

**ARCTIC COUNCIL
MEETING OF SENIOR ARCTIC OFFICIALS**

Reykjavík, Iceland

April 9-10, 2003

MINUTES

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Chairman of the Arctic Council, Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. Following the Minister's intervention, the Chairman of Senior Arctic Officials (SAO), Ambassador Gunnar Pálsson, took over and chaired the meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The meeting approved the draft agenda circulated on 10 March 2003.

3. APPROVAL OF AD HOC OBSERVERS

No applications for ad-hoc observership awaited the meeting.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST SAO MEETING

The SAOs approved the minutes of the SAO meeting in Inari, Finland, on October 7-8, 2002.

5. UPDATE ON THE ARCTIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

Reports from all the Working Groups had been distributed before the meeting. The Chairman asked the Chairs of the Working Groups to present their reports to the SAOs.

5.1. ACAP

The Chairman of ACAP, Mr. Per Dövlé, presented three documents to the meeting. Firstly, the ACAP report to the SAOs, secondly, a table showing the financial status

of ACAP projects and thirdly, background information on Brominated Flame Retardants. Mr. Dövla updated the meeting on the status of the ACAP projects and asked SAOs to consider the establishment of a trust fund to cover priority projects preparation as well as critical elements of projects implementation. Mr. Dövla asked the meeting to decide whether the AMAP Working Group should take over the task of developing fact sheets on contaminants in the Arctic for use in other fora. In addition, he requested support for starting an Arctic project on Brominated Flame Retardants, based on information from AMAP.

The Chairman suggested that the question of trust fund be taken up in relation to agenda item 8 on financing of Arctic Council projects and that the question concerning responsibility for fact sheets would be revisited under agenda item 5.2., AMAP.

Delegations congratulated ACAP on its progress and pledged support for ongoing projects, which were considered to constitute an important part of Arctic Council work. The meeting supported the idea of launching a project on Brominated Flame Retardants and stressed the importance of following closely the work of other organisations on this issue.

Many delegations welcomed in particular the offer by the US to deliver technological equipment for PCB destruction and the support of NEFCO to the PCB project.

The United States announced that it had agreed to take up the responsibility of chairing ACAP after Norway. The offer was welcomed by the meeting.

5.2. AMAP

The Chairman of AMAP, Mr. Helgi Jensson, presented the progress report of AMAP. Mr. Jensson highlighted two new assessments to be delivered in 2006 on oil hydrocarbons and acidification and informed the meeting that Mr. John Colder, from the US, had been elected as Chairman of the steering group overseeing these assessments. Mr. Jensson underlined the need for the assessments to cover wider issues than pollution and said that AMAP would come up with an invitation to other Working Groups to participate in the assessments, provided the SAOs agreed.

Mr. Jensson also drew attention to two new reports from AMAP; The Regional Based Assessment on Persistent Toxic Substances and the Scientific Human Health Report.

The AMAP progress report contains two requests to the SAOs. Firstly, to ensure timely availability of the necessary finances to allow AMAP to fulfil its work plan. Secondly, to clarify the responsibility for production of different fact sheets.

In addition, Mr. Jensson stressed that since the work of AMAP had from the beginning been based on national plans, it was important that member states continue to execute such plans to provide AMAP with the necessary data to follow trends in the Arctic and evaluate the results of Arctic Council actions.

Member states expressed their support for the AMAP oil hydrocarbons and acidification assessments to be delivered in 2006. The broadening of the assessments to include not only the environmental impact of oil and gas developments, but also its effect on sustainable development was supported. This will require the involvement of other Working Groups.

Member states agreed that the responsibility for the fact sheets should lie with AMAP.

Canada encouraged member states to enforce the protocols of the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the Stockholm Convention and stated its wish that the enforcements of these instruments be made a priority of the Arctic Council. The meeting took note of the request.

Several delegations expressed their intention to do their share as regards the financing of AMAP activities.

Norway asked the Chairman of AMAP and CAFF about the state of play regarding the co-ordinated monitoring programme called for in the Report of Senior Arctic Officials to Ministers in 2002.

In answering the question, Mr. Jensson, stated that CAFF was currently producing a biodiversity monitoring programme. During this year, AMAP and CAFF, will explore how to co-ordinate that programme with the ongoing monitoring programme of AMAP and present a first draft of a common monitoring programme.

5.3. CAFF

The Chairman of CAFF, Mr. Kent Wohl, presented the status report of the CAFF Working Group to the meeting.

Mr. Wohl highlighted four keystone CAFF projects for the coming years. The first one is the so-called ECORA project, which, last October, obtained GEF funding. Some delays as regards the implementation have been expressed on the Russian side. The second project mentioned was the ACIA science and policy document. The third project is the Birds of Arctic Conservation Concern and finally, an upcoming project, the Biodiversity Monitoring Programme. Its aim is to assess and evaluate changes of Arctic biodiversity through eight monitoring networks.

Before opening the floor for discussion, the Chairman recalled that CAFF and AMAP had put forth three requests for the SAOs to consider. Firstly, the funding for the ACIA scientific and policy documents. Secondly, support for the participation of Permanent Participants in the drafting of the policy document. Thirdly, the role and participation of observers in the review of the ACIA policy document and suggested that the last one would be addressed under agenda item 6.2. on the ACIA policy document.

The CAFF Working Group was complimented for the quality of its work. The co-operation and co-ordination between CAFF and AMAP was highlighted as a particularly important aspect as regards biodiversity monitoring. Some delegations expressed concern that it might become difficult to meet the deadline of 2004.

The new project on Birds of Arctic Conservation Concern drew a positive comment. The Norwegian representative stated that the Norwegian Polar Institute would be willing to work with CAFF on this project.

It was observed that CAFF may be in the process of moving towards more ecological approach and should be given time to work out what that approach entails.

The Russian representative stated his awareness of the delays in Russia as regards the ECORA project and expressed his intention to make efforts to correct the situation.

5.4. EPPR

The Chairman of EPPR, Ms. Laura Johnston, introduced the EPPR report to the meeting and went through the status of the several different projects currently undertaken by the Group. Ms. Johnston stated that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held in Murmansk in June 2003 and asked for guidance from the SAOs, whether to consider placing greater emphasis on radiological and other hazardous material and the possible expansion of EPPR mandate to include natural disasters. Ms. Johnston also expressed the Groups intent to work together with PAME on the Strategic Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the development of the Oil transfer guidelines.

The meeting thanked EPPR for its report and commended it for its work. The need for considering the distribution of work among the EPPR, PAME and AMAP, not least as regards the oil spills issue was taken up by some delegations. It was observed that the EPPR is confronted with a whole range of projects to be discussed at its next meeting in Murmansk and the point was made that if the group's mandate is to be expanded it should be clear that the requisite resources to deal with additional work are available.

5.5. PAME

The Chairman gave the floor to Mr. Thomas Laughlin, former Chairman of PAME, who introduced the developments as regards the activities of the Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment since the Inari meeting as outlined in the PAME report to the meeting. Following his presentation, Mr. Davíð Egilsson, the recently selected Chairman of PAME, gave a talk on behalf of Canada and Iceland on the Arctic Council Strategic Plan for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (SPPAME), to be delivered by the Ministerial in 2004, under the co-ordination of PAME. Mr. Egilsson also introduced the proposed Workshop for the SPPAME scheduled for October 2003.

The meeting expressed a broad support for the Strategic Plan and acknowledged that its timetable is ambitious. PAME was urged to pay particular attention to communications and the need to bring all participants on board as early as possible as work on the Strategic Plan goes forward. The point was made that the main focus of the Plan should be on pollution but it should not preoccupy itself exclusively in that area and approach the subject from an ecosystem-based perspective.

The setting up of a Workshop was approved in principle.

The meeting thanked Mr. Laughlin for his services as the Chairman of the PAME Working Group.

At the request of the Chairman, Mr. Morgunov of the Russian delegation informed the meeting about the implementation of the Russian NPA Arctic and the associated GEF project. Among other things, Mr. Morgunov stated that UNEP had declared its willingness to co-fund the GEF project. The Russian Federation has also confirmed its commitment to cover costs as a party to the GEF project and a number of regional Governments in Russia have confirmed their commitment to implementing parts of the GEF project. The confirmation of co-funding by international partners is the key implementation issue at present. Several Governments and organisations have already committed to co-funding the project. The European Commission is reviewing the possibility of supporting the project.

Necessary funding, in order to start the official approval of the GEF project, should be secured by 1 May 2003. The first stage of the GEF project should therefore be launched in June or July 2003.

Round Tables and partner conferences for the support of this project are under preparations. The first Round Table is scheduled in Washington approximately fifteen months after project commences.

The Chairman concluded that the work taken by Russia to protect the oceans from the effects of land-based activities was of great importance for the Arctic as a whole.

5.6. SDWG

The Chairman gave the floor to Mr. Hugi Ólafsson, the Chairman of the Sustainable Development Working Group. Mr. Ólafsson provided an overview of the activities of the SDWG during the past six months and requested the guidance of the SAOs on the following issues;

Firstly, on its suggestions for vice-chairs, i.e. Mr. Morgunov and Mr. Sulyandziga.

Secondly, regarding the designation of responsibility for developing the Sustainable Development Action Plan as provided for in the Ministerial declaration from Inari. On the basis of a background paper prepared by Russia, the Group suggested that the SDWG be responsible for developing the Action Plan and that Russia should be the lead country for this task.

Thirdly, the Group asked for the endorsement of a proposal for a new project; Women's Participation in Decision-making Processes in Arctic Fisheries Resource Management. The project is a follow up from the Taking Wing Conference and lead by Norway.

Fourthly, the Group considered its meeting schedule for 2004 and reflected upon the possibility of having two meetings during 2004, one of which would be separate from the SAO meeting.

The meeting complemented the SDWG for excellent work and welcomed the selection of the two vice-chairs.

As regards the Sustainable Development Action Plan, the meeting gave the Working Group a go-ahead with the project. The responsibility for its development lies with the SDWG under Russia's lead. The point was made that the SDWG should integrate the work on the Action Plan with ongoing work in international fora as well as the Arctic Council Working Groups, not least the Groups dealing with climate change.

Contribution from observers would also be welcomed to the process, including the Northern Forum. As regards a discussion paper, it was considered necessary to have

such a paper finalized for the next meeting. The work on the Action Plan should be carried out in co-operation with other Working Groups.

The new project proposal on Women's Participation in Decision-making Processes in Arctic Fisheries Resource Management, found favour among the SAOs. However, it was stated that this should not include new financial obligations. The lead country, Norway, announced that should other funds not be forthcoming, it would be willing to take care of the project cost.

Finally, the Chairman joined Mr. Ólafsson in thanking Ms. Sheila Watt Cloutier for her services to the SDWG.

6. ACIA ACTIVITIES

6.1. ACIA SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Dr. Corell updated the meeting on the status of work regarding the ACIA project and told about some findings that are likely to dominate the final report. The ACIA will produce three documents; Scientific and factual analysis, Overview document and Policy Recommendations. Emphasis is placed on integrating ACIA with ongoing assessments and related activities with an Arctic focus and integrate the following features into its implementation; credibility, salience, and legitimacy.

A discussion with the SAOs on the ACIA documents will take place in May 2004 and the final iteration and publication will take place during the period May - October 2004. A more detailed timetable was submitted to the Secretariat for distribution among the SAOs.

As regards the preliminary key findings, Dr. Corell mentioned, among other thing, the movement of tree-line and species, sea level rise, sea ice reduction and substantial change in permafrost.

6.2. ACIA POLICY DOCUMENT

Mr Wohl, the Chairman of CAFF, presented ongoing work on the policy document. Mr. Wohl informed the meeting that the policy document process had been initiated by the establishment of policy document drafting team comprising designated people

from members states and Permanent Participants. The policy document team has held its first meeting and scoping workshop of the ACIA process has been carried out.

At this stage, it is foreseen that the policy document will be at least 30 pages, containing three major chapters. The first one on the circumpolar context, the second one a scientific summary and the third, the policy recommendations themselves, which have preliminarily been categorised into about eight different subject areas, including adaptation and mitigation.

The first draft of the policy document is due on 15 June 2003, the second on 31 October 2003 and the third on 9 February 2004. The first three drafts will go informally to the SAOs without formal comments being expected. The fourth and final policy document will be formally handed over to the SAOs for commenting on 4 April 2004.

The meeting commended CAFF and AMAP for their leadership in preparing the policy document. The point was made that a linkage to the scientific work should be respected.

The meeting took note of a statement given by the ICC concerning the challenges associated with increased maritime transport foreseen in relation to the opening up of the Arctic oceans and the importance of maintaining sustainable communities in the Arctic as changes take place.

The issue of the participation and role of observers in the ACIA process, both the scientific and the policy aspects, was discussed. The view was expressed transparency was necessary to make sure that the policy document is well received. Observers should therefore have a role in the development of the ACIA process, not least the scientific part. Even though the policy document is the prerogative of the Governments, observers should be involved in that also through existing structures where they already participate.

Dr. Corell informed the meeting of his intention to visit the member states' capitals in order to introduce the ACIA project.

7. WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT; ARCTIC COUNCIL FOLLOW UP

The Chairman reiterated the commitment from Inari, to contribute to the implementation of the Johannesburg outcomes.

The meeting emphasised the importance of Arctic Council issues being adequately addressed in the follow up process of the Johannesburg Summit within the United Nations system, in particular through the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was underlined that the UN Secretary General's reports on the Johannesburg Plan of implementation points to the importance of strengthening the linkages between global, national and regional actors in the implementation process. The next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development is to be held on 28 April - 9 May 2003. It will set out the work program for further going as regards the Plan of Implementation. The Chairman was requested to consider the possibility of making a formal statement at the meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held on 28 April - 9 May or at a meeting of the European Regional Commission.

Several references were made to the number of Arctic Council activities pertinent to the WSSD; Sustainable Development Action Plan, Strategic Plan for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment, the ACIA project, the ECORA project and the Arctic Council as such as a model of voluntary co-operation for sustainable development.

8. FINANCING OF ARCTIC COUNCIL PROJECTS

The Chairman gave the floor to Mr. Harro Pitkanen, Managing Director of the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), who delivered a presentation on the financing of projects. Mr. Pitkanen explained the logic of projects, from identifying a concrete project through a process of project preparation, which he underlined as crucial. According to Mr. Pitkanen, the preparatory process is one where joint steps might be taken to increase its effectiveness and reach concrete results.

Mr. Pitkanen expressed his view that the idea of ACAP, to consider an element of joint technical trust fund could bring benefits to the work of the Arctic Council and presented some ideas on how a trust fund could be established. Firstly, a technical assistance trust fund for the Arctic Council could start with a limited funding which could be devoted to the project preparation exercises. Secondly, individual voluntary contributions could be the source. Thirdly, the modality could be arranged either through a blind trust fund or an “earmarked” one. Finally, Mr. Pitkanen stated that the decision-making should ideally lie with the contributors, i.e. with a group of representatives of the contributors who have the final word on how the funds should be allocated.

Mr. Pitkanen declared NEFCO’s preparedness to take on the task of fund manager should the SAOs so desire.

The discussion under this item first dealt with ACAP’s proposal concerning the establishment of a trust fund and the requests stemming from the Inari meeting (Report of Senior Arctic Officials to Ministers, item 3.3). Thereupon, funding the participation of Permanent Participants was discussed.

Delegations agreed that funding issues were among the most important challenges of the Arctic Council and underlined the importance of getting to terms with them sooner than later. There was a general agreement to further consider the idea of setting up a technical trust fund. Several questions were put forth regarding the nature and scope of such a fund, its impact, if any, on the Arctic Council structure, how contributions to it could be arranged and would a trust fund provide financing for the participation of Permanent Participants. It was mentioned that advice would be needed as regards legal questions having to do with liability and risk and the question of project ownership came up.

It was proposed and agreed, that by the next SAO meeting a detailed background paper would be prepared on the funding issue, possibly on co-operation with NEFCO and that a separate meeting session on the financing of projects, would be considered.

As regards the participation of Permanent Participants, the discussion revolved around the issue in general as well as a specific request for funding the participation in the ACIA drafting process, as spelled out in a letter signed by the Chairmen of IPS, AMAP and CAFF, which was circulated at the meeting.

Delegations reiterated that active involvement of Permanent Participants was of the utmost importance for the work of the Arctic Council and that it was of great importance to secure the necessary means for this to take place. The issues referred to as regards funding covered not only travel cost but other cost as well, including expert cost. It was demonstrated that the sources of funding the participation of Permanent Participants are of various kind. In some cases, member states are contributing in other instances the IPS is able to provide funding and in certain other cases, funding comes from the common cost of the project. With this in mind, the Chairman suggested that a clearer description of the current situation should be obtained and invited the IPS Board to compile a background paper of the total picture as regards funding sources for the participation of Permanent Participants.

9. THE NEW EU's NORTHERN DIMENSION ACTION PLAN; UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS

The European Commission's representative, Mr. Giuseppe Busini, updated the meeting on the preparations of the new Northern Dimension Action Plan. The methodology of the work is based on the guidelines from the Luxemburg Conference together with inputs from the Commission, member states, regional bodies and partner countries.

The action plan will be divided into two parts. Firstly the strategic objectives and general priorities and secondly an Annex containing examples of activities that can contribute to the objectives mentioned in the first part. The Commission will present its proposal to the Council of Ministers in June. The final action plan will be a decision of the Council and is expected to enter into force in the beginning of 2004.

Delegations welcomed the renewal of the Northern Dimension Action Plan and expressed the importance of Arctic issues being adequately addressed in the Plan.

10. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE; UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS

The Chairman gave the floor to Mr. Thorsteinn Gunnarsson, the head of the task force responsible for the preparation of the conference. Mr. Gunnarsson informed the meeting that the conference, which is an initiative of the Icelandic Chairmanship, would be held in Akureyri, Iceland on 20-21 October 2003 under the title "International Conference on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Arctic: Opportunities and Obstacles for Sustainable Development, Education and Telemedicine." The conference will be organized into a plenary session in the morning of October 20th and two parallel workshop sessions in the afternoon. The conference will conclude with a round table discussion the following day, summarizing discussions and formulating conclusions. Preparations are well under way, including the selection of speakers. The University of the Arctic will develop a background paper on the state of technical affairs and ICT infrastructure in the Arctic. Mr. Gunnarsson expressed hope that the learning experience from the conference would be formulated into proposals for action within the Arctic Council.

The initiative was well received by delegations. It was mentioned that the conference, not least its telemedicine part, would support ongoing programs of the Arctic Council.

The Chairman expressed special thanks to the Northern Forum for having generously provided a staff member to the conference task force, Ms. Yana Alexandrova.

11. INFORMAL ACIA MEETING IN SVALBARD IN AUGUST 2003, UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS

The SAO of Norway, Ambassador Jan Tore Holvik, informed the meeting of the preparations for the informal ACIA meeting in Svalbard on 5-7 August 2003, organised by the Norwegian Government. The meeting should, among other things, create a link between the scientific work of ACIA and the policy document. A document will be sent out in advance, pointing to the main challenges and items to be addressed at the meeting.

The meeting expressed its appreciations to Norway for taking the initiative of organising the meeting and looked forward to moving the ACIA process forward. Norway received special thanks for taking care of travel arrangements and costs for all participants once in Svalbard as well as funding the travel of a representative from each of the six Permanent Participants to the meeting.

12. REPORTS IN CONNECTION WITH CO-OPERATION AMONG NORTHERN REGIONAL FORA

The Chairman gave the floor to the SAO of Finland, Ambassador Erik Ulfstedt, who reported on the meeting of the Chairman of the Committees of Senior Officials (CSO) of the four Nordic regional Council's (the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents-Euro Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers), held in Helsinki on 12 December 2002. The main subject of the meeting was to exchange views on the different regional inputs to the Northern Dimension Action Plan. The meeting proved valuable and is expected to take place on ad hoc basis in the future.

The SAO of Sweden, Ambassador Helena Ödmark, reported on the Summit of Prime Ministers of the Nordic Countries and Russia, held under the Swedish chairmanship of the BEAC, on the occasion of its 10 years anniversary, in Kirkenes, Norway on 10-11 January 2003. The Summit discussed, among other things, economic development, environmental- and nuclear safety issues, and health- and social affairs and adopted a political declaration. The Ministers highlighted transportation as a major issue for the coming years, not least east-west transportations in the Barents area. The Summit reached a conclusion on the MNEPR negotiations, to be finalised soon.

The meeting congratulated the BEAC on its ten years anniversary of successful co-operation.

Ms. Priscilla Wohl, Executive Director of the Northern Forum, introduced the upcoming 6th General Assembly of the Northern Forum, to be held in St. Petersburg on 22-25 April 2003. Governors from about 30 northern regions and 11 countries will come together, discuss and approve recommendations in the Forum's three priority

areas; Environmental protection, sustainable development and society and culture. In an effort to create a link between the Northern Forum and the Arctic Council, all of the Chairmen of the Arctic Council Working Groups and the Chairman of the SAOs have been invited to address the General Assembly.

Several members thanked the Northern Forum for its efforts in introducing the work of the Arctic Council to the regional authorities of the north.

Ms. Kate Sanderson, a member of the Danish delegation, introduced an additional sub-item, the North Atlantic Conference 2003, to take place in Lerwick, Shetland on 1-2 October 2003. The conference will highlight current views and approaches towards ensuring the clean and productive marine environment and sustainable use of its resources in the region. Four main priority areas have been identified to this end; Management of living marine resources, joint action to protect the seas, institutional arrangements in the North Atlantic region and culture and community in the North Atlantic region.

13. FOLLOW UP ON THE PROGRESS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC

The Rector, Mr. Lars Kullerud, introduced the subject matters of the UArctic. Recent focus has been on formulating the UArctic's new Strategic Plan and Target Budget 2003-2007. With the new Plan, UArctic programs will move from development to delivery. Future activities require a mixture of in-kind contributions from members, funding from governments and project funding from various sources. The Rector thanked member states for financial contributions to the UArctic and referred to the funding expectations detailed in the funding strategy. The Rector also asked the meeting to address questions related to student mobility barriers.

Responding to a query concerning the involvement of indigenous peoples in the UArctic, Mr. Kullerud explained that the involvement of indigenous peoples was a core interest of the UArctic and that further involvement in the governance structure would be preferred. Among the students, approximately half were indigenous although the instructor was not.

Delegations expressed their satisfaction with the progress of the UArctic and welcomed the financial strategy. Several delegations declared their willingness to support the project further, while the importance of seeking sources outside the government structures was underlined. The meeting welcomed the invitation of the UArctic to the Working Groups, to draw on the university to communicate the contents of their work.

14. HIGHER EDUCATION DAY; REPORT

The Day of Higher Education, hosted by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland, was held in Akureyri, Iceland on 8 April 2003. Mr. Thorsteinn Gunnarsson, Rector of the University of Akureyri, presented a report from the meeting, which was seen as a first step towards a circumpolar agenda on higher education. Four priority areas were defined with the aim of establishing links between the activities of the Arctic Council Working Groups and higher education institutions and networks, including the UArctic. The priorities include; Building human capital in the Arctic, sustainable North, capacity building and mobility.

Participants of the Day of Higher Education encouraged the Arctic Council to continue to support the UArctic and recommended that authorities responsible for higher education in each of the Arctic Council member states designate a co-ordinator of higher education to act as a liaison to the SAOs. In addition a request was made that the Arctic Council consider how the SDWG could promote activities related to the priorities defined by the meeting.

The Chairman stated that the continued support of Arctic Council member states to the UArctic had already received support. As regards the designation of a co-ordinator, the Chair suggested that that be left to the discretion of the authorities for higher education in the member states. It was decided to refer the question of how the SDWG could promote the priorities of the Day of higher Education to the Chairman of the SDWG for further discussion within the Working Group.

15. OTHER BUSINESS

Norway informed the meeting of an ad-hoc commission recently established by the Norwegian Foreign Minister, to study the situation in the high north from a national perspective. A white paper, based on several studies commissioned under this initiative, will be presented to the Norwegian Parliament early next year.

The Chairman informed the meeting that both Permanent Participants and observers had asked for the opportunity to make presentations at SAO meetings, i.e. the Aleut International Association and the Northern Research Forum. Unfortunately, the Chair was not able to accommodate these requests at this meeting, due to its tight time schedule. Instead, the Chair suggested that those who have requested a presentation at this meeting would make their appearance at the next meeting. No objection was made to the suggestion.

The Chairman announced that Mr. Jim Moore, Deputy Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada, would be leaving official services and thanked him for his valuable contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. The meeting applauded Mr. Moore.

16. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for 23 and 24 October 2003.