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Co-chairs' Summary from the First TFAMC-II Meeting

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CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY:

Arctic Council Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation II 1st Meeting, Helsinki, September 14-15, 2017

Introduction

During the U.S. Chairmanship (2015-2017), the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC-II) assessed future needs and existing mechanisms for increased cooperation on Arctic marine issues and further recommended the Arctic Council as a preferred vehicle for Arctic marine stewardship. The Task Force also concluded that this would necessitate an addition of new institutional capacity. At the 10th Ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council, held in Fairbanks, Alaska, in May 2017, Foreign Ministers of the eight Arctic States adopted TFAMC's report and mandated the Task Force to build upon this work by developing terms of reference for a potential new subsidiary body, and recommendations for complementary enhancements to existing Arctic Council mechanisms.

At its first meeting during the Finnish Chairmanship, hosted by the Finnish Transport Safety Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland in Helsinki on 14-15 September 2017, the TFAMC-II focused on the functions and structure of a potential subsidiary body, which would strengthen cooperation and coordinate marine related activities of the Arctic Council, and held a preliminary discussion on possible enhancements of existing mechanisms.

The meeting was co-chaired by Anita Mäkinen (Finland), Jóhann Sigurjónsson (Iceland), and Gabriel Swiney (USA). Representatives from all Arctic States attended the meeting. Three Permanent Participant organizations (Aleut International Association, Inuit Circumpolar Council, and Saami Council) and three Arctic Council Working Groups (CAFF, EPPR, and PAME) were present. Accredited observers attending the meeting included one state (Republic of Korea) and four organizations (CCU, IASC, OSPAR, and WWF).

In their introductory remarks, the Co-chairs proposed an ambitious roadmap for the next year and a half, including three face-to-face meetings (September 2017, February 2018, September 2018) and extensive intersessional work. Delegations agreed that intersessional work was crucial, but also agreed on considering adding an extra meeting if the need should arise.

Discussion on Functions of a Potential Subsidiary Body

To stimulate the discussion on functions of a potential subsidiary body the Co-chairs had prepared a list of some possible functions. It was further suggested and agreed that the needs would be evaluated against the full marine stewardship cycle, i.e. from planning of scientific research and increasing knowledge, to formulating policy and informing decision-making, and then to assessment of implementation. Subsequently, one would identify in which of those areas there is a need to enhance AC functions and structures, then to decide which of these are already addressed through existing bodies, and which could be better addressed in a new subsidiary body. Based on these two points of departure, delegates identified some possible functions for the potential new subsidiary body: coordination of marine work across AC groups, follow-up on the implementation of recommendations,

overarching strategic planning, and communicating with the international community about the work of the AC.

Discussion on Structure of a Potential Subsidiary Body

The structure of a potential new subsidiary body was discussed during the meeting, although many delegations agreed that it was difficult to decide on form before finalizing function. Nevertheless, it was unanimously agreed taking also into account discussions and decision during the TFAMC Phase I that a potential body should not work outside the existing scope and mandate of the AC. The potential new subsidiary body would also most likely be created by Ministers through a Declaration, or some other non-binding arrangement, so that its mandate can change over time, and grow to take on more tasks if needed and so decided. It was agreed that the body would follow the standard AC rules of procedure, including with regards to decision-making and participation. It was decided that delegations would be responsible for choosing who would represent them at this body, and participation might change from meeting to meeting based on the topics on the agenda. With respect to Working Group participation, some participants expressed the opinion that their participation should be limited to the level of Chairs or Vice-Chairs. Further, the Task Force discussed secretariat support for the potential new subsidiary body, but the decision was deferred until the form and function are clearer and until additional information on current secretariat structures within the AC and financial implications thereof have been reviewed by the group.

Complementary Enhancements to Existing AC Mechanisms

The Task Force also began discussing complementary enhancements to existing AC mechanisms, but found that it was premature and agreed to first seek input from WGs on how they envision that their own functioning and cooperation on marine issues could be enhanced. The Co-chairs will provide some questions for the WGs, which will be attached to the next non-paper.

Next Steps

Based on the deliberations of the meeting in Helsinki, the Co-chairs will draft a new non-paper, which will be sent out in draft form to the delegations and the Chairs of the WGs by the end of October. The delegations will then have 6 weeks to provide their feedback, with the final deadline for comments set to roughly mid-December 2017. The Co-chairs will integrate all comments and produce a new draft, which will be distributed 30 days prior to the next TFAMC meeting, which will most likely take place in the beginning of February back to back with the PAME meeting.

As TFAMC agreed that it was important to involve WGs, the Co-chairs decided to attend some of the upcoming WG meetings in order to gather information from the WGs and to inform them on the work of the Task Force.