**Report from SDWG General Meeting in Gällivare 14-15, February 2012**

Participants included almost all of the State and Permanent Participants[[1]](#footnote-1), Observers2 together with representatives from the PAME and AMAP Working Groups.

**Projects for SAO Approval**

Two projects were endorsed by the SDWG for approval by the SAO’s in March:

* *Circumpolar-Wide Inuit Response to the AMSA (ICC) (Canada)*
* *Arctic Maritime and Aviation Transportation Infrastructure Initiative* *(AMATII) (USA, Iceland)*

A third project proposal, *Development of National and International Financial Mechanisms Supporting Sustainable Development in Arctic Regions (Russian Federation),* was identified as having a bearing on the Arctic Council as a whole and not limited to the SDWG. It was decided that the Russian Federation would seek guidance from the SAO’s for further handling of this proposal. A fourth project proposal, *National Arctic Atlas (Russian Federation)* was considered. Members noted that the scope was mainly national with no other State sponsoring the project. Therefore it was concluded that the project could only be approved by SDWG as a “*Designated Project*”, which means it will continue to be developed on a national basis and reported to SDWG. A Designated Project is not subject for SAO approval. If another State would sponsor the project in the future the status can be reconsidered.

**News and future deliverables**Three projects were presented as “work in progress”, where a decision could be foreseen in the near future, as soon as all the formal criteria are met:

* *Arctic Economic, Social and Cultural Expert Group (Canada).*  A recommendation from the SDWG strategic plan was to appoint an expert group to handle the many requests on economic, social and cultural issues in the Arctic. All the delegations welcomed the idea and the principle of a separate expert group, as an important resource for the SDWG. Further work on the Terms of Reference will now be conducted before being tabled for a formal decision.
* *Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Business in the Arctic (Sweden)*Sweden reported on the workshop held in Stockholm 26-27 January. Delegations welcomed the work in progress. The next step for Sweden is to seek support and present a revised project proposal.
* *Food and Water Security (Sweden)* Professor Evengård (Chair of AHHEG) reported on the experts meeting held in Stockholm 26-27 January. Next step is to revise the project proposal and seek support from members to make it a joint SDWG and AMAP project.

**On-going Projects**The Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG) provided an update of three projects which are progressing smoothly and on target: a) The International Circumpolar Surveillance (USA/Canada), b) Arctic Human Health Initiative (USA) and c) Comparative Review of Circumpolar Health Systems (Canada/Denmark/Greenland).

Three newly approved projects, the *Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR- II)* (Iceland, Canada, Denmark / Greenland), the *Reindeer Herding and Youth (Russian Federation)* and the *Assessing, Monitoring & Promoting Arctic Indigenous Languages (Canada)* reported on their initial organizational meetings.

The *Assessment of Cultural Heritage Monuments and Sites in the Arctic (Norway)* has progressed slowly in 2011, due to the planned absence of the Project Leader. Efforts will be made to identify who will maintain the database and how the selection criteria are monitored to ensure consistency. The *Arctic Social Indicators Phase II (Iceland, Canada, Denmark / Greenland)* isready for publication.

**Arctic Council Cross-Cutting Activities**SDWG will continue its efforts to establish clear operational channels with other working groups through the sharing of information and work of their expert groups.

*Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA) (IIc)* may not be completed within its identified timeline. Areas of heightened *ecological* significance seem to be well covered, but there are uncertainties in regards to the coverage of areas of heightened *cultural* significance. There will be a renewed effort with the Project Team to identify its capacity to complete the work and the required timeline.

*Arctic Resilience Report (ARR)* has asked the SDWG to nominate an expert, but for the moment the SDWG is experiencing an institutional deficit responding to requests for participation on Projects and other Working Groups. The Chair and Executive Secretary will fulfil this role.

*Arctic Ocean Review Phase II (AOR)* this PAME project is proceeding according to plan and will be circulated for input as per the project’s timeline. SDWG will provide input to the report as a whole and specifically on the “Human Dimension” chapter.

*Arctic Change Assessment (ACA)* AMAP has asked SDWG for a demonstration of support. Since the project plan is still being restructured and that the SDWG delegates have been working closely with their national delegations it was concluded that this was not an appropriate action.

In addition to collaborating in the AC Communication Strategy, SDWG will be working to identify its own communication strategy with a similar approach and priorities.

The next meeting of the SDWG is being planned for mid-September 2012 in Iceland. SDWG will be communicating with other Working Groups to discuss the possibility of holding back-to-back meetings.

The SDWG held an *Open Discussion Session* prior to the formal meeting. The objective was to offer an opportunity for the local community to express concerns and to dialogue on issues that were currently not on the formal agenda. The session was well received with expressed wishes to have similar events in the future.

1. With the exception of the Arctic Athabaskan Council and the Aleut International Association

 2 Observers included Japan, the European Union, the Netherlands, Association of World Reindeer Herders, University of the Arctic, and European Environmental Agency [↑](#footnote-ref-1)