

FACT SHEET



CURRENT KNOWLEDGE  
ON THE THEME:

# Arctic Council

## What is the Arctic Council?

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 with the signing of the Ottawa Declaration. Its members are the Arctic States: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America. The Arctic Council is the leading cross-national forum for the Arctic and promotes cooperation between Arctic States, indigenous peoples and other Arctic residents, particularly with regard to sustainable development and environmental protection in the region. Six organisations representing the indigenous peoples of the Arctic are actively involved and consulted as Permanent Participants. A permanent secretariat based in Tromsø (Norway) supports the Arctic Council.

## Who leads the Arctic Council?

The chairmanship of the Arctic Council changes every two years within the Member States. The handover takes place at ministerial meetings. In May 2019, the Presidency was handed over from Finland to Iceland. In the period between the ministerial meetings, which take place every two years, the work of the Council is coordinated by special Arctic representatives of the Member States, the so-called „Senior Arctic Officials“.

The decisions of the Arctic Council require the approval of all members and are taken in consultation with the Permanent Participants. However, the guidelines and

recommendations of the Arctic Council are not legally binding; their implementation is the responsibility of the member states. At the same time, the Arctic Council also serves as a forum for the Arctic States to negotiate legally binding agreements.

### Legally binding agreements initiated by the Arctic Council

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

The activities of the Arctic Council are carried out mainly by its six Working Groups. These groups regularly produce comprehensive and groundbreaking status reports on various aspects of the Arctic environment and society, which serve as recommendations for action by the Council member states. As the Arctic Council has no programme budget, the activities are financed by the member states.

In addition to the long-term Working Groups, the Arctic Council can establish temporary, thematic and problem-oriented Task Forces or Expert Groups.

## Who's on the Arctic Council?

The meetings of the Arctic Council are attended by representatives of the Member States, the Permanent Participants and the six Working Groups. Representatives of 13 non-ruling States, 14 intergovernmental organisations and 12 international non-governmental organisations are also admitted as observers.



## Working Groups

Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP): supports national measures to reduce emissions and other pollutants.

Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP): coordinates environmental monitoring and provides scientific advice on environmental issues.

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF): focuses on the conservation of Arctic biodiversity with regard to the sustainability of living resources.

Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR): develops measures to protect the Arctic from environmental accidents.

Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME): deals with aspects of marine environmental protection and the sustainable use of marine habitats.

Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG): promotes the sustainable development of Arctic regions to improve the living conditions of the Arctic population.

### Member States

 Canada	 Norway
 Denmark	 Russia
 Finland	 Sweden
 Iceland	 USA

### Observer States

 China	 Italy	 Republic of Korea
 France	 Japan	 Singapore
 Germany	 The Netherlands	 Spain
 India	 Poland	 Switzerland
		 United Kingdom

### Permanent Participants

- > Aleut International Association (AIA)
- > Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- > Gwich'in Council International (GCI)
- > Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)
- > Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- > Saami Council (SC)

## What is the role of Germany?

The active participation of observers in the Arctic Council's activities at the level of the Working Groups is explicitly welcomed. Germany, represented by the Federal Foreign Office, has had observer status since the founding of the Arctic Council. Today, Germany is represented by experts from science and environmental policy in all Council working groups and actively contributes to a number of activities.

The Arctic Office assists the Federal Foreign Office in the selection of these scientific experts and ensures that re-

ports from meetings and recommendations for action are made available.

## Contact the AWI experts



Dr Volker Rachold  
Tel: 0331 288-2212  
E-Mail: volker.rachold@arctic-office.de

### Imprint:

German Arctic Office at the Alfred Wegener Institute  
Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research,  
Telegrafenberg A45,  
14473 Potsdam

Editors: Volker Rachold, Lisa Grosfeld  
Potos: AWI Arctic Office / Volker Rachold (cover photo), AWI (expert photo), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland / Jouni Porsanger (photo Arctic Council)