summit (AES)[USA]

- Circumpolar Information Tool Kit on Minerals, and Oils and Gas for Indigenous People and Northern Communities [Canada]
- EALAT-Information: Reindeer herding, traditional knowledge and adaptation to climate change and loss of grazing land [Norway]
- Action Arctic ICT
- ArcticStat
- Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic [Denmark/Greenland/Faroe Islands]

In addition, the creation of the SDWG Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG) in 2007 will allow for better coordination of a number of ongoing projects and activities in relation to Arctic human health, including:

- International Circumpolar Surveillance: Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Arctic (ICS)
- Arctic Human Health Initiative (AHHI)
- Advancing Alcohol & Drug Abuse Treatment in the Circumpolar North
- Research & Action Plan for Human Health Risk Reduction in the Arctic

B. New Projects and Activities Currently under Development (subject to approval by SAOs)

The SDWG is currently considering a project proposal being developed by Norway in relation to *Assessment of Cultural Heritage Monuments and Sites in the Arctic*. This proposal may be ready for SAO consideration and approval prior to the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in April 2009.

C. Possible Follow-On Projects and Activities (subject to consideration at the future SDWG Meetings)

The SDWG is currently considering a number of possible follow-on activities related to projects and activities concluded during the Norwegian Chairmanship (as indicated above under Part 2 of this report). Any formal proposals for projects or activities will be considered at future SDWG meetings and brought forward to SAOs for intersessional consideration and approval, as appropriate. Follow-on activities under consideration include:

- Vulnerability and adaptation to Climate Change
- Ecosystems-Based ocean management
- Arctic energy
- Arctic human health
- Arctic social indicators
- Arctic socio-economic issues
- Arctic cultures and languages

D. *Thematic Areas for SDWG Projects and Activities:*

In addition, consistent with the overall work and priorities of the Arctic Council, the SDWG may carry out projects and activities, as approved by SAOs, in the following thematic areas:

1. Arctic Socio-Economic Issues

An emerging competence of the SDWG is in relation to the development of reliable and accessible human data sets through such projects as the *Arctic Human Development Report*, *SLiCA*, *ECONOR I* and *II* and *ArcticStat*. In addition, the important work of the *Arctic Social Indicators* project has contributed to this effort. These data sets and indicators are important to the work of the SDWG and in the context of cooperation with other working groups. Increasingly SDWG has a contribution to make to this cross-cutting work, particularly in the socio-economic dimension. The SDWG is considering ways to allow it to participate in cross-cutting activities in a more structured and consistent way, for example in relation to *SWIPA* (Climate Change and the Cryosphere: Snow, Water, Ice, and Permafrost in the Arctic) and the *Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) process*.

2. Arctic Cultures and Languages

The SDWG has recognized that until recently there was a gap in its projects and activities in relation to culture and language issues. Some progress has been made in addressing this gap during the Norwegian chairmanship through of the *Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium* and the developing proposal in relation to an *Assessment of Cultural Heritage Monuments and Sites in the Arctic*. SDWG will explore further projects and activities in this thematic area, including possible education and outreach projects or activities.

3. Arctic Human Health

A cluster of projects and activities in relation to human health has resulted in the creation of the SDWG Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG). The AHHEG will assist the SDWG in identifying Arctic human health issues and priorities, coordinating SDWG Arctic human health projects and activities, identifying possible new projects and activities, and cooperating with other working groups on Arctic human health issues.

4. Adaptation to Climate Change

Given the importance of Arctic climate change and variability, and related impacts, the SDWG proposes to pay particular attention to development of new projects and activities that are relevant to climate-change-related vulnerability, adaptation and resilience of Arctic residents.

5. Management of Natural Resources

Arctic residents fundamentally rely on the sustainable use of natural resources for their health and economic well-being. Increases in shipping, petroleum activities, fishing, mining as well as external influences such as climate change and variability, require that the management of resources is based on a holistic perspective. The SDWG proposes to pay particular attention to the development of new projects and activities that relate to the ecosystem approach and implementation of integrated management concepts.

6. Energy and Arctic Communities

Access to energy is a prerequisite for the existence and development of Arctic communities and societies. To sustain people and their livelihoods in Arctic regions, energy resources are essential for basic heat, power, light and transportation, as well as for a myriad of other purposes. Many important political, economic, social, environmental and technological questions underlie development of Arctic energy resources. Given the *SDWG Report to Ministers on Arctic Energy* and the ongoing work of *Arctic Energy Summit*, Arctic energy is an important theme around which to focus many issues that relate to the Arctic as an energy consumer and energy producer. In coming years the pressures to develop Arctic energy resources, including renewable resources, are likely to increase. The SDWG will explore the possibility of new projects and activities in this thematic area.

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