

A Short Comment on Finland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2017–2019

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Finland has the presidency of the Arctic Council in 2017–2019, and meteorological collaboration is one of the four priorities during the chairmanship. Finnish Meteorological Institute has prepared an Action Plan (<https://tinyurl.com/ybazba6p>) how, in practice, we can achieve concrete development during the next two years.

Climate change is clearly taking place faster in the Arctic region than anywhere else. With climate change, tourism, shipping and the utilisation of natural resources will increase in the Arctic region, which in turn asks for both observational data on the Arctic environment and services.

Finland is one of the world's most northern societies with permanent settlements, so challenging natural conditions are familiar to Finns. However, and like in all Arctic Council activities collaboration is the key to any development in arctic meteorology. Therefore FMI has challenged the entire meteorological community to join its capacities and ambition. Only through fruitful co-operation and clear goal setting can we ensure the safe and sustainable Arctic.

Overall, the Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting co-operation, 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. The following countries are Members of the Arctic Council: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States. In addition, six organizations representing Arctic indigenous peoples have status as Permanent Participants, which provide active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous peoples within the Council.

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 in the Council at the level of Working Groups. World Meteorological Organization became an Observer in May 2017.

The standing Arctic Council Secretariat is placed 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 work of the Council is primarily carried out in six Working Groups:

- The Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP) acts as a strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants.
- The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) monitors the Arctic environment, ecosystems and human populations, and provides scientific advice to support governments as they tackle pollution and adverse effects of climate change.
- The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF) addresses the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, working to ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources.
- The Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR) works to protect the Arctic environment from the threat or impact of an accidental release of pollutants or radionuclides.
- The Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group is the focal point of the Arctic Council's activities related to the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment.
- The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) works to advance sustainable development in the Arctic and to improve the conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

The Council may also establish Task Forces or Expert Groups to carry out specific work. Current Task Forces are Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC) and Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic (TFICA). During the 2017–2019 Finnish Chairmanship there is also one operating Expert Group (Expert Group in support of implementation of the Framework for Action on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM)).

Arctic meteorology is in the interest of the Arctic Council, and in particular AMAP, EPPR and PAME. During its presidency in the AC, Finland has now challenged the entire arctic meteorological community to work together for a robust observation network, improved modeling of weather, ocean and climate change, and tailored services for the Arctic.