

# 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**:<sup>1</sup>

- 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).

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<sup>1</sup> 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](mailto: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:

International Union for Circumpolar Health

Date of submission:

July 11, 2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

www.iuch.net

### Information for appropriate contact person

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Organization or department: International Union for Circumpolar Health

Job Title: President (Past)

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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.

The International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH) is an international non-governmental organization, formally established in 1981, with members, adhering bodies and affiliates throughout the circumpolar regions. The IUCH is a multilateral scientific union, which strives to contribute to the growing body of scientific medical and public health research data for the circumpolar regions and globally.

The health and wellness of northern peoples are the focus of the IUCH.

The IUCH is the main organization of its kind dedicated to health in the Arctic and Antarctic and brings together several health organizations from the entire circumpolar region.

The objectives of the IUCH are to:

1. Promote international cooperation in circumpolar health.
2. Encourage and support research and exchange of scientific information in the circumpolar health sciences.
3. Promote education and public awareness of circumpolar health.
4. Provide a means of communication with other scientific organizations.
5. Promote and encourage the participation of indigenous peoples in circumpolar health affairs.

The five adhering bodies include the scientific societies for circumpolar health in the USA, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, the Nordic countries, and the Russian Federation.

In the period since the last report and prior to that, the IUCH has performed many functions that are relevant to the Arctic Council, Arctic Council member states, and the permanent participants. As the lead organization within circumpolar health, the IUCH works together with the SDWG, the AMAP and the Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG), a subsidiary of the SDWG, and their members. We have also worked closely with many of the other circumpolar organizations, mainly the International Network of Circumpolar Health Researchers (INCHR), the International Association of Circumpolar Health Publishers (IACHP) and the UArctic Thematic Network of Health and Well-being in the Arctic. A non-legally, non-binding Memory of Understanding (MoU) has been made between the IUCH and the University of the Arctic (UArctic) under the Arctic Council. One of the collaborative areas is teaching activities, such as PhD courses in relation to the ICCH congresses.

Like most other health professionals and health organizations throughout the world, the IUCH and its members have worked with the COVID-19 epidemic since January 2020. There has been much concern over the possible course of the epidemic in Arctic areas, as such areas were, historically, very severely hit during past epidemics, including measles epidemics and the Spanish Flu in 1917-18. Thus, IUCH members have been heavily involved in various work aspects of the COVID-19 outbreak. The IUCH was worked with the AC secretariat on COVID-19, as Anders Koch, past president of the IUCH, on behalf of the IUCH board and in collaboration with AMAP and AHHEG members, contributed to the recent COVID-19 report to the AC SAOs with a section on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in the Arctic.

A main task for the IUCH is to facilitate sharing of knowledge of circumpolar health and well-being through organizing the tri-annual International Congresses on Circumpolar Health (ICCH). These congresses are the main venue for such information sharing in the circumpolar world and attracts hundreds of researchers, health professionals and indigenous representatives from Canada, Greenland, Denmark, USA, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and other countries interested in circumpolar health. These persons come together to share health related research findings and program successes that will improve the quality of life for those living in circumpolar regions.

In recent years the 13th ICCH was held in 2006 in Novosibirsk, Russian Federation; the 14th ICCH in 2009 in Yellowknife, NWT, Canada; the 15th in 2012 in Fairbanks, Alaska, USA; the 16th in 2015 in Oulu, Finland; and the most recent in August 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark [www.icch2018.com], with approximately 400 participants from all circumpolar and related areas and countries. A wide range of health issues relevant to circumpolar populations were presented and discussed through keynote lectures, oral and poster sessions, in addition to a session of AHHEG and SDWG activities in the field of health and wellbeing.

The next ICCH conference, ICCH 18, is planned to be held in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, in August 2021.

Of particular relevance to the Arctic Council, the ICCH congresses in 2006, 2009 and 2012 were devoted to presentation, discussion and presentation of IPY projects and their results, respectively.

A very important element supported by the IUCH is the International Circumpolar Surveillance (ICS) collaboration, an international network with members from all Arctic countries whose purpose is to carry out circumpolar surveillance and research within infectious diseases. A similarly important element within the IUCH is the presence of a number of scientific working groups within the IUCH. Members of the IUCH are encouraged to sign up and participate in working groups. Examples of a few active IUCH working groups are: 1) The Infectious Disease Working Group with a membership of >100 individuals comprised of many topic-specific subgroups that meet regularly and are engaged in multi-center studies across the Arctic, 2) The Indigenous People's Working Group, 3) The Maternal and Child Health Working Group, 4) The Food Security Working Group, 5) The Birth Defects and Birth Outcomes Working Group, and 6) The Suicide Prevention Working Group. During the 17th ICCH conference a new Working group on Health and the Built Environment in addition to a Network on Mother and Child were formed.

The Working Groups share the general goals and objectives of the IUCH. By focusing on specific fields of interest within circumpolar health, the Working Groups promote and encourage closer collaboration between individuals and institutions involved in improving the health of circumpolar populations. Thus, the work of the working groups is relevant to the Arctic Council.

Both the ICS collaboration and the scientific working groups are Arctic Council endorsed projects that are being reported to the Council through the AHHEG.

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 IUCH intends to continue its activities as described above in relation to the Arctic Council, mainly within collaboration, sharing and dissemination of health information through the ICCH congresses and the Working Groups.

It must be anticipated that the world-wide COVID-19 epidemic will still require much work and attention from health professionals and health organizations in the period to come. The IUCH will strengthen collaboration with the AC and organizations/groups under the AC with the overall aim to reduce the spread and impact of the epidemic in Arctic areas.

The IUCH will continue to work with the University of the Arctic (UArctic) under the Arctic Council to possibly develop teaching activities under the collaboration.

The IUCH supports the Arctic Council-endorsed project, "Improving Health through Safe and Affordable Access to Household Running Water and Sewer (WASH)" that is co-sponsored by the US and Greenland.

The IUCH will contribute to the work of the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR). Members of IUCH have expertise in the fields of telehealth and rural and remote medicine. Telehealth and rural/remote medicine themes are included in the triennial ICCH conferences. We have members who are experts in the field of contaminants in the Arctic who can contribute to the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP) and the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP).

Finally, the IUCH will continue to support the Arctic Council by having its members serve the Arctic Council as SDWG/AHHEG and AMAP/HHAG representatives. Many of the AHHEG country and permanent participant representatives are IUCH members. Essentially, members of the entire group are IUCH members. This provides important cross-linkages between the larger community of Arctic health providers and researchers and the Arctic Council. Thereby the Arctic Council is served by making sure that recognized regional health leaders are engaged in advising AC activities.

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.

The IUCH is interested in remaining an observer to the Arctic Council. The IUCH is the only organization of its kind with elected representatives from across the Arctic and because of this, we work from a "bottom up" perspective. Members of the adhering bodies participate in Work Groups of their choosing (created by them) on issues important to them in the circumpolar world. Through IUCH's observer status, important findings from these Working Groups can then be brought to the attention of the SDWG, the Senior Arctic Officials and the Arctic Council (AC). Observer status on the AC is a very important mechanism for moving information from the grassroots IUCH working groups to higher levels in order to convert research into action and policy. We realize that institutions such as the AHHEG report to the SDWG; however, the mandate of IUCH is broader than that of the AHHEG, and we feel that our two organizations complement each other. We at the IUCH work with the AHHEG at every opportunity to promote improved health throughout the Arctic.

We have and will continue to contribute expertise to the Arctic Council through the findings of our working groups. Groundbreaking work of the IUCH Infectious Disease Working Group has resulted in circumpolar surveillance of infectious disease across all the Arctic countries (except Russia), introduction of Hepatitis B vaccine in Greenland, the formation of a Tuberculosis Surveillance Network across the Arctic that has created reports and papers on circumpolar tuberculosis epidemiology and surveillance systems, and a set of recommendations for treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* infection in circumpolar populations.

The IUCH works with all of the permanent participants of the AC (the Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Sami Council and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)) in preparation for sessions at the International Congress on Circumpolar Health which occurs every 3 years. The permanent participants are well represented in scientific sessions and also sessions at the Congress specific to Indigenous peoples. In addition, one of the IUCH Working Groups is the Indigenous People's Working Group which works with and closely interacts with permanent participants on the AC.