



Arctic Council  
Observer Manual  
For Subsidiary Bodies



## **1. Background**

At its Seventh Ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, the Arctic Council decided that it would publish an observer manual to guide the Council's subsidiary bodies in relation to meeting logistics and the role played by observers<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Introduction**

The work of the Arctic Council is to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous peoples and communities of the Arctic region, on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection. This work is carried out by the Council's subsidiary bodies under the guidance and direction of Senior Arctic Officials.

Since the establishment of the Arctic Council, participation by observers has been a valuable feature through their provision of scientific and other expertise, information and financial resources. The involvement of observers should enhance and complement the work conducted in the Arctic Council, including the unique and critical role of Permanent Participants. In addition, observers are encouraged to support the work of the Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council.

## **3. Purpose and scope**

This manual reflects the provisions on observers in the Arctic Council's founding documents, including notably the Ottawa Declaration. It complements the Rules of Procedure and guides the participation of observers at meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Arctic Council.

The purpose of the manual is to strengthen the work carried out by the subsidiary bodies. In particular, this manual will help to guide chairs of subsidiary bodies to run meetings effectively and efficiently to ensure the exchange of information on items under discussion.

The manual is applicable to all meetings of subsidiary bodies where observers are invited. Observers are encouraged to participate with their expertise, competence and resources primarily in working group meetings and projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant background documents for this manual are the Ottawa Declaration, Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, Senior Arctic Officials Report to Ministers, Nuuk, Greenland 12 May 2011, page 50-51.

In addition, this manual provides guidance for observers' working relations with the Arctic Council Secretariat. For information purposes a copy of the Rules of Procedure is appended as Appendix 1 to this manual.

## **4. Definitions**

### **4.1 Membership**

Membership in the Arctic Council is limited exclusively to the Arctic States: Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America (the Arctic States).

### **4.2 Permanent Participants**

The Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Saami Council are Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council.

The category of Permanent Participants has been created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Arctic Council. This principle applies to all meetings and activities of the Arctic Council.

### **4.3 Observers**

Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to:

- (a) non-Arctic States;
- (b) inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, global and regional;
- (c) non-governmental organizations

that the Council determines can contribute to its work.

The observers are accredited to the Arctic Council proper. Subsidiary bodies are not authorized to accredit observers.

Observer status continues for such time as consensus exists among Ministers. Any observer that engages in activities which are at odds with the Ottawa Declaration or with the Rules of Procedure will have its status as an observer suspended.

An updated list of observers is available on the Arctic Council website.

#### **4.4 Subsidiary bodies**

The subsidiary bodies of the Arctic Council are:

- 1) working groups;
- 2) task forces;
- 3) expert groups; and
- 4) such other subsidiary bodies the Arctic Council may create.

#### **4.5. Invited guests and other experts**

Where the Arctic States participating in a subsidiary body agree, the chair of the body may invite any person or organization that can contribute expertise and is able to contribute to the work of that body to participate in specific meetings. These persons or organizations do not have observer status, and subsidiary bodies should thus decide on the necessity of a given expert on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

#### **5. Decision-making in the Arctic Council**

Decisions at all levels in the Arctic Council are the exclusive right and responsibility of the eight Arctic States with the involvement of the Permanent Participants. All decisions are taken by consensus of the Arctic States.



#### **6. The role of observers**

The primary role of observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Furthermore, observers are encouraged to continue to make relevant contributions through their engagement primarily at the level of working groups.

#### **7. Guidelines for subsidiary body meetings**

The different roles of Arctic States, Permanent Participants and observers in the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies should be reflected in the practical arrangements at all meetings.

The Chair is responsible for explaining the rules of order at meetings of a subsidiary body. A copy of this manual should be made available to all delegations.

Subsidiary bodies may establish operating guidelines consistent with the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, this manual, and other relevant Council procedures.

### **7.1 Invitation and registration**

Observers may attend meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council, unless Senior Arctic Officials have decided otherwise. The Heads of Delegation of the Arctic States may also at any time meet privately at their discretion.

The Chair of the subsidiary body in question should invite observers to the meeting no later than 30 days in advance. The Chair may determine the maximum number of observers in respective delegations.

Registration to attend meetings should be done in accordance with the procedure outlined by the subsidiary body as appropriate. The Chair will keep records of participation and convey these to the Arctic Council Secretariat.

### **7.2 Documents**

The Chair should send a final agenda to observers no later than 30 days before the specific meeting.

Observers admitted to a meeting will have access to the documents available to Arctic States and Permanent Participant delegations, with the exception of documents designated as "restricted to Arctic States and Permanent Participants".

The official report provided by the Chair or the relevant Secretariat should be made available to observers after the meeting.

### **7.3 Seating arrangements**

At meetings of subsidiary bodies Arctic States and Permanent Participant delegations, as a rule, are seated at the main table. The Chair should ensure that there is adequate seating for observers adjacent to the main table.

Participants from sub-units of the same observer delegation should sit together as one delegation and will be recognised as such.

Observers may not assign or designate another entity or organization to represent them at a meeting.

#### **7.4 Discussion, statements and speaking order**

The chair should make every effort to ensure that discussions on agenda items proceed in a methodical and regular manner that encourages the exchange of information.

Observers may, at the discretion of the Chair, make statements, present written statements, submit relevant documents and provide views on the issues under discussion.

On any agenda item under discussion, the Chair should ensure that speakers from Arctic State and Permanent Participant delegations have first had an opportunity to intervene and discuss the agenda item, before considering opening the discussion to further interventions from all delegations to the meeting, including speakers from observer delegations.

During the discussion of any matter, a representative of an Arctic State or Permanent Participant may rise to a point of order and the point of order shall be decided immediately by the Chair.

#### **7.5 Projects**

Observers may propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant but the total financial contributions from all observers to any given project may not exceed the financing from Arctic States, unless otherwise decided by the Senior Arctic Officials.

#### **7.6 Costs**

Observers are responsible for all costs associated with their attendance at a meeting of a subsidiary body.

#### **7.7 Communications**

While Arctic Council bodies are in session participants may not comment publicly on agenda items under discussion.

#### **7.8 Other**

If an observer delegation does not respect the guidelines outlined in this manual, the Chair, after consulting with the Heads of Delegations for the Arctic States and Permanent Participants, may ask the delegation to leave the meeting. The Chair will inform the Chair of Senior Arctic Officials accordingly.

## **8. Arctic Council Secretariat**

The priority of the Arctic Council Secretariat is to provide services to Arctic States and Permanent Participants. It may also assist observers in their participation by communicating information about meetings and other activities, distributing documents, as appropriate, and other assistance the Director decides to provide, in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

## **9. Amendment of this manual**

This manual may be amended by a decision of Senior Arctic Officials.

