

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**:¹

- 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).

¹ 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 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:

Nordic Council of Ministers

Date of submission:

June 2020

Observer's website, if appropriate:

www.norden.org and www.nordregio.org

Information for appropriate contact person

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Organization or department:

Office of the Secretary General, Int. Cooperation

Job Title:

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Ved Stranden 18, 1061 Copenhagen K
Denmark

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.

Since the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) launched its Arctic Cooperation program in 1996 the NCM has been committed to promoting and supporting cooperation on Arctic issues, both within the Nordic Countries as well on the international level.

The Arctic constitutes a large part of the territory and geography of the Nordic Countries; home to its Indigenous people communities and makes a large contribution to the economy of the Nordic Countries. Since the NCM launched its Arctic Cooperation Program and joined the Arctic Council as an observer at the ministerial meeting in Barrow, Alaska in 2000, the Arctic has developed and changed dramatically, not least as the effects of global greenhouse gas emissions take its toll on the fragile environment and ecosystem in the Arctic. The NCM would therefore like to highlight the following contributions to the work of the Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies and provide an update to the NCM's 2016 observer review and the 2018 observer report focusing on the contributions in 2019, 2020 and plans for 2021.

The Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Cooperation Program is an important instrument for the NCM and its members to demonstrate the importance of the region and its development for the Nordic countries. The program is primarily an instrument for project support that achieves its goals through supporting projects that are found to be relevant and important for enhancing knowledge about the Arctic and benefit the Indigenous and local populations in the region.

As reported and outlined in the December 2018 observer report covering years 2017 and 2018 the Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Cooperation program supported eight projects in these two years led by the Arctic Council Working Groups with the total amount to these projects 1.61-million DKK.

The breakdown of the above-mentioned projects and numbers can be found in the 2018 observer report. As a part of the period 2019 -2021 the NCM would like to highlight the following contributions to the work of the Arctic Council, its working groups and subsidiary bodies (amounts in thousands of DKK in parenthesis):

2019 - PAME – Arctic Shipping Status Report (200), Marine Litter Phase II (250), Arctic Marine Tourism (150), CAFF – follow up on the state of the Arctic marine diversity report (270), SDWG – Gender in the Arctic III (400), Arctic Pedagogy in Teacher Education (400). Total of 1.6 MDKK or around 215 TEUR.

In addition, several projects and funds were granted to among others, Saami Council and the Association of Reindeer Husbandry as a part of the focus on Indigenous communities within the NCM Arctic Cooperation program. A total of 22 Arctic projects were supported by the Arctic Cooperation program open application round in 2019 for a total amount of close to one million EUR.

In addition to the open application funding outlined above the NCM Arctic Cooperation program has funded directly through the so-called political priorities budget. Arctic Council projects that have received grants from this funding mechanism include: Resilience and management of Arctic Wetlands (CAFF), Blue bio economy in the Arctic (SDWG) as well as projects that raise awareness on ocean plastics and marine pollution, climate change information as well as supporting World Meteorological Organization 2020 conferences in Rovaniemi in May 2019 connected to the Arctic Council ministerial that marked the end of Finland's chairmanship in the Council.

In 2020 the NCM Arctic program continued to support the three abovementioned PAME projects for a total amount of 600 TDKK as well as supporting Arctic Shipping Best Practices Forum (200) organized by PAME, SDWG received continued support for the Gender in the Arctic III project (400) and CAFF received funds for project related to Arctic biodiversity data visualization (400). This amounts to a total of around 1.6 MDKK, a similar amount to the one in 2019 for around a total of 215 TEUR.

Like in 2019 number of projects lead by and/or with participation of Indigenous communities and organizations are supported. A total of 20 projects received funds from the Arctic Cooperation Programs open application process.

In relation to political priorities only half of the total funds for political priorities has been allocated in 2020 at the time of this report. That allocation included support to the SDWG project on Gender Equality. The remaining funds will be granted in the second half of 2020. It is also worth mentioning that in 2020 the NCM commissioned a report on Reducing risks and enhancing environmental security in Arctic Waters.

The NCM Arctic Cooperation Program is first and foremost a funding mechanism aimed to contribute financing for projects and programs related to the Arctic. As with all NCM programs the criteria are that at least three Nordic Countries are involved to make sure that the projects and programs that receive funding are truly Nordic in nature and can in that way encourage and promote cross national Nordic cooperation.

The current program for the 2018-2021 is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDG's. This allows the four categories of the program: Planet, Peoples, Prosperity and Partnerships to connect to the relevant SDG's. The aim and the goals are in that way closely connected to the Arctic Councils main principles outlined in the Arctic Council Ottawa Declaration on sustainable development and environmental protection.

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.

2021 – Outlook and plans for the Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Cooperation Program

Looking towards next year, the NCM Arctic Cooperation Programs budget for 2021 is expected to be approximately around the same amount as in previous three years, with total budget around 9.5 MDKK with close to 7 MDKK allocated to the open application process. The NCM budget is always subject to approval at the annual fall session of the Nordic Council.

In 2021 the NCM will develop and adopt a new Arctic Cooperation Program for the years running 2022- 2025 as a part of the international cooperation of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Given the importance of the Arctic region for the Nordic Countries and their ongoing collective commitment to fostering, promoting and developing knowledge about the region, the expectation is that the next program will include around the same elements and budget size as in previous periods. The focus will continue to be on sustainable development, environmental protection and mitigating the effects of climate change as well as the important elements of focusing on the social and economic conditions of Indigenous peoples and local populations in the Arctic

Decisions to fund projects from the 2021 open application process will be made in March/April 2021 timeframe, deadline for applications is normally in late January. Funds available from the political priorities budget are allocated twice a year, in the spring and in the fall. It is the responsibility of the Nordic countries to develop and propose projects that can be funded from the political priorities budget. This is done in consultations between the countries and the NCM Secretariat twice a year through the NCM Expert Committee on Arctic affairs staffed with representatives from the countries.

In August 2019 the Prime Ministers of the Nordic Countries adopted a new vision for the Nordic Council of Ministers with focus on a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region. The NCM will prioritize policies in these three areas and has developed plans and projects to implement them in the coming years in the policies of the NCM and its Nordic institutions.

It is therefore expected that a similar amount from the NCM Arctic Cooperation Program in 2021 will be allocated to Arctic Council Working Group projects in 2020 along the same lines that has been the case in recent years and previous program periods. All the applications are subject to evaluation by Nordregio, the Nordic Institute of Regional Development in Stockholm.

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 Arctic and Nordic Cooperation – importance of regional and international cooperation

The Nordic Council of Ministers is committed to supporting greater international cooperation in the Arctic region. For over 20 years the NCM has contributed to enhancing knowledge and facilitate cooperation in the area and in that way helped build up the collective understanding about the Arctic, a region that was for a long time isolated and inaccessible. This accumulated knowledge is the result of a collective effort from our scientific community in close collaboration and cooperation with the people, both Indigenous and local communities, in the region.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has for a long time focused on the cross cutting strategies and mainstreaming the topics of sustainability, equality and children and young people into its projects. Special effort has been made to incorporate these elements into the NCM programs and plans with the aim to mainstream them in the NCM projects and policies.

Although the Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Program is an independent program the NCM recognizes the importance of international cooperation and collaboration. Indeed, this was one of the major reason behind establishing the Arctic program in late 1990's and subsequent application of observer status in the Arctic Council in 2000. These principles still hold true today and in the years to come.

All the Nordic Countries have individually laid out their Arctic Policies and in all of them emphasize the importance of international collaboration and cooperation. The NCM Arctic Cooperation Program is aligned with these priorities. Although the lead institutions in projects supported by the NCM program need to be from one of the Nordic Countries the program is open for third county participation, including from other Arctic Council Countries.

It is important for the Nordic Council of Ministers to continue to support not only projects of the Arctic Council Working Groups but as well being able to follow discussions on the political level and follow the Arctic Council policies on important themes such as environmental protection, sustainability and climate change within the Arctic Council. It is also worth mentioning that NCM has supported many projects and initiatives in cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council and the University of the Arctic.

The NCM is an international organization that work across many sectors. Within the structures of the NCM ministerial councils there is an important link to the sectors of environment, climate, sustainability, social and health issues, economy, food production and culture just to name a few. These sectors also contribute to the NCM Arctic cooperation since the program can draw on the expertise and work of these sectors.

The NCM would like to use the opportunity to thank the Arctic Council; the nations and the Secretariat in Tromsø for the cooperation and collaboration. The Arctic Council observer status gives the NCM opportunity to follow closely the policies and projects in the Arctic Council as well as for the Arctic Council to see how the NCM Arctic Cooperation contributes to increasing and enhancing knowledge about the region.