



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Arctic Council

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Environmental Cooperation

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Voluntary International Instrument

FORM:

Cooperative Forum

STATUS:

- Established by the Ottawa Declaration, signed by Arctic States September 19, 1996

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Lead: *Global Affairs Canada*

Partners: *Environment and Climate Change; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada; Fisheries, Oceans and Canadian Coast Guard; Transport Canada; Arctic States and Northern Indigenous organizations.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**Web Links:**

- <http://arctic-council.org>
- [Ottawa Declaration](#)
- [Global Affairs website on Arctic Council](#)

Contacts:

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

October 2018

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

The Arctic Council is the principal intergovernmental forum that works to promote the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development in the Arctic region. The Council has successfully developed a common agenda among Arctic states and Indigenous Permanent Participants. Decisions are taken based on the consensus of members. The Council serves as a foundation for strong, responsible and cooperative governance of the region.

Non-Arctic states, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations can obtain observer status in the Arctic Council and contribute to the engagement of the Council at the level of the working groups.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this intergovernmental forum is to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.

KEY ELEMENTS

The Arctic Council requires the representation and participation of all eight Arctic States and the six Northern Indigenous organizations with Permanent Participant status in the Council, and is a consensus-based forum. The Chairmanship of the Arctic Council rotates every two years among the Arctic States and the work of the Council is primarily carried out in six Working Groups where the role of the chair also rotates among the Arctic states. The Arctic Council is not a treaty based organization and does not have legal personality.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The Arctic Council is expected to achieve improved social, economic and environmental conditions in the Arctic, and increase awareness and interest in Arctic-related issues.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

The Arctic Council is the leading multilateral forum through which Canada advances its Arctic foreign policy and promotes Canadian Arctic interests internationally.

Canada played a leadership role in the establishment of the Arctic Council. Since the Arctic Council's inception, Canada has chaired the Arctic Council twice (1996-1998 and 2013-2015).

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

Canada actively participates in the work of the Arctic Council. This work is carried out in six working groups:

- **Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group (ACAP):** provides information on remedial and preventive actions relating to contaminants;
- **Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme Working Group (AMAP):** focuses on monitoring, assessing and preventing pollution in the Arctic;
- **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF):** focuses on biodiversity conservation and sustainability;
- **Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Working Group (EPPR):** focuses on prevention, preparedness and response to environmental emergencies;
- **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME):** focuses on policy and pollution prevention and control measures related to the protection of the Arctic marine environment.
- **Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG):** focuses on the living conditions of Arctic residents.

Canada also participates in Task Forces that are appointed at Ministerial meetings to work on specific issues for a limited amount of time. There are currently two active Task Forces in the Arctic Council: Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation and the Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic. In 2013-15, Canada co-chaired the Task Force on Black Carbon and Methane which led to the development of a *Framework for Enhanced Action to Reduce Black Carbon and Methane Emissions* and is now a member of the Expert Group that was established to support implementation of the framework.

The Council's work has led to three legally-binding agreements: Agreement on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response which was signed by Arctic state Ministers in May 2013, Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, which was signed by Arctic state Ministers in May 2011, and an Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation, which was signed by Arctic state Ministers in May 2017 and came into force in May 2018. In May 2017, Arctic Ministers also adopted a collective aspirational goal of reducing black carbon emissions by 25 to 30 percent below 2013 levels by 2025.

Results

A few examples of results achieved by the Arctic Council are:

The Arctic Council has completed a number of key scientific assessments which have contributed to the understanding, addressing and facilitating of cooperative responses to key socio-economic and environmental challenges. This work has made an important contribution to the conclusion of the International Maritime Organization's "Polar Code", the "Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants," the "Minamata Convention on Mercury" and others.

The Arctic Council has also facilitated the creation of additional structures for regional cooperation and interaction such as the University of the Arctic, the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks forum, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, the Arctic Economic Council, and the Arctic Offshore Regulators Forum.

Reports

Key reports:

Snow, Water, Ice, and Permafrost in the Arctic, SWIPA, AMAP, 2017
Chemicals of Emerging Arctic Concerns, AMAP, 2017
Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic Reports, AMAP, 2017
Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane, Summary of Progress and Recommendations, 2017
Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2025, PAME, 2015
Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, CAFF, 2013