

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

A QUICK GUIDE

3RD EDITION
2021/2022



ARCTIC COUNCIL

This document exists in two versions, print and digital.

ISBN 978-82-93600-79-4 (print)

ISBN 978-82-93600-80-0 (digital, PDF)

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Suggested citation:

Arctic Council Secretariat, 2021. The Arctic Council: A Quick Guide, 3rd edition. 36pp.

Author: Arctic Council Secretariat

Published by: Arctic Council Secretariat

This document is available as a PDF from the Arctic Council's open access repository:

oaarchive.arctic-council.org

Cover photo: iStock / DmitryND

Facing photo: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland / Kaisa Sirén

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

A QUICK GUIDE



THIS IS THE ARCTIC COUNCIL.

The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous Peoples and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.





WHO TAKES PART?

THE ARCTIC STATES

The founding document of the Arctic Council, the Ottawa Declaration, lists the following countries as Members of the Council:

- Canada
- the Kingdom of Denmark, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands
- Finland
- Iceland
- Norway
- the Russian Federation
- Sweden
- the United States

The eight States have territories within the Arctic and thus carry the role of stewards of the region. Their national jurisdictions and international law govern the lands surrounding the Arctic Ocean and its waters. The Northern regions of the Arctic States are home to more than four million people, whose health and well-being is on the top of the Arctic Council's agenda.

arctic-council.org/states

THE PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS

The category of Permanent Participants is a unique feature of the Arctic Council. Six organizations representing Arctic Indigenous Peoples have status as Permanent Participants. This category was created to provide a means for active participation of the Arctic Indigenous Peoples within the Council.

The Permanent Participants have full consultation rights in connection with the Council's negotiations and decisions, and make valuable contributions to its activities in all areas. Their participation in the Council's projects and initiatives is facilitated by the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat.

arcticpeoples.org

arctic-council.org/pps





Aleut International
Association



Arctic Athabaskan
Council



Gwich'in Council
International



Inuit Circumpolar
Council



Russian Association of
Indigenous Peoples of
the North



Saami Council



Indigenous Knowledge
Roundtable at the 10th
Ministerial Meeting
of the Arctic Council
in Fairbanks, Alaska,
2017.

ARCTIC COUNCIL SECRETARIAT /
LINNEA NORDSTRÖM

WORKING GROUPS AND EXPERT GROUPS

The Council's activities are primarily conducted in six Working Groups and one standalone Expert Group that cover a broad field of subjects, from climate change to emergency response, from mental health to sustainable development.



ARCTIC CONTAMINANTS
ACTION PROGRAM

acap.arctic-council.org

ACAP works to prevent and reduce pollution and environmental risks in the Arctic. ACAP carries out demonstration projects to raise awareness and show possibilities to cut pollution in the Arctic and clean up. The Working Group encourages nations to strengthen policies and take actions to reduce pollutants and mitigate associated environmental, human health and socio-economic risks.



ARCTIC MONITORING AND
ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

amap.no

AMAP's mission is to monitor and assess pollution and climate change issues in the Arctic. AMAP produces independent, science-based and peer-reviewed assessments of the status of pollution and climate change in the Arctic in order to provide the basis for sound policy- and decision-making – for the benefit of ecosystems and human health in the Arctic.

The Working Groups and Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane provide a broad and scientifically-sound knowledge-base upon which informed decisions can be taken. They also develop best practices and recommendations for safe and sustainable operations in the Arctic.



CONSERVATION OF ARCTIC
FLORA AND FAUNA

caff.is

CAFF's mandate is to address the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, and to communicate its findings to the governments and residents of the Arctic, helping to promote practices which ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources. It provides a mechanism to develop common responses on issues of importance for the Arctic ecosystem such as development and economic pressures, conservation opportunities and political commitments.



EMERGENCY PREVENTION,
PREPAREDNESS AND
RESPONSE

eppr.org

EPPR is mandated to contribute to the prevention, preparedness and response to environmental and other emergencies, accidents and search and rescue. While not an operational response organization, EPPR conducts projects to address gaps, prepare strategies, share information, collect data, and collaborate with relevant partners on capabilities and research needs that exist in the Arctic.



PROTECTION OF THE ARCTIC
MARINE ENVIRONMENT



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
WORKING GROUP

pame.is

PAME is the focal point of the Arctic Council's activities related to the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment. PAME addresses marine policy measures in response to environmental change from both land and sea-based activities. It develops and coordinates strategic plans, programs, assessments and guidelines, complementing existing legal arrangements aimed at protection of the Arctic marine environment.

sdwg.org

SDWG focuses on the human dimensions of the Arctic. It works to protect and enhance the environment, economy, social conditions and health of Indigenous communities and Arctic inhabitants. The guiding tenet of SDWG's work is to pursue initiatives that provide practical knowledge and contribute to building the capacity of Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities to respond to the challenges and benefits from the opportunities in the Arctic region.

EGBCM

BLACK CARBON AND METHANE
EXPERT GROUP

arctic-council.org/egbcm

Prompted by the climate impacts of black carbon and methane emissions in the Arctic, the Ministers of the Arctic Council adopted *Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions: An Arctic Council Framework for Action* in April 2015. To help implement the commitments outlined in this document, the Framework established an Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane. The Expert Group was tasked with developing a biennial *Summary of Progress and Recommendations* based on the national reports and other relevant information.

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Non-Arctic States

13

Intergovernmental and
Interparliamentary
Organizations

12

Non-Governmental
Organizations

OBSERVERS

Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to non-Arctic states, along with inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work. Arctic Council Observers primarily contribute through their engagement at the level of Working Groups.

arctic-council.org/observers

Observers at the SDWG meeting in
Chena, Alaska, United States, 2015.

KSENIIA IARTCEVA / ARCTIC COUNCIL
SECRETARIAT



WHAT DOES THE ARCTIC COUNCIL DO?

The Council's "Strategic Plan 2021-2030" guides its work towards the Arctic as a "region of peace, stability and constructive cooperation, that is a vibrant, prosperous, sustainable and secure home for all its inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples, and where their rights and wellbeing are respected."

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Decisions of the Arctic Council are taken by consensus among the eight Arctic Council States, with full consultation and involvement of the Permanent Participants. The Council's assessments, recommendations and strategies are the outcome of the efforts undertaken by the Working Groups and serve as a basis for informed decision-making.

The standing Arctic Council Secretariat formally became operational in 2013 in Tromsø, Norway. It was established to provide administrative capacity, institutional memory, enhanced communication and outreach and general support to the activities of the Arctic Council.

The Chairmanship of the Arctic Council rotates every two years among the Arctic States.

2023-2025
NORWAY

2021-2023
RUSSIAN
FEDERATION

2019-2021
ICELAND

2017-2019
FINLAND

2015-2017
UNITED STATES

2013-2015
CANADA

2011-2013
SWEDEN

2009-2011
KINGDOM OF
DENMARK

HOW IS IT ORGANIZED?

The Chair of the Arctic Council is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State holding the Chairmanship. At the end of a Chairmanship, minister-level representatives of the Arctic States meet to review the Council's work and grant a mandate for the incoming Chairmanship. The Council's daily operations are managed by Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) appointed by the Arctic States, under the guidance of the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials. SAOs and Permanent Participants meet at least twice a year. Subsidiary bodies such as Working Groups, the Expert Group and Task Forces hold additional meetings.

WHAT ARE SOME OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

The Arctic Council regularly produces comprehensive, cutting-edge environmental, ecological and social assessments through its Working Groups. The Council has also provided a forum for the negotiation of three important legally binding agreements among the eight Arctic States:

- *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic*
(Nuuk 2011)
- *Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic*
(Kiruna 2013)
- *Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation*
(Fairbanks 2017)

arctic-council.org/cooperation

Occasionally, Task Forces are appointed at a Ministerial meetings to work on specific issues for a limited amount of time, remaining active until they have produced the desired results.

WHAT DOESN'T IT DO?

The Arctic Council is a forum; it has no programming budget. All projects or initiatives are sponsored by one or more Arctic States. Some projects also receive support from other entities. The Arctic Council does not and cannot implement or enforce its guidelines or recommendations. That responsibility belongs to individual Arctic States or international bodies.

The Arctic Council's mandate, as articulated in the Ottawa Declaration, explicitly excludes military security.



Signing of the
Agreement on Enhancing
International Arctic
Scientific Cooperation.
Pictured, Gudlaugur Thór
Thórdarson, Minister for
Foreign Affairs of Iceland.

ARCTIC COUNCIL SECRETARIAT /
LINNEA NORDSTRÖM

ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES IN THE ARCTIC



FOSTERING HUMAN WELL-BEING

The Arctic is home to almost four million people today – Indigenous Peoples, more recent arrivals, hunters and herders living on the land and city dwellers. Roughly 10 percent of the inhabitants are Indigenous and many of their peoples are distinct to the Arctic. They continue their traditional activities in the context of an ever-changing world. Yet, as the Arctic environment changes, so do livelihoods, cultures, traditions, languages and identities of Indigenous Peoples and other communities.

Changes in the Arctic affect inhabitants in various ways. Arctic communities are already facing challenges that result from the impacts of climate change, demonstrating the need for action to strengthen resilience and facilitate adaptation. At the same time, the Arctic offers potential for sustainable economic development that both brings benefits to local communities and offers ground for innovation transcending the region.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

To cater for the differing needs of Arctic inhabitants, the human dimension of the Arctic Council's work covers a wide array of areas:

- improving mental and physical health and well-being
- sustainable development
- local engagement
- education
- youth involvement
- gender equality



Find out more about the efforts the Arctic Council undertakes to foster health and well-being of people across the Arctic – browse projects, discover stories, read interviews and get the latest news.

arctic-council.org/people



Discover how the Arctic Council contributes to a better understanding of Arctic change and what efforts are undertaken to tackle the effects – get to know projects, read stories and get the latest news:

arctic-council.org/climate

THE ARCTIC IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

The temperatures in the Arctic continue to rise at three times the global annual average, driving many of the changes underway in the Arctic. Most prominently, snow and ice are melting at an increasing rate. This impacts both local ecosystems and the global climate system. It contributes to rising sea levels, and is likely to provoke extreme temperature events beyond the Arctic. The effects of a shifting Arctic climate are felt across the high latitudes and beyond – with global environmental, economic, and social implications.

While the effects of climate change are pronounced in the Arctic, their causes are often linked to activities taking place outside the region. This underlines the importance to raise awareness of Arctic change on a global level, and to integrate Arctic issues in global frameworks and conventions.

The Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies are therefore collaborating closely with the Council's Observer states and organizations and other stakeholders on addressing the implications of a changing climate in the high North.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

Acknowledging the scope of the changes taking place and their possible effects on livelihoods, societies, the environment and economy, the Council's Working Groups commit to working closely together. Through their ever-growing body of reports and assessments, the Arctic Council serves as knowledge broker and global advocate for Arctic topics. Their efforts include initiatives on:

- climate change and adaptation actions
- green energy solutions
- resilience



Find out more about the work of the Arctic Council related to biodiversity – browse projects, read stories, and get the latest:

arctic-council.org/biodiversity

SAFEGUARDING ARCTIC BIODIVERSITY

The Arctic is often perceived as a harsh environment. But difficult living conditions have given rise to unique ecosystems in the far North. Some of the most iconic species in the world are endemic to the Arctic, such as the polar bear, walrus, narwhal, snowy owl and Arctic fox. But the Arctic also contains thousands of lesser-known species, often remarkably adapted to survive in extreme cold and highly variable climatic conditions.

In all, the Arctic is home to more than 21,000 known species of highly cold-adapted mammals, birds, fish, invertebrates, plants and fungi and microbe species. This extensive biodiversity provides essential services and values to people. They provide not only food, but the everyday context and basis for social identity, cultural survival and spiritual life.

Extremes of cold and seasonality and limited accessibility have kept human influence low, allowing ecological processes to function largely undisturbed. But climate change and an increasing demand for Arctic resources are driving a new era of human activity with subsequent consequences for Arctic biodiversity.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

Ever since its establishment, environmental protection has been at the core of the work of the Arctic Council. In the Council's founding document, the Ottawa Declaration, the eight Arctic States affirmed their commitment to protect the Arctic environment and healthy ecosystems, to maintain Arctic biodiversity, to conserve and enable sustainable use of natural resources. It does so through defined actions based on scientific recommendations in areas related to:

- life on land, in the sea and in the air
- managing Arctic marine ecosystems
- mainstreaming biodiversity



Explore how the Arctic Council addresses marine issues – browse projects, dive into stories and interviews and get the latest news:



arctic-council.org/ocean

COOPERATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE ARCTIC OCEAN

With sea ice cover shrinking, the Arctic Ocean has taken centerstage in global discussions related to climate change and economic opportunities. While open waters may bring new opportunities to the region, increasing accessibility to the High North also presents risks for Arctic inhabitants and ecosystems, including through oil spills and shipping accidents.

The Arctic States hold a responsibility to safeguard the future development of the region and to develop models for stewardship of the marine environment. This requires both a better understanding of the drivers and effects altering the Arctic marine environment and enhanced cooperation amongst the Arctic States, local inhabitants, external actors and international legal frameworks.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

To protect the Arctic marine environment and counteract possible detrimental effects of climate change and pollution, the Arctic States have recognized the need to work together closely – and they do so on a wide range of marine issues. These include issues related to:

- marine pollution
- sustainable shipping practices
- search and rescue operations
- marine cooperation



Learn more about how the Arctic Council works on preventing emergencies and prepares to respond to them — discover projects, stories and the latest news:

arctic-council.org/emergency

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

The Arctic is an environmentally sensitive area with an extreme climate characterized by low temperatures, winter-time darkness, snow, ice and permafrost. Harsh conditions and the sparse and limited amount of infrastructure in much of the Arctic increase risks and impacts and hinder response activities.

Actions for prevention, preparedness and response must be carefully pre-planned and adapted to the conditions and remoteness of the Arctic to maximize the use of available resources. Accordingly, international cooperation in this area is of vital importance.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

Increased shipping, exploration activities, intensifying wildfire seasons – these are some of the threats to the Arctic environment, people and animals that the Working Groups of the Arctic Council address. Their work contributes to international agreements, sets guidelines and frameworks, creates best practices, and fosters collaboration across borders and international organizations. Their efforts focus on:

- oil spills
- search and rescue
- wildfires
- risk assessments



Learn more about how the Arctic Council addresses pollution like soot, pesticides and marine litter – view projects, read stories and get the latest news:

arctic-council.org/pollution

ADDRESSING POLLUTION

While most regions of the Arctic are far removed from large industrialized areas, the environment in the high North carries the traces of human-induced pollution – from soot to plastics, from methane to pesticides.

To an extent, pollutants originate in the Arctic for example through wood combustion or oil and gas flaring. Yet, many contaminants are transported over long distances, traveling to the high latitudes via rivers, oceans, and the air – where they can have far reaching negative impacts on the environment and human health.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

Several of the Arctic Council's Working Groups are closely monitoring and addressing the impacts of pollutants and contaminants on the Arctic ecosystems. In addition, the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane analyzes and assesses progress towards the reduction of black carbon and methane emissions across the Arctic and beyond. Arctic Council work has raised awareness on the serious implications of pollution in the Arctic and contributed to both national actions and international conventions. Key topics include:

- mercury
- persistent organic pollutants
- short-lived climate forcers, such as black carbon and methane
- marine litter
- waste management

CULTIVATING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



The establishment of the Arctic Council was considered an important milestone enhancing cooperation in the circumpolar North.

In the Ottawa Declaration, the eight Arctic States established the Council as a high-level forum to provide means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States – including the full consultation and full involvement of Arctic Indigenous Peoples and other Arctic inhabitants.

The Arctic – An area of unique international cooperation

Since its establishment in 1996, the Arctic Council has provided a platform and mechanism to address common concerns across Arctic States – with a special emphasis on the protection of the Arctic environment and sustainable development. Over the years, the Council has emerged as the pre-eminent high-level forum of the Arctic region to discuss these issues and has turned the region into an area of unique international cooperation.

This cooperation spans across the eight Arctic States, six Indigenous Peoples' organizations with Permanent Participant status in the Council, six Working Groups, and close to 40 non-Arctic States and international organizations holding Observer status in the Council.

Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide signing the Rovaniemi Joint Ministerial Statement at the 11th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi, 2017.


JOUNI PORSANGER / MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



Interested in the statements and declarations issued by the Arctic States that reaffirm their commitment to maintain peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic and emphasizing their role in providing leadership in addressing new opportunities and challenges in the Arctic? Browse the Council's Open Access Archive:



arctic-council.org/oar



There is no problem that
we cannot solve together
through our cooperative
relationships on the basis
of existing international
law and good will.

VISION FOR THE ARCTIC, 2013

ENGAGE WITH THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

ARCTIC COUNCIL

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CHAIRMANSHIP

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES'

SECRETARIAT

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ACAP

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vimeo.com/acaparctic

AMAP

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CAFF

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EPPR

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PAME

fb.com/pame.secretariat

twitter.com/pamesecretariat

SDWG

fb.com/sdwgsecretariat

twitter.com/sdwg_chair

AIA

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twitter.com/aleut_aia

AAC

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ICC

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GCI

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twitter.com/gwichincouncil

RAIPON

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arctic-council.org/newsletter



ISTOCK / STOCK_COLORS

COMMON ARCTIC COUNCIL ACRONYMS

AAC	Arctic Athabaskan Council
AACA	Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic (AMAP project)
ABA	Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (CAFF, 2013)
ACAP	Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group
ACGF	Arctic Coast Guard Forum
ACIA	Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (AMAP, 2005)
ACS	Arctic Council Secretariat
AEC	Arctic Economic Council
AIA	Aleut International Association
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program Working Group
AMBI	Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (CAFF)
AMSA	Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (PAME, 2009)
AORF	Arctic Offshore Regulators' Forum
ARR	Arctic Resilience Report / Arctic Resilience Assessment
ASDS	Arctic Shipping Data Service (PAME)
ASTD	Arctic Ship Traffic Data (PAME)
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group
CBMP	Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CAFF)
CLEO	Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer Network (ACAP)
EA	Ecosystem Approach (to management)
EG	Expert Group
EGBCM	Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane
EPPR	Emergency Prevention Preparedness and Response Working Group
ERMA	The Environmental Response Management Application (EPPR)
GCI	Gwich'in Council International
HFO	Heavy Fuel Oil (PAME)

ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
IPCAP	Indigenous Peoples Contaminant Action Program Expert Group (ACAP)
IPS	Indigenous Peoples Secretariat
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOSPA	Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013)
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group
POP	Persistent Organic Pollutant
PP	Permanent Participant
PSI	Project Support Instrument
RAIPON	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
RRFP	Regional Reception Facilities Plan (PAME)
SAMBR	State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (CAFF)
SAO	Senior Arctic Official
SAOC	SAO Chair (Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials)
SAON	Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks
SAR	Search and rescue
SCTF	Task Force on Enhancing Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group
SLCF	Short-lived climate forcers
SWIPA	Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (AMAP assessment)
TF	Task Force
TKLK	Traditional knowledge and Local Knowledge
WG	Working Group (of the Arctic Council)



ARCTIC COUNCIL

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