A photograph of an Arctic landscape. In the foreground, a rocky shore is covered in thick, white ice and long icicles hanging down. The water is dark and calm, reflecting the sky. In the background, there are snow-covered mountains under a blue sky with some clouds.

Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS): Process and organization, 1991-97

An assessment

Håken R. Nilson



Norwegian Polar Institute

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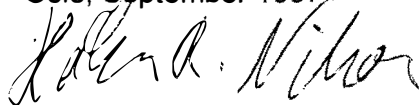
Preface

AEPS has developed “all by itself”, gradually growing more complex. It can be seen both as a process and as an organization, unfolding itself along a continuum from input of scientific data, to political action for the environment as the maximum output. In this perspective, awareness raising about the Arctic environment is to be regarded as the major feature of the process. An organization tailored to a thrust on expert work will then be a suitable instrument. As the process is moving closer towards political action and entanglement with an increasing number of other issue areas, a shift to more political steering of the activities would be expected, thus changing the mode of operating the organization. The mandate for the current evaluation report (quoted in the Introduction) should be understood against this background.

The current report was requested by the Ministers of Environment of the eight Arctic countries in 1996. The Norwegian Polar Institute was by the Norwegian Chairmanship of AEPS assigned the task of carrying out an independent assessment. Then working at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, I was engaged as evaluator.

I would like to thank those who kindly offered their time to contribute with information and viewpoints, thus making this report possible. I will also thank Dr. David Scrivener at Keele University, UK and Dr. Robert Huebert at the University of Manitoba, Canada, for their indeed helpful assistance in a critical phase. Also, Prof. Oran R. Young at Dartmouth College, USA, deserves an acknowledgement for fruitful commenting. Thanks also to all others who facilitated sessions for review and discussion of the report.

Oslo, September 1997



Håken R. Nilson

Executive summary

In the Inuvik Declaration, the Ministers of Environment of the eight Arctic states instructed the Senior Arctic Affairs Officials (the SAAOs) to provide for an assessment of the present organizational structure of the AEPS: *“For SAAOs, the priorities are directing the AEPS process and [to] provide integration, policy and management direction to the AEPS Programmes and the AEPS Secretariat, as well as conducting an assessment of the present organizational structure of the AEPS with a view to ensuring cost-effective and well coordinated programmes, developing a framework and estimate of common cost-sharing...”*

Working under this mandate, the author of this report has focused on the organizational structure of the AEPS. The essential part of the information that underpins the current investigation, comes from interviews with a broad range of AEPS actors. The opinions put forward in this report are reflecting commonly held views among those actors.

Main findings and assessments

The main *success* of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy is threefold. Based on scientific cooperation and environmental management, it has provided a mechanism for the Arctic states to initiate and maintain a constructive dialog, and for a significant increase in the knowledge about the Arctic environment. In addition, cooperation on concrete environmental issues has been strengthened.

Concerning the practical operation of the process, however, a certain gap between the work process under the AEPS programs, and political guidance from above, has been observed. This situation forms the point of departure for the present analysis. It is the connection between the two process levels that emerges as the main concern when the effectiveness of the organization is considered. In the following, the main issues that has been deduced from this observation will be briefly reviewed.

1. Characteristics of AEPS process and organization

The initial focus for the AEPS was to set its programs in motion. This entailed concentrating upon developing arrangements to enable the expert work to produce results of some substance. It was only at a later stage that the political steering level of the organization began to take its present shape. That led to the development of a process driven from below by environmental experts. Gradually, efforts to steer that process from above, has intensified. As a large array of substantial data now actually has been produced, politicians are facing the question of what kind of action to take. This puts the cooperation under intensified politicization - the stakes become higher, the moment the step is taken “from data to action”. However, that step has yet to be taken. Instead, the stage seems to have been reached when the search for opportunities to activize the AEPS arrangement for policy action is entering the agenda.

2. Policy guidance and management

Initially, it was not clear whether the SAAOs were to undertake policy guidance of the work process, in addition to functioning as a “diplomatic filtering” of the process.

Environmental experts say that during the early years, they thus tended to regard the SAAOs more as “outsiders”. Gradually, however, the policy-guiding role has become clarified, thus representing a transfer of the thrust of policy-making that has led the process from the environmental experts and over to the SAAOs.

The SAAOs have demonstrated their gradual move into leadership through the way they have practiced their role. As yet, from the interviews, the impression has become quite clear that their current mode of leadership remains somewhat less determined. Much of the agenda setting is still left to the environmental experts, since the SAAOs do not seem to have made a clear choice of where to place their focus. Occasional attempts at more detailed steering have apparently been perceived as untimely interference in the activities of the Working Groups (WGs), and attempts at overall setting of priorities seem to occur on an equally random basis. The present report presents an assessment of the effect of a deliberate choice as to which manner to steer, with the support of clearer procedural rules.

3. AEPS program activities

A frequently expressed opinion is that Working Groups have occasionally got “too far in front” of what the states have been willing to support. Whereas this might have constituted an obstacle to effective organization, it should, however, not be understated that this seems to account heavily for the creativeness and vitality of the organization.

Lack of oversight over AEPS program activities has been reported as a steering problem, as well as a source of unclear communication between the Working Groups. It is widely felt that there is much unsurveyed overlap of activities, in the form of duplication of work, and thereby a low degree of cost-effectiveness in the operation of AEPS programs. This situation may be attributed to the structure of WG mandates, to an unclear work-focus, and to diverging management rules for the Working Groups. This report assesses the effects of overlapping activities, by contrasting the efficiency loss caused by duplication of work with the gains relating to mutual fertilization of work areas.

4. Secretariat functions

Concern for continuity, communication, logistics and information seems to speak for a more centralized and – possibly – permanent secretariat arrangement. Concern for inclusiveness and flexibility could, on the other hand, speak for less centralized and perhaps rotating arrangements. The present report reviews various solutions that may underpin either choice. These contrasting concerns are indicative of the dilemma between the wish for smooth operation from above, and for a creative work process from below. A proper balancing of the two should be reflected in the shaping of the future secretariat arrangement.

5. Interface between scientific input and political process

Scientific information is not always delivered to the SAAOs in an easily grasped form, thus making the policy formulation process unnecessarily hard to manage. Moreover, capacity to handle all the information made available through the AEPS program work seems to have reached its maximum limit. Scientific information that is processed from the WGs on to the SAAOs seems to be piling up within the system. All of it does not become fully exploited, and no unit or person seems to have the total overview.

6. Contributions by others than the eight Arctic states

The present situation regarding the participation of Permanent Participants, Observer Countries, and NGOs, is reviewed in this report. Special attention has been paid to the Observer Countries. These states participate from a marginal position, and it would seem that the potential for making use of their capacities is far from fully exploited. The Observer Countries are strong on polar research; moreover, as countries sustaining large industries, they already impact on the Arctic environment to a considerable degree. On the part of the Observer Countries themselves, stronger efforts towards development of joint strategies could help in increasing their influence upon the AEPS.

In the AEPS, Arctic Indigenous Peoples take part alongside the states through their representatives as Permanent Participants. They act in their own capacity instead of as members of national delegations. That is a historic achievement. Also, at the expert level, their influence seems to be gaining momentum.

7. Adaptation to the upcoming Sustainable Development Agenda

The Rovaniemi Process is about to take a further step towards more overarching political cooperation, with sustainable development as the guiding concept for future Arctic cooperation. However, if economic development is included in the Arctic Council agenda, this will mean a risk of internal conflicts between the environmental and development components of circumpolar cooperation. One solution could be to set a Sustainable Development agenda for the Arctic Council guided by the goals and principles of the AEPS.

Proposals for improvements

The analysis has revealed a large potential for fine-tuning the organization and its working mode. Also, the significance of maintaining a certain degree of flexibility has been recognized, in order to ensure the creativity that marked the cooperation in the AEPS period. With this in mind, the following proposals for improvements will be put forward:

Policy guidance and management

The SAAOs should consider how successful they have been in setting agendas and priorities, as well as in maintaining overview over the activities of the Working Groups. Thus, SAAOs will have to consider the role they play at SAAO meetings, concerning:

- how they relate to details as compared to overarching environment political questions; and
- whether they give clear policy messages which are subsequently followed up.

SAAOs should also be aware that even if the consensus principle and the limitations of intergovernmental cooperation require caution, a too-hesitant decision-making mode could endanger the motivation of players operating at the technical level. As a concrete step toward a more efficient decision-making process at SAAO meetings, the SAAOs should consider:

- clear procedural rules for the conduct of the SAAO meetings as well as for the formal process prior to the meetings.

Coordination of AEPS program activities

For the purpose of achieving more efficient steering, the following measures should be considered:

- Working Groups' mandates should be made more clear, and perhaps also written according to a common format
- Standardized reporting formats seem highly advisable, for steering purposes and also from the perspective of the Working Groups' need for more qualified guidance.

A quite extensive degree of freedom for the expert work should still be maintained. The pattern of work carried out in the Working Groups should be studied systematically, for the purpose of:

- better distinguishing between fruitful overlap of activities and unnecessary duplication of work.

Secretariats

A permanently located secretariat would be cost-effective with regard to ensuring continuity and proper coordination of work. A strengthening of the secretarial support for the Working Groups would improve coordination of WG activities, as well as the coordination of the political work of the SAAOs and the technical work carried out in the Working Groups. A more permanent location, in combination with rotation of Chairman and Lead Country responsibilities for activities, could provide a solution.

A future solution could build upon:

- a group structure with one or two permanent secretariats covering all working groups within the framework of a system with rotating Chair(s) and Lead Country responsibilities for program activities;
- adjustment of mandates/terms of reference for Working Groups to suit a common format and avoid unnecessary overlap of activities.

In the case that a group structure with one or two permanent secretariats is not found feasible, one should consider:

- a system of slow rotation of the secretarial functions, with the aid of supplementary arrangements as necessary.

Organization of the science-politics interface

This issue lies at the heart of the current problems of policy management. The implementation of a more stringent reporting system, possibly accompanied by the establishment of an advisory body, could prove useful. An advisory body at the level between the experts and the policy managers may better support the information process. Alternatively, a screening function could be established without further expansion of the number of AEPS bodies. The presentation of scientific information to the SAAOs could be handled by either:

- assigning it to a separate advisory body, and/or
- by means of tighter management rules and reporting systems.

Contribution to the process by others than the eight Arctic states

At the political level of participation, it could be useful to make some minor adjustments favorable to observer participation. For example,

- a statement in the rules of procedure to the effect that “...an Observer may speak on any issue if recognized by the Chair...” could perhaps encourage more Observer input.

The rules concerning Observers' rights and duties in the Working Groups should be clarified.

- Equal participation at this level could raise observers' motivation for AEPS work, all the time access to the political process is restricted.

Working Groups themselves could achieve a wider range of available data by

- inviting specialists from Observer Countries to become directly involved in WG program activities

Since the eight Arctic states have interests that diverge on important issues, it could be useful to

- fine-tune the access/participation filter and process

As to the Permanent Participants,

- some widening of their input base to the Working Groups would seem advisable. Their existing input tends to be mainly focused on delivering and processing 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge' (TEK).

Greater emphasis on developing expertise above and beyond TEK might serve to strengthen the IPOs' standing.

Organizational adjustments related to the upcoming Sustainable Development agenda

Environmental protection is necessarily an integral part of any strategy for sustainable development. In the context of the Arctic Council, sustainable development should be reflected by better integration of AEPS activities with other Arctic Council activities.

Integration should be based upon Sustainable Development as the core, or horizontal, concept. This concept will then underpin any activity, whether directly related to the environment, or undertaken within the realm of other sectors. The AEPS should be maintained as a strong component of the Arctic Council, working in coordination with other program bodies. For AEPS activities, three model options may be considered:

- an "Arctic Environmental Coordination Committee" (AECC), created through an amalgamation of all AEPS working groups, and served by a common secretariat;
- two separate working groups coordinating efforts in the sectors of pollution ("the brown environment") and conservation ("green environment") respectively, each served by its own secretariat;
- continuation of the present AEPS working group system, served by one secretariat.

There are strong indications that there is a willingness to carry out and expand current AEPS activities within the framework of the Arctic Council, and that future cooperation related to sustainable development should remain in compliance with the goals and principles of the AEPS. In that case, it will be necessary to ensure that development-related strategies and activities remain in compliance with strategies and action plans in the various fields of environmental protection. The AEPS and its Working Groups will then have to be provided with the necessary resources, formal status and hierarchical position. Ways of accomplishing this could include:

- adequate representation of AEPS working groups in all development-related working groups;
- a formalized role for the AEPS working groups in evaluating cooperative development activities in relation to goals and strategies in the various fields of environmental protection.

Introduction

In the Inuvik Declaration, the Ministers of Environment of the eight Arctic states instructed the SAAOs to provide for an assessment of the present organizational structure of the AEPS: *“For SAAOs, the priorities are directing the AEPS process and [to] provide integration, policy and management direction to the AEPS Programmes and the AEPS Secretariat, as well as conducting an assessment of the present organizational structure of the AEPS with a view to ensuring cost-effective and well coordinated programmes, developing a framework and estimate of common cost-sharing...”*. Working under this mandate, the author of this report has focused on the organizational structure of the AEPS.

The main **data basis** for the analysis is primary source data from interviews and AEPS documents. Secondary source data (books and articles) have been used to assist in the development of perspectives and research questions, and to provide a background for interpretation of data. The essential part of the information that underpins the current investigation, comes from interviews with a broad range of AEPS actors.

A more detailed interpretation of the mandate, as well as a full presentation of the methodology, is given in Annex 1.

The current study has sought to map the opinions of actors within the various components of the AEPS. The focus has been on those areas of AEPS cooperation and components of the organizations with whose functioning there is discomfort, as well as on where there seem to be potentials for improvements.

The report starts by providing a backdrop for further analysis, through a presentation of the AEPS cooperation in terms of a process and an organization (Chapter 1). On the basis of viewpoints collected in interviews with AEPS actors, the following issues for assessment were selected: policy guidance and management (Chapter 2), coordination of AEPS program activities (Chapter 3), the secretariat functions (Chapter 4), and the processing of the scientific information base as the foundation for policy formulation and decision-making (Chapter 5). Opportunities and constraints to the contributions made by others than the eight Arctic governments are assessed in Chapter 6. Finally, with a view to the new context of Arctic cooperation constituted by the Arctic Council (AC), a brief assessment is made of the relationship between the AEPS agenda and that of Sustainable Development, as well as the possible organizational implications.

1. AEPS: Process and organization

In this chapter, the AEPS will be discussed as a process as well as an organization. The various organizational problems that will be dealt with should be regarded as typical of the early stages of the development of any regime. Regimes take shape gradually, with their particular organizational and procedural solutions emerging as the demands for policy integration arise. The problems that the AEPS is facing today should not therefore be regarded as unique to this particular organization, but as typical of the current stage of development. For a chart and a comment to the formal organization, see Annex 4.

Organizational development: Bottom-up process in a top-down organization

AEPS has developed “all by itself”, gradually growing more complex. It can be seen both as a process and as an organization, unfolding itself along a continuum from input of scientific data, to political action for the environment as the maximum output. In this perspective, awareness raising about the Arctic environment is to be regarded as the major feature of the process (Fig. 1).

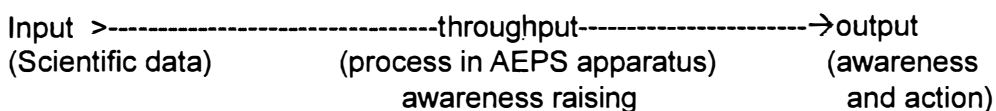


Figure 1: AEPS process (the Rovaniemi Process) on the continuum from data to action

This has been a typical “bottom-up” process, driven forward by the expert work in the AEPS Working Groups. Then, as the output increasingly began to affect governments, the political authorities decided to become more and more involved, seeking stronger top-down steering. At the Inuvik Ministerial in 1996, the steering bodies were given a clearer mandate to guide the expert work.

Gradually, AEPS gained an organizational structure in order to operate more efficiently. The organization has become structured hierarchically, with a concern for “top-down” steering. In other words, one has been seeking to operate a bottom-up process by means of a top-down organization. The AEPS today is thus characterized by tension between the expert-driven process from below, and political steering from the top (Fig. 2). When we turn to the more narrow question of making the organization more effective, it will be important to keep this background in mind.

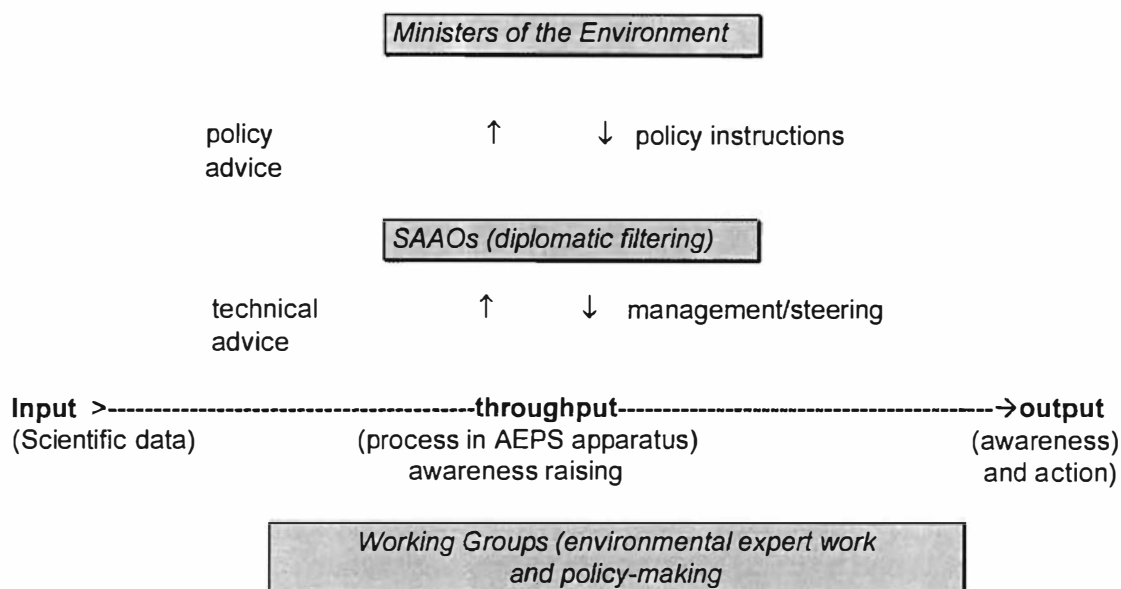


Figure 2: Bottom-up process and top-down organization

Scientific data are the main input to the cooperation in the AEPS, with data processed through the work of environmental experts and government agency environmental officials. Also involved in this work are a number of Arctic stakeholders, such as the Indigenous Peoples' organizations. The diplomats, the Senior Arctic Affairs Officials (SAAO), act as a diplomatic "filtering station", checking out the intergovernmental political implications of AEPS activities and environmental experts' proposals. They must try to balance concerns for the environment against diverse political concerns among the governments of the eight Arctic states.

Awareness and knowledge, as well as advice, concerning action to improve the state of the Arctic environment is the main output of the process. It is then up to the individual governments to carry out or support actions, within the framework of the intergovernmental cooperation.

The Ministers represent the environmental sector. Their role is to take a stand on proposals from diplomats, environmental experts, and policy-makers. Through the SAAOs, Ministers give feed-back to the process in the form of policy recommendations and instructions. Since it is the Ministers of Environment and their agencies that are responsible for policy-making, their collaboration is essential to the strength of the cooperation.

The SAAOs therefore act primarily as coordinators, and should strictly speaking not be seen as policy-makers. In practice, however, recommendations adopted at SAAO meetings are considered essential for the setting of policy priorities.

Figures 1 and 2 show that the political process and the work carried out in the AEPS organization are interlinked and inseparable. This can give rise to uncertainty about the relationship between policy guidance on the one hand, and expert work on the other. The resultant built-in tension and unclearness may be illustrated by two paradoxes concerning the management of the cooperation process:

- Foreign Ministry diplomats (the SAAOs) are mandated to guide the process upon instructions of other Ministers than their own, namely the Ministers of Environment.
- In the bottom-up process, it is the environmental experts and policy-makers who actually set the agenda. According to the hierarchic organization, however, it is the Ministers who bear that responsibility, whereas the SAAOs are to carry out their instructions.

The first paradox implies that environmental experts and policy-makers in the Working Groups may easily perceive SAAO policy guidance as untimely interference and that SAAOs devote themselves to diplomatic maneuvering instead of concern for the Arctic environment. The second may indicate an inconsistency in current management practices that seems to weaken overall steering of the process.

The picture that just has been drawn up may seem confusing. However, it should be borne in mind that such interplay between foreign policy management and sector political authority is in fact a quite normal way of structuring intergovernmental cooperation on sector issues. In most cases, the accompanying tension is something the actors are simply forced to live with. Inquiries into the effectiveness of the organizations involved will have to take this into consideration as a given framework. With that in mind, let us now turn to the way the AEPS organization has developed, what actors are involved, and the roles they play.

The system of Working Groups has expanded, both groups and sub-groups. The distribution of issues among the groups has also been carried out in the course of each group's development. This has resulted a great deal of overlapping work between the groups. The actors themselves do not seem to be fully aware of what overlaps and what does not; neither is there agreement as to whether such overlap is fruitful to the work process or not.

Environmental and diplomatic problem-solving

The experts and the officials may now seem to have ended up working within two rather separate "worlds": One "world" of environmental politics and interstate diplomacy, and another "world" of technical environmental problem-solving. At first glance, it may seem as if these two "worlds" – which actually represent two equally important elements of the AEPS organization – need to become better connected.

Here, however, it should be remembered that in organizations like the AEPS - working on the consensus principle and with comparatively peripheral, low-stake issues (e.g. national security or core economic issues would involve much higher stakes) - and when considering the current stage of its development, such gaps are not unusual. The AEPS has now reached the stage of awareness raising, but has not entered that of political action.

At the current crossroads, some sort of improved linkage between the two levels of action seems necessary to ensure greater efficiency. Some of the issues dealt with require more political work than others. For example, developing comprehensive arrangements like a circumpolar network of protected areas may have greater effect on many stakeholders than cooperation on more limited issues like – to take one example – the protection of single species of seabirds. Therefore, in the process of developing cooperative action, one will gradually infringe upon more and stronger

interests of different kinds. In such a setting, environmental problems can no longer be handled by mainly technical means on the basis of knowledge. The assistance of political and diplomatic approaches becomes equally important.

What might appear to be two separate agendas – one environmental and one diplomatic – are therefore not that separate after all, although the two are strongly interdependent. Indeed, the AEPS process may in its earlier stages actually have benefited from a separation of the two levels of action, as this provided time to develop the substantive environmental work. As the process continues to develop, however, some more tightly structured accommodation of diplomatic problem-solving and environmental problem-solving will be necessary.

SAAO and Working Group actor types, and roles they play

“Diplomatic SAAOs” and “Environmental SAAOs”

SAAOs come from a variety of backgrounds and from different political levels within each government. As a main rule, there are two types of SAAOs: the “Diplomatic SAAO” and the “Environmental SAAO”.

In most cases, each country’s SAAO represents that country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The MFA SAAO also heads the national delegation to the SAAO meetings. Other members of the SAAO delegation are often referred to as “SAAOs” as well, but the only “real” SAAOs are the Heads of the SAAO delegations. They are what will be termed the *“Diplomatic SAAOs”*.

As MFA representatives, not all SAAOs will always have a background in Arctic issues. In most cases, they will rather be true generalists, working with Arctic issues for a limited time, frequently in addition to other issue areas. In their dual role of coordinating domestic AEPS work and providing policy advice to AEPS on behalf of the Ministers of the Environment, lies the function of balancing environmental concerns against general foreign policy concerns of national interest.

The SAAO delegations are mainly staffed with Ministry of Environment (ME) senior officials. These, then, are the *“Environmental SAAOs”*. Their role is also twofold: To act as environment policy advisers to the SAAO, and as sector authority representatives. The former role also implies the important task of forwarding and explaining technical policy advice to the diplomatic SAAOs. The latter role involves ensuring that environmental concerns are given due consideration in the policy formulation process.

That SAAOs must serve as “go-betweens” between the Ministers of Environment and the environmental policy-makers and experts seems to be a troublesome role, but also an inescapable one. The environmental policy-makers appear quite frequently both as Environment Ministry policy-makers and Working Group experts. In the former capacity, they may appear both in the SAAO delegations and in the Working Groups.

There are some advantages connected to the current mix of backgrounds. For example, the fact that there are ambassadors, civil servants, and scientists among the SAAOs has provided a broad appreciation of the issues under consideration. On the other hand, the fact that some SAAOs have relatively junior standing at home has meant that they have had to go back to their government repeatedly for instructions or have even been overridden.

Working Group members: Experts and policy-makers.

There are two main types of actors in the Working Groups: Government agency experts, and Environment Ministry officials. The former act as expert advisers to the process. Only to a small degree are these experts supplemented by scientists. The latter may play a dual role: depending on their professional qualifications, they may both act in a policy-making capacity (for example, by saying yes or no to funding of AEPS activities), and serve as environmental experts as well (Figure 3).

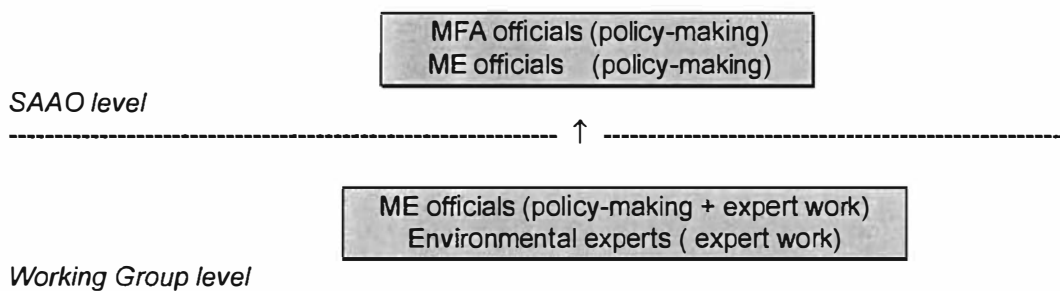


Figure 3: Policy formulation in the AEPS

At the political level, these role patterns are reflected in the influence relationship between the Environment Ministries and the Foreign Ministries: The former are in a better position to decide upon the *content* of the AEPS process, by means of deciding upon the funding of Working Group activities. The latter are in a position to *steer* the process according to overarching goals and in relation to overall foreign political relations between the Arctic states, by approving or vetoing the proposals of environmental experts and policy-makers.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide a backdrop for the subsequent analysis of how the various components of the AEPS function. The following features of the cooperation should be noted:

- Role-confusion tends to complicate the process of policy formulation, constituting a source of unclear expectations as well as tensions between experts and policy managers.
- At the current stage, the cooperation has succeeded in raising awareness of the Arctic environmental problems, on the basis of the data collected through the AEPS Programs. Specific aims for political action have not yet become formulated, but this should be the next step to be expected.
- The ongoing process of re-interpretation of roles expresses a search for new roles in a changing context. The final outcome of that process will become visible only after the question of where to go from the current achievements has been answered.

2. Policy guidance and management

In the preceding chapter, the observation was made that government officials working in the environment policy sector may play a dual role of policy-making and technical work. Environmental policy in the AEPS is thus being made at the level of expert work *and* at the level of policy guidance. It was argued that policy guidance of the AEPS process is a matter of taking environmental and diplomatic concerns together in steering the expert work. When this is to be carried out from above within an organization that mainly works from the bottom and up, getting the input through becomes a complicated process. This in turn brings into focus the relationship between the environmental work - technical and political - and the diplomatic process.

Against this background, current practices and roles played by the SAAOs will be examined in terms of:

- overall policy guidance
- guidance of AEPS programs
- current modes of decision-making.

Under each of these headings, the *main message* of each paragraph is written in italics. Subsequently, a brief underpinning of the “diagnosis” is given. Lastly, possible remedial action is indicated.

SAAO policy guidance - general comments

The SAAOs have frequently been criticized for weak policy guidance that has in practice allowed the Working Groups to proceed extensively on their own agendas.

When the AEPS started, the SAAOs had not been properly established as a body, so they initially were operating from a position of weakness. By contrast, the Working Groups had already been firmly established by the time the SAAOs entered into the process. At that early stage, Working Group experts tended to view the SAAOs as outsiders. However, due not least to their strengthened mandate in the Inuvik Declaration, the SAAOs seem to be catching up and moving more to the forefront of the process.

The formulation in the Inuvik Declaration indicates only a vague mandate about “directing the process”, without specifying how this is to be carried out. Until Inuvik, the Working Groups reported directly to the national governments. More recently, they have begun reporting to the SAAOs as such.

At present, the SAAOs are criticized for not to give consistent direction through overall policy formulation, and for not responding adequately to Working Group reporting. For example, the SAAOs tend to go more into details in questions that are difficult to assess critically because of their scientific nature, instead of paying more attention to the process in the WGs. To the extent that direction is carried out in this

way, it would not be surprising if the SAAOs fail to gain a more firm hold of the agenda-setting process.

If the SAAOs are to strengthen their guidance of the policy process, it would probably be wise to shift the focus away from detailed and random overview of single activities, and towards checking the work process as such in relation to overall priorities.

Guidance to the AEPS programs

Communication of policy priorities from the SAAOs to the Working Groups does not appear to proceed in a consistent manner. The Working Groups do not seem to receive clear advice about what kind of activities they should carry out.

The signals given to the Working Groups about policy priorities are essential for the planning of their work. Unless clear priorities are indicated, guidance to the expert work will be weak and confusing.

The AEPS has not managed to set up rules for such matters as the procedure for proposing agenda items. The process is therefore still flawed by repeated occurrence of ad hoc situations where proposals are raised directly at SAAO meetings without any prior formal process. In some cases, such incidents delay or prevent decisions that otherwise could have been possible, if the appropriate formal procedures had been in place.

Typical of consensus-driven processes and processes dealing with low-stake issues - both typical of the AEPS - are lengthy decision-making processes. The current practice at SAAO meetings is to treat non-consensus issues by letting them circulate around the table, without substantive discussion of whether to approve them or not. Abdication of decision-making in this manner seems to have become somewhat exaggerated at the SAAO meetings, having turned into a near-habitual way of dealing with issues. In such cases, only partial decisions become the maximum option. A good example is the managing of the core matter itself, the procedural rules. Procedural Guidelines have been repeatedly "non-adopted" at a number of SAAO meetings. The maximum decision reached has been to "use, but not adopt" the existing AEPS Procedural Guide Draft.

In a consensus-based cooperation, one will have to live with lengthy decision-making processes. However, in order to minimize inferior preparation work and poor communication, stricter procedural rules would seem desirable.. Many of the problems that the Chair now has to manage "on the spot" could be regulated in advance through formal procedures.

Straddling approaches to environmental cooperation

Communication between working group experts and SAAOs suffers from misinterpretations and confusing expectations about their roles.

There seem to be some "cultural" gaps that will have to be overcome in order to improve mutual understanding about roles and decision-making modes. What seems to create particular difficulty are the expectations among Working Group experts that

Foreign Ministry SAAOs should automatically be capable of understanding the scientific content of the experts' recommendations. The SAAOs, however, usually work as generalists. The experts, by contrast, are individuals with in-depth knowledge developed over years of involvement in specific fields – quite opposite to the generalist approach of the government official.

In the expert's value system, specialized issues will tend to rank high on the priority list, whereas for the generalist the main idea will be not to push forward a single issue at the expense of others. Instead, the generalist's skill will be connected to the ability to balance diverging issues against each other. With their specialized skills, experts will tend to expect those responsible for directing the process to have thorough knowledge themselves, and they may become frustrated if they feel that officials "don't know what they are talking about".

Clearly, then, it is vital to bear in mind that there are two quite different approaches to the task of protecting the environment through international cooperation: a political, intergovernmental approach; and a more technical approach.

In order to deal with them both, one will have to relate consciously to the inherent dilemma of maintaining emphasis on diplomatic relations and inter-state politics, while also allowing for sufficient extent of "expert rule". Over-emphasizing the former would be likely to increase already existing discomfort felt by many experts who consider that their efforts are not taken seriously enough. On the other hand, greater emphasis on the latter would reinforce experts' motivation and improve the environment political activity – however, at the risk of reducing the room for maneuvering in reaching inter-state political solutions.

Consequently, it would seem that both experts and SAAOs have a way to go towards improving their mutual understanding of each other's roles in the AEPS process.

Conclusion

Policy management appears to need strengthening and clarification. However, efforts in that direction may encounter some limitations as long as the overall ambitions and goals for the process still await final clarification. Some steps could obviously be taken. These include:

- The SAAOs should make a firm choice of policy focus: either wide or narrow, and not to attempt both, on random basis.
- Clear rules of procedure to be adopted for the policy process
- SAAOs and Working Group experts should work together to improve their mutual understanding of their respective approaches to dealing with international environmental protection.

3. Coordination of AEPS program activities

The AEPS Working Groups carry out the expert work under the AEPS programs. They have been structured according to their perceived needs, and they have developed their operating modes accordingly. The level of activity will vary, as will the number, size and scope of working items of the various groups, but there is steady overall growth. Of the Working Groups, only AMAP and CAFF have their own secretariats. The other WGs are managed entirely according to a lead country system. In order to assess how this situation has affected the coordination of the AEPS program activities, we will analyze the following topics in some detail:

- Working Group mandates
- focus and overlap of the expert work
- Working Group management rules.

A “diagnosis” of various aspects of policy management and coordination of AEPS program activities will be given in the following paragraphs. The *main message* of each paragraph is written in italics. After a brief underpinning of the “diagnosis”, possible remedial action will be indicated.

Working Groups’ mandates

Differently structured mandates may be a source of unclear instructions and unclear priorities, thus causing unintended overlap of Working Groups’ work areas and unsurveyed formation of subgroups.

The Working Groups’ mandates have been individually tailored for each group. Working Groups were initially allowed to take their mandate directly from the Ministers, without prior clarification by the SAAOs. In spite of the SAAOs’ strengthened mandate to guide the process, the WGs are still allowed to follow their own interpretation of ministerial “requests”.

In the case of the EPPR group, the mandate may be described as a mix of instructions to carry out certain tasks, and more generally formulated guidelines as to the types of activities that, upon the request of the Ministers, may be undertaken by the Group. In contrast, PAME is working on the basis of a small number of apparently well defined tasks – which, however, are not in every respect clearly distinguishable from those of EPPR. For example, when referring to “*the transportation of oil and gas in the Arctic*” the mandate of EPPR contains no obvious delimitation against PAME’s mandate to concern itself with shipping activities. Likewise, PAME’s mandate does not seem to prevent penetration into EPPR’s dealing with accidents. Neither of these two Working Groups seems to apply any clarifying interpretation – for example in the form of terms of reference – of their instructions in order to avoid territorial overlap.

The Working Groups are reported to establish their own agenda almost exclusively, to such a degree that each Group has taken on a life of its own. One WG expert describes the agenda-setting process as “*...a tendency for the individual Working Groups to create ‘shopping lists’ of what they want to do*”.

Formation of subgroups seems to be a continuous process that reflects an ongoing interpretation of the existing mandates. As new tasks are taken on, they subsequently need new, small specialized expert groups to may carry them out. As a consequence, each Working Group may expand its own work field across the boundaries of other Groups.

It may appear that, unless the mandates of the WGs become detailed in such way as to specify their respective types of activities, as well as the kind of work to be carried out, expansion may easily continue, and conflict over work areas intensify. In light of the difficulties connected to policy guidance concerning communication problems and vague management rules, clearer delimitation of Working Group mandates would most probably help in relieving some of the current management problems. On the other hand, one should not forget the potential for fruitful combinations of work areas across program boundaries.

Focus of Working Group activities

Unclear focus of the overlap in Working Groups' activities is reported to cause some frustration among experts as well as inadequate overview among policy managers. Duplication of work may mean poor exploitation of resources.

Duplication of work may appear to represent a loss in efficiency if resources could have been used instead to reinforce the output of each program. However, overlap can also lead to worthwhile mutual fertilization across Working Group boundaries: the sharing of work areas may contribute to filling gaps and improving connections between the AEPS programs. In such cases, a reinforced output would actually be the result.

Fruitful sharing of focus may indeed demand more in terms of coordination of activities. Various statements by AEPS players indicate that certain issues do overlap. Furthermore, it is said that overlapping activities among the Working Groups more tend to arise from the structure of the issue areas, instead of from deliberate expansion of each one's particular work agenda. For example, EPPR and PAME are both focused on issue of pollution. The only substantive difference is that one is dealing with response to emergency situations, while the other is concerned with reducing the amount of pollution being produced through international agreements. PAME has taken on an overview examination of agreements dealing with marine pollution. Since there are very few agreements that deal with emergency response, it would not be difficult for PAME to expand its study. There may also be some overlap with PAME with regard to risk assessment. As a consequence of such overlapping, there has been considerable discussion with regard to combining the two groups.

What then appears to be the basic challenge here is to organize the appropriate combinations of issues, groups, tasks, and projects. This would leave the Working Groups with responsibility for identifying border areas for beneficial cross-fertilization. For the SAAOs, the challenge will be to decide which activities to open or close, and to undertake the necessary organizational arrangements.

Working Group management rules

The Working Groups' management rules diverge, possibly causing obstacles to information between Working Groups as well as between Working Groups and the SAAOs. This weakens the attention paid by the SAAOs to the process at the expert level.

Management rules diverge (AMAP, CAFF and EPPR) or have not been made explicit (PAME). Among SAAOs and WG experts, especially in the larger groups, the current situation is perceived as an inconsistency that disturbs the operation of the process. Information about Working Groups' plans, activities and schedules is reported not to have been passed on properly. Furthermore, the benefits from the results and insights accumulated within the various programs may become unequally and randomly distributed among external research communities.

However, in the smaller Working Groups, the general opinion seems to be that precisely because of their limited size and focus, coordination does not represent a major problem. These groups seem to feel quite able to manage without a more rigid rule system.

The current arrangement may have given rise to obstacles in information and communication between the SAAOs and Working Groups, as well as among the Working Groups themselves. For example, there are no common rules about the structure of WG reports to the SAAOs. For the SAAOs, it creates considerable amounts of extra work to read through reports which vary greatly in size, structure of the content, and in emphasis of technical descriptions and policy recommendations. It becomes difficult to recognize which are the decision-making relevant parts of the reports as long as there is no uniform system of emphasizing these aspects.

In general, however, the commonly shared view in the "community" of AEPS experts seems to be that the Working Groups manage well themselves with their present solutions. On the other hand, there is also agreement that problems have arisen concerning information about what is happening in the other WGs.

Still, even though various statements indicate a certain call for a more transparent system, Working Group experts seem to be highly conscious about not to be interfered with by non-experts. It is frequently argued that common management rules will not pay attention to the individual character of the Working Groups. Streamlining the rules and practices could melt them into one mold, thus erasing their individual profile and their specific concern for the particular aspects of the environmental problems that they have been assigned to deal with. Maintaining diversity is important because it enriches the process by paying attention to the different aspects of the environmental questions, goes the argument.

There might still be a case for harmonizing the management rules for the Working Groups, for reasons of smooth operation of the process. However, consideration must be given to maintaining the "creative spirit" of the process. As today's system does appear a bit too loose, a fair amount of tightening up by means of clearer management rules could make good sense.

Conclusion

Lack of oversight over Working Group management and activities is hampering efficient steering of the cooperation. On the other hand, the freedom for the Working Groups to set their own agendas, to expand their activities, and to organize themselves as they feel appropriate, has provided fertile ground for creativeness in the work of WG experts. The current success of the AEPS seems to a large degree attributable to the considerable freedom enjoyed by its environmental experts to date. Under the upcoming broader agenda for Arctic cooperation, the balance between top-down steering and bottom-up work process will most probably change, as higher stakes enter into the cooperation. To achieve more efficient steering, the following measures should be considered:

- Working Groups' mandates should be made more clear, and perhaps also written according to a common format
- Standardized reporting formats seem highly advisable, for steering purposes and also from the perspective of the Working Groups' need for more qualified guidance.

A quite extensive degree of freedom for the expert work should still be maintained. The pattern of work carried out in the Working Groups should be studied systematically, for the purpose of:

- better distinguishing between fruitful overlap of activities and unnecessary duplication of work.

4. Secretarial support functions

The analysis in Chapters 2 and 3 has indicated that in order to achieve efficient coordination of the process, the following concerns should be borne in mind:

- effective policy guidance: Attention to the process in the Working Groups
- communication between the SAAOs and the Working Groups, as well as between and among Working Groups: logistics, information
- inclusiveness in the process
- simplicity and overview
- continuity of work, systems and staff
- flexibility and creativeness of arrangements and activities.

The secretarial services represent the main link for operation of the process at the practical level. This chapter will examine these services with regard to the above mentioned concerns for efficiency.

In the following, some experiences with the secretarial functions are reviewed, followed by a discussion of possible ways of organizing more rational secretarial support functions within the AEPS.

Experiences

The current arrangement for secretarial support provides the AEPS with a decentralized and flexible system in which the various parts of the organization are free to arrange their support functions as they wish. The system allows the Working Groups to follow their own ideas and plans, and to develop their specific identities. However, it also deprives the cooperation of a permanent center, something which, it is frequently claimed, negatively affects the smooth functioning of the process.

The present rotating AEPS Secretariat spends a large part its functioning period building up staff and knowledge, much of which becomes disrupted when it is transferred to another country. The AEPS Secretariat thus seems to be too fluctuating to function efficiently as a central body that can provide information to all parts of the organization.

Those Working Groups who operate without a secretariat may be especially vulnerable to lack of support from their respective Chair countries. These Groups are led by a chairperson employed by a government ministry or agency in the lead country. Since the responsible ministry or government agency also has to take care of its daily business in addition to providing secretariat services for the Working Group, they may be inclined to pay less attention to the needs of the WG Chair that they are hosting.

For such reasons as logistics, information flows, data management, focus on tasks, and cost efficiency, secretarial support could be made more concentrated – a “centralized” solution. On the other hand, the need for diversity and flexibility might speak for a continuation of the more “decentralized” solution, perhaps in combination with some more stabilizing arrangements.

In general, the operation of a number of secretariats is more costly than operating one secretariat. However, as noted in the Strategy for Financing of the AEPS, issued by the AEPS Secretariat, the investments have already been made by establishing the existing Program Secretariats. The administrative costs of operating all the existing AEPS secretariats should be compared to the total costs of establishing a common AEPS (or even Arctic Council) secretariat.

Secretarial support: Optional solutions

In the following, eight different optional solutions for organizing secretariat functions will be mentioned. The first four solutions refer to the possibility of a “centralized” solution as indicated above, while the latter four involve a “decentralized” solution.

(i) Possible types of centralized secretariat services:

One common secretariat for all Arctic Council activities and levels.

This solution represents the most extensive degree of centralization. The secretariat would serve the SAAOs, all AEPS Working Groups, and all other Arctic Council ad hoc working groups as well.

A common secretariat for all levels and activities would be a tidier, more transparent arrangement that could provide the organization with a central contact point that it currently lacks. A notable advantage, in terms of cost-effectiveness, would involve logistics, for example for the sake of ensuring better cross-fertilization of the Working Groups, and continuity of work. A secretariat of this kind would be a fixed unit that would hold the data, be the central unit for distribution of information about work and events, and provide a permanent central archive system. It would also enable a long term build-up of competence on how the system works.

AEPS actors often mention the idea of a rotating depository system for the storage and distribution of documents as the pivotal mechanism for effective management. However, some consideration should perhaps also be offered concerning the extent to which such a system would be vulnerable to, for instance, diverging national practices, and how to counter such potential problems.

A highly centralized secretariat solution would probably score low on simplicity: It could easily grow too big. Having a single, large secretariat could also prove difficult from the viewpoint of inclusiveness in the process. Its sheer size would favor a permanent location, which might well alienate the countries not chosen to host it.

One secretariat for AEPS Working Groups + one for Arctic Council SAOs.

The idea behind this solution is that of a continuation of AEPS activities, integrated with social and economic development issues. The various sector issues could be managed by ad hoc/time-limited working groups. The permanent element would be the AEPS component, currently constituted by the AEPS activities and groups (and possibly organized in the Arctic Council as the core environmental component in a “horizontal” structure – see Chapter 7), needing centralized secretariat services. A secretariat at the level of the SAOs would serve the coordination of the political process.

This arrangement could tidy up the communication lines between the SAOs and the technical experts, provided that functioning modes of coordination between the two

secretariats could be worked out. Since the Arctic Council will be a bigger organization than the AEPS, that could prove advantageous.

This model could, by its dual-body structure, also provide a way of circumventing the difficult issue of location: the SAO secretariat could rotate along with the chair country, thus ensuring the necessary legitimacy and inclusiveness at the political level, while the Working Group secretariat could be permanently located, thus ensuring the stability and long-term build-up of the necessary logistical systems.

One secretariat for the original AEPS Working Groups + one secretariat for the other Arctic Council ad hoc working groups.

This solution responds to the idea of a two-pillar structure for AC activities. With regard to the integration of environmental and development concerns under the Sustainable Development agenda, each secretariat would have to be made responsible for the appropriate integration between the environmental working groups and those for activities in other fields. A fuller discussion of this issue is undertaken in Chapter 7.

Merging AMAP, PAME and EPPR into one pollution group, and retaining CAFF as a separate biology group – each group served by its own secretariat.

Reducing the number of Working Groups would rationalize the secretariat functions, but it might be perceived as a threat to the groups with the lowest levels of institutionalization. In the case of merger, it would probably be felt even more important for each working group to have its own secretariat, to maintain necessary support for the experts between SAAO meetings. The rationalization of the AEPS group structure in this model could prove reasonable if there is a concern not to expand the number of bodies in the Arctic Council. The question remains, however, whether the pollution group would over-extend itself, trying to cover too many aspects of that particular issue.

(ii) Possible types of decentralized secretarial services:

Inherent in the question of a centralized solution is the risk of conflict over where it should be seated. The location question is a highly important and quite difficult one, which may produce an enervating deadlock. The issue is connected to two basic questions: That of who should pay, and that of the host country's influence over the work and agenda of the secretariat. How these questions are resolved will affect the legitimacy of the arrangement: for example, developing a "host country route" could make a shared commitment easier to preserve.

"Slow rotation" of AEPS/AC secretariat

Alternatively, the location question could be handled by means of a longer interval between the transfer to the next host country. That would provide for a system of "slow rotation", which might reconcile two counteracting concerns: stability of the work process on the one hand, and shared commitment by the states on the other. With hosting periods of four to six years, continuity in staff, knowledge, and administrative system could be better maintained. At the same time, there would be sufficient rotation to ensure that commitment to the arrangement will be shared by the states. This kind of arrangement could also promote a more even distribution of the relative influence of the individual states upon the process.

Permanently located secretariat with rotating Liaison Secretariat.

A different way of arranging a “slow rotation” system could be to combine a permanently located central secretariat with a separate Liaison Secretariat. The Liaison Secretariat would follow the state who chairs the Arctic Council (every two years). The Liaison Secretariat would work directly with the AC Chair, functioning as the main link between the AC Chair, the Working Groups, and the permanently located main Secretariat.

Under this arrangement, the question of whether or not each Working Group should be fitted with its own secretariat would become less salient. For the purpose of maintaining continuous contact with the AC Chairmanship, it would suffice for each WG to have a Secretary, if secretariats are not desired (cf. PAME and EPPR). The Secretary would then work through the Liaison and Permanent Secretariats. The advantage of this arrangement would be continuity in the central secretarial services, inclusiveness in the process, and distribution of influence. While the central secretariat would provide for stability, the Liaison Secretariat would operate the main link of the work process on a rotating basis.

Rotating secretariat, overlapping of personnel

This solution builds upon an arrangement where the central secretariat follows the AC Chairmanship. In order to mitigate the negative effects of the full personnel change that is undertaken every time the secretariat moves on to a new Chairmanship country, one or a few members of the former secretariat staff could be transferred to the new staff for a given period of time. That would facilitate the build-up of new staff, as well as improving the logistical infrastructure as to the build-up of new depository and information systems.

Keeping this functioning on a regular basis would probably be a challenging task, so it might be advisable to think of creating a rotating element of staff members. Such an element could be arranged by assigning to selected positions a work period extending into the next Chairmanship. This would provide a stimulus to the central secretariat to develop into a “community” of professional Arctic officials. Such an element could weaken the Secretariat’s possible vulnerability to being perceived by the other states and participants as basically promoting the Arctic policies of the current Chair country.

Voluntary secretariat system

Advocates of a least-centralized solution whereby secretariat services would be a volunteer system, envisage a solution along the lines of PAME and EPPR. The state that offers to chair a Working Group should be willing to also provide a limited secretariat with administrative and technical support. A voluntary basis would also tend to ensure a means of embarrassment: States would attract criticism if they volunteered and then failed to follow through.

As to PAME and EPPR, these Working Groups do not have a secretariat, but are nevertheless able to reach agreement on important issues. However, experience with this kind of solution has been somewhat discouraging. Host states have not always proved ready to follow up the necessary support. Moreover, current experience draws upon the activities of comparatively small, specialized groups. With a large, comprehensive organization such as the Arctic Council, a voluntary system of this kind would probably have less chance to succeed.

Conclusion

What would be a useful way of arranging the secretarial services? A list of concerns to take into account was presented at the beginning of the current chapter.

Requirements as to continuity, communication, logistics, and information seem to favor greater centralization and permanency, whereas the concern for inclusiveness and flexibility would indicate less centralized and perhaps rotating arrangements. As alternatives for further consideration, a future solution could be suggested that builds upon either:

- one or two permanently located secretariats, along with rotating Working Group Chairs and Lead Country responsibilities for projects; or
- a system of slow rotation of secretariat functions, with the aid of supplementary arrangements as necessary.

5. The science-politics interface

This Chapter addresses the question of the efficiency of the current mode of processing of scientific information necessary for decision-making. In the following paragraph, some organizational possibilities for ensuring more efficient processing of data will be discussed.

Build-up of scientific data

The AEPS has produced an impressive amount of work. However, so much information has been built up that the capability of reading, digesting, and, not least, acting on it appears to have become exploited to its limits. It has become increasingly difficult to maintain overview of all data available and how to access them.

Scientific information comes in from many different directions. For example, international scientific organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), through its International Arctic Seas Assessment, contribute critical data and analysis of sea sediment samples to the AMAP program. International non-governmental organizations with active conservation programs in the Arctic have made positive contributions to the work of CAFF. Several non-Arctic states are involved, individually and on a bilateral basis, in the scientific and technical evaluations of Arctic ecosystems and the monitoring of change to the Arctic and the globe. These contribute greatly to the collective understanding of the Arctic. Bodies like the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) can provide a non-governmental Arctic science component and focus on key issues beyond the reach of governmental budgets. Others, such as the International Union of Circumpolar Health (IUCH), help to bridge the important gap between science and health, issues of increasing importance in Phase 2 of the AMAP program.

At present there exists no recognized center to consult for advice on how to act upon the basis of the data available, and not all information finds its way through to set policy priorities. A screening mechanism between government officials and WG experts could facilitate proposals and assistance in policy formulation. This points up a disjointedness in the overall structure, since there is no uniform system for the provision of scientific information from the Working Groups. In turn, this complicates the process of advising the Ministers between their biannual meetings.

Organizational possibilities

The organization of a screening mechanism should respond to two basic needs: access to the best available data, and the provision of a knowledge base relevant to the specific policy issues on the agenda. The following discussion addresses two main approaches for coming to grips with this challenge: by way of a specific screening body, and by way of procedural means.

Screening body between Working Groups and Senior Officials

The AEPS currently has no such body. The concept and purpose of an advisory screening body would be to staff it with knowledgeable people who can advise the

decision-making body on policy priorities. An advisory body could aid in facilitating communication between SAAOs and Working Groups.

An advisory body at the WG - SAAO interface could serve as a scientific advisory body. This could be arranged in two ways, either:

- as a purely scientific body (scientists only), or:
- as a technical advisory body (scientists and government agency experts).

In the AEPS today, expert advice is processed by government agency experts. Non-government scientists act as suppliers of data material, operating on the fringes of the AEPS program system. The Working Groups are staffed by government agency personnel. This might mean information processing in which the perspectives of the government experts dominate over the more purely scientific approaches. In that case, the sources of advice would tend to follow government priorities rather than relevant data, wherever such data may be found.

A scientific body could grasp the full range of available data more easily than could a technical body staffed with government agency experts. However, consideration would still have to be given to the relationship between the knowledge base pursued, and the range of policy options on the agenda for the overall cooperation. Arranging for full access to the best available data could result in focusing the cooperation extensively on scientific matters.

Whenever needed as a result of bargaining between the Arctic governments, the task of shifting focus between environmental issues (or even over to other issues) could prove too slow a process if the guiding concept were a purely scientifically based selection of data. A focus on data required for such flexible policy purposes could prove easier to handle with the assistance of a body that was a technical rather than purely scientific one.

A technical advisory body could play a twofold role: It could process the scientific knowledge base into a basic material suitable for policy formulating purposes ("translation"), and it could act as a "filtering body" which would indicate possible policy choices for the SAAOs. Here, however, it should be kept in mind that giving that task to an advisory body would provide it with considerable power. Thus, it might be better to limit its mandate to the task of evaluating the different proposals, and then let the SAAOs filter out the further issues.

With an advisory body it should be possible to come to grips with the challenge raised by the communication problem between the SAAOs and WG experts. An emphasis on the technical profile should attract government personnel of both the official kind and the agency expert kind. Balanced with academic scientists, this would then ensure a complete communication link through all levels of the information processing system. Establishing an advisory body would necessitate expanding the number of AEPS bodies. It might be possible to ensure effective screening functions in a simpler fashion, through procedural measures. Two such solutions will be considered in the following.

Meetings of Heads of Working Groups "back to back" with SAAOs

Prior to SAAO meetings, the Heads of the Working Groups could meet back to back with the SAAOs in order to improve communication on proposals for future action.

Such an arrangement could contribute in two ways: By improving the flow of information between the Working Groups, and by structuring the communication between the technical experts and the government officials.

Meetings of Heads of Working Groups in the form of preparations for the SAAO meetings could in principle be cost-effective, since these persons at the same time are members of the national SAAO delegations. The system could improve information flow between the Working Groups by, for example, providing opportunities for clarifying earlier written correspondence between the Groups; for signaling needs for assistance from other Groups, and by providing a forum for discussing coordination and sharing of work. Especially in the current situation, with the AEPS managing its business without a permanent secretariat, this would assist with some of the coordination functions.

Back to back meetings would provide opportunities for a more open process of preparing SAAO delegations for plenary meetings. Personal ties would be strengthened, and the foundations for closer acquaintance would be laid. Ideas could then undergo a trail run prior to actual SAAO meetings. However, it is questionable whether such a system would not overload the already comparatively costly process of running the SAAO meetings. In light of the limited WG budgets, increased spending in connection with the SAAO meetings could attract severe criticism.

Harmonized reporting procedures for the Working Groups

Uniform reporting routines could function as a way of sifting out proposals for policy action from more descriptive accounts of state of the environment and related activities. If such practice became firmly established by way of formal rules, it could provide a stimulus for experts to formulate their reporting work more consciously in terms of policy recommendations. With regard to the previous discussion of Working Groups mandates, supplementing procedural rules with firmer requirements in their mandates to set clear priorities, the basis could be laid for an efficient screening mechanism, without any further institutionalization. Establishing some form of review process prior to the Officials' meetings would further strengthen the screening system.

Conclusion

Three ways of improving the processing of scientific information have been considered in this Section. First, there could be an advisory body at the level between the experts and the policy managers; this could promote the information process. The two other, simpler, solutions represent different ways of establishing a screening function without further expansion of the number of bodies. As to the idea of a system of back to back meetings, this would probably increase the administrative costs of the process, as it would constitute an extra task. Consequently, the following should be considered as useful options:

- the establishment of an advisory body, or
- implementing a stricter reporting system.

6. Contributions to the process by others than the eight arctic states

In the course of the 1990s, the Arctic has evolved from a region geared to national security concerns, into a common political arena where a wide range of “low politics” issues are addressed. More actors are emerging, and more interfaces are developing between them.

An increasing number of actors are holding stakes in relation to the efforts made to protect the Arctic environment. In the AEPS, the SDU agenda continues to have a mobilizing effect, by expanding the environment political sector into closer interfaces with other sector policies.

The AEPS has responded to these developments. It has included both non-Arctic states and non-state Arctic players in the cooperation forum. The three indigenous peoples’ organizations (IPOs) – the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), the Saami Council, and the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (AIPON) – have been given opportunity to participate as Permanent Participants. Even relationship with further international organizations with Arctic interests is also under consideration.

The various Observers and Permanent Participants have one problem in common: funding, and limited access to the process. Lack of funding has made it difficult to attend meetings, and to initiate projects. Restrictions on access to the process, both in the Working Groups and at SAAO meetings, remain a source of discontent among Permanent Participants and Observers. Conversely, it has constrained the use that the AEPS might have been able to make of their input.

This section of the Assessment questions whether the AEPS has made full use of the actual or potential input to the process that might have been made by participants other than the Eight Arctic States. Opportunities and constraints to participation will be explored. Suggestions as to how external contributions might be more effectively exploited are put forward.

Opportunities and constraints to Permanent Participants’ participation

During the earlier stages of the AEPS cooperation, the IPOs’ access to the policy formulation process was not at all obvious. Persistent pushing for regular participation from the ICC resulted in the IPOs being invited to all SAAO meetings, except the meetings of the Heads of Delegations.

This injected them into a key position in the policy making process. It allowed them to participate alongside Arctic Governments. However, from the IPOs point of view, it would have been preferable if access to the meetings of the Heads of Delegations had been provided for. Their main argument had been the need for the Indigenous Peoples to be involved in any decision making process which might effect their land. On the technical side, IPOs have made strenuous efforts to participate in the scientific and technical work of the Working Groups. However, because of persistent funding problems, substantive participation is carried out only occasionally, even if

there are cases where the ICC and certain NGOs have contributed widely on projects and program work.

The main constraints to extensive participation in ongoing work relate also to the availability of professional technical manpower which may enable effective contributions in the Working Groups. However, by setting priorities as to which Working Groups to focus on, by developing specific Indigenous approaches to build-up of knowledge, such as *Traditional Ecological Knowledge* (TEK), and by careful selection of competent people, the IPOs have in general gained a secure position both at the SAAO level and in the Working Groups as well.

In the Task Force for Sustainable Development, the ICC has led on promoting Traditional Knowledge, and the development of TEK as a guiding concept for application of indigenous knowledge in the AEPS programs. The main application of TEK is as a means of making studies of wildlife, wildlife management, and environmental monitoring. In AMAP, ICC has played a role in developing the communications strategy, and in both AMAP and CAFF, elements related to TEK have been brought in.

While the ICC has been the most active, the Saami and the Russian IPOs have had more difficulty in participating, because of own priorities or because of lack of resources. Faced with limited possibilities to travel to meetings, the Russian AIPON has placed heavier emphasis on data collection, and on forwarding their data and observations on to Russian scientific institutions that may analyze them and feed them into the AEPS.

Opportunities and constraints to Observer Countries' participation

Among AEPS observers, frustration has been felt over the limitations to contributing to the process. Despite their importance both as polar research nations and as industrial states with a heavy impact on the Arctic environment, these countries are only being offered a marginal role in the process.

Due to this reduced formal position within the AEPS, the Observer countries have concentrated their efforts on the Working Groups. In this position, they have been able to contribute through highly valuable scientific resources. However, they have not been provided with any significant means of influencing the process at policy level. For example, the Observer countries are usually only provided with the ability to make one intervention during a SAAO meeting.

On the scientific side, however, their considerable resources have allowed them to participate actively in AEPS programs. For example, the Netherlands provides data on a wide scale to AMAP projects, maintains a direct dialogue with the AMAP Secretariat, and has even hosted an AMAP meeting in 1997. Observers also undertake work for the AEPS which is not recognized by the organization. For example, the CAFF project on a GAP analysis of Protected Areas was undertaken by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Great Britain. That work was funded by Britain under the British "know how" fund for Eastern Europe. As an external input at no cost, it never became recognized by the AEPS.

Even if Observer participation in Working Groups is extensive, it is not without its problems. Even at this working level, rules are unclear, thus creating uncertainty about the extent of permissible participation. For example, one of the national

Observers indicated that it is difficult to know whether it is permissible to speak or not at Working Group sub-group meetings.

The Observer Countries' ambitions about influencing the process diverge considerably. Ambitions range from regarding the observer role as an observation post useful for collecting inputs to other, more important, processes that they are engaged in; to holding strong opinions about playing a political role.

The consequence is that coordination among Observer countries, with a view to improving their standing within the AEPS is almost absent. There are e.g. no processes for inter-sessional coordination between the SAO meetings. In order to make their voice more effective, stronger efforts towards coordinated strategies may be needed, for uncoordinated frustration from one or more Observers seems to have little effect on the "Arctic Eight". The AEPS Procedural Guide provides a means for joint presentations of policies, by indicating the opportunity for Observers to caucus and have one representative speak for them all. However, without appropriate coordination, it would not be possible to arrange for eg a Common Observer to represent a number of Parties.

Non-governmental organization's (NGO) participation

The NGOs' pattern of participation is similar to that of the Observer countries. In some cases the NGOs have financed projects to the direct benefit of the AEPS, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature's Arctic Conservation Atlas Project. But there is no agreement amongst the Arctic States as to the extent of permissible NGO participation. In some cases, therefore, NGO-funded projects such as that above have not been listed under the respective AEPS program. That has given rise to disputes over access to decision making within the Working Groups, where funders of such projects may request to have a full say.

Among NGOs, there is concern that the current access rules prevent the Arctic Council from being a "completely open and transparent" forum. There is also a perceived need for balance, and a recognition that the NGOs can provide important contributions to the process. As the example of the Conservation Atlas projects shows, the NGOs can also play an important role in providing extra resources for the process. In light of the limited funding available for AEPS programs, such contributions are by many considered highly valuable.

Conclusion

The intergovernmental nature of AEPS cooperation provides the basic ramifications for Permanent Participant and Observer participation. While the IPOs' formal position seems to have been advanced as far as possible at the present stage, the Observer Countries' position could be given a firmer basis through some clarification concerning their practical participation, also if it is not substantially improved at the political level.

Even at the political level, some minor adjustments favorable to observer participation could be useful. For example, a statement in the Rules of Procedure to the effect that "...*the Observer could speak on any issue if recognized by the Chair...*" might encourage greater Observer input, e.g. through an increased submission of papers.

Rules concerning the participation of observers' rights and duties in the Working groups could be clarified. Taking a stand on whether to allow for full equality of observers in the Working Groups could be an item to consider. Equal participation at this level could raise Observers' motivation for AEPS work, all the time access to the political process is restricted.

Working Groups themselves could widen the range of available data by inviting specialists from Observer Countries to work directly in WG program activities. Today's system instead emphasizes delivery of scientific data into the Working Groups – a more indirect approach.

It would seem difficult to find access criteria that would meet the requirements of all eight Arctic states. Their interests on important issues diverge, and in some areas the stakes are high. It could therefore seem appropriate to fine-tune the access/participation filter and process, so as to allow in those who are both committed and useful to the process.

On the part of the Permanent participants, some widening of their input base to the Working Groups would seem advisable. Their existing input tends to focus mainly on delivering and processing knowledge of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge kind. However, according to one IPO representative, acceptance (of his organization) is partly due to the fact that it brings technically competent people to meetings. This would tend to suggest that a stronger emphasis on developing expertise beyond the particular area of TEK could possibly strengthen the IPOs standing within the AEPS.

7. AEPS as a component of sustainable development in the Arctic

The establishment of the Arctic Council has broadened the agenda of Arctic cooperation and made it timely to consider an adjustment or renewal of the organizational framework. The purpose of the Arctic Council is to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. While the Rovaniemi Declaration of 1991 focused on threats to the Arctic Environment, the 1996 Ottawa Declaration pays equal attention to sustainable development and environmental protection.

The backdrop is a growing understanding that efforts to protect the Arctic environment are likely to fail unless accompanied by initiatives to meet the economic and social needs of the people living there. On the other hand, there is also a clear recognition that economic and social development can be considered sustainable only if it does not lead to depletion of renewable resources, loss of biodiversity or degradation of the ecosystems on which Arctic residents depend for their livelihood and culture.

Effective "horizontal" integration of environmental protection into the development process must therefore be reflected in the future organization and management of the programs and working groups of the Arctic Council.

The following analysis seeks to draw on the limited experiences with integration of the environmental and development agendas within the framework of the AEPS. With this as a basis, some potential organizational and management structures and their possible implication for integration of the development and environmental agendas under the Arctic Council are discussed.

Integration of the Arctic environmental and development agendas

Efforts to develop the Arctic with due regard to environmental concerns require greater knowledge about the present state of the environment, and models and assessment of sustainable use of the natural resources. The development of Arctic guidelines for environmental impact assessments is one example of a specific step. The Arctic Council could identify similar steps to integrate environmental concerns in social and economic development, such as: design and implementation of effective conservation measures, land-use systems, and pollution control measures, design of management regimes for consumptive uses of renewable resources, and development of guidelines for large-scale industrial activities.

In the Arctic, as elsewhere, there are conflicts between economic development objectives and environmental protection. In particular, this is true of large-scale industrial development schemes in many parts of the circumpolar Arctic. If economic development is included in the future agenda, there is a risk that such conflicts will also become internal conflicts between the environmental and development components of circumpolar cooperation. On the other hand, integration will be promoted.

One way of coming to grips with such conflict potentials could be to set a sustainable development agenda for the Arctic Council, guided by the goals and principles of the AEPS. The strategies formulated by the AEPS Working Groups within the various fields of environmental protection could be taken as a premise.

The principles of the AEPS provide quite firm guidance as to how environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the development process. The principles of the AEPS provide quite firm guidance as to how environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the development process (cf. the annexed listed principles as quoted from the AEPS Strategy Document).

Assuming that these would also be the premises of an Arctic Council Sustainable Development Program, group structures and management procedures would provide mechanisms to ensure that development activities are compatible with the goals and principles of the AEPS, and that such activities remain in line with strategies and action plans developed in the various fields of environmental protection.

The SDU agenda of the AEPS

The AEPS experience can offer only limited advice on the issue of integration of the environmental and development agendas within the framework of the AEPS in the future. Still, some lessons can be learned from experiences with the TFSDU in relation to other AEPS Working Groups.

Organizational structures and management procedures are undoubtedly important in defining the future direction of the Arctic sustainable development agenda in relation to environmental goals and objectives. The experiences with AEPS SDU work, however, indicate that institutional design and management procedures are of secondary importance. More forceful means would seem to be the operationalization of sustainable development through the creation of a concrete work program, and the definition of goals and objectives on which to base such operationalization.

Implications for future cooperative activities

How could programs and working groups be organized and managed to ensure that environmental protection becomes an integral part of social and economic development activities under the Arctic Council? This is to some extent a question of political priorities. Organizational structure and management procedures could be tailored to suit the overriding goals and priorities of the Arctic Council.

Sustainable development is a sector-transcending concept, so cooperation in this field should emphasize on cross-sector rather than sector approaches. Group structures and management procedures as well should be designed to facilitate cross-sector integration and coordination, and avoid sector self-sufficiency. On the other hand, as the cooperation extends beyond the initial stage of case studies and assessments, the need for active involvement of national competent authorities will increase, both at the political and management levels. The demand for a stronger catalytic role by the environment authorities and other environmental players should be expected to increase accordingly. A sector approach may facilitate such involvement.

(i) Two-pillar structure

If an organizational structure that integrates environmental concerns with social and economic development cannot be found, the AEPS and the Sustainable Development Program (SDP) would then constitute two pillars. The impression of a development towards a two pillar system is to some extent underpinned by the Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council, which states that the Council is established to *"oversee and coordinate the programs established under the AEPS"*, and to *"adopt terms of reference for, and oversee and coordinate a sustainable development program"*.

The development towards such a two-pillar system has gained momentum due to the simplicity of keeping the AEPS intact while lumping all other activities together as a Sustainable Development Program. Such an approach may be suitable to secure a "safe" transfer of the AEPS and its program activities into the framework of the Arctic Council. On the other hand, a two-pillar system may complicate effective integration of the environmental and development agendas.

(ii) Horizontal structure

A future group structure organized around sustainable development as the "core" or "horizontal" concept was proposed by Greenland at the SAO meeting in Kautokeino in March 1997. Rather than organizing sustainable development activities as a program and a second pillar of the Arctic Council in addition to the AEPS, in this proposal the various components of the sustainable development equation, such as environmental protection, health, culture, social issues, trade, etc., are organized as working groups or ad hoc project related groups.

Organizing Sustainable Development activities into separate sector working groups could favor sector rather than cross-sector approaches. Such an approach may, however, have certain other benefits: First, the number of hierarchical levels in the organizational structure would be reduced, as there would be no Sustainable Development "umbrella" to gather the various sector working groups and ad-hoc project related groups. Furthermore, as cooperative activities expand, active involvement of competent sector authorities will be needed. A sector-based organization of working groups may facilitate such involvement both on the management and the political levels. Such a system could also allow for Arctic Council meetings of sector ministers.

The disintegration of the sustainable development agenda into a set of parallel sector processes with little coordination and few cross sector links may be prevented through adequate representation of important stakeholders and interested parties in relevant working groups. For example, in an ad hoc group developing strategies for sustainable use of timberline forests, experts and managers in the fields of nature conservation and pollution would have to be represented, as well as representatives of indigenous people and other stakeholders involved in reindeer herding, subsistence and other land-use in Arctic timberline forests. To this end, a procedure would have to be established for selecting representatives for permanent sector and ad hoc project related working groups.

Conclusion

In the Arctic, as elsewhere in the world today, there are conflicts between economic development objectives and environmental protection. One way of coming to grips with these conflict potentials could be to set a Sustainable Development Agenda for the Arctic Council, guided by the goals and principles of the AEPS. The principles of the AEPS provide quite firm guidance as to how environmental protection should constitute an integral part of the development process. Assuming that these would also be the premises of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Program, group structures and management procedures would provide mechanisms to ensure that development activities are compatible with the goals and principles of the AEPS, and that such activities remain in line with strategies and action plans developed in the various fields of environmental protection.

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Annex 1: Mandate and research method

Mandate

In the Inuvik Declaration, the Ministers of the Environment of the eight Arctic states instructed the SAAOs to provide for an assessment of the present organizational structure of the AEPS: *"For SAAOs, the priorities are directing the AEPS process and provide integration, policy and management direction to the AEPS Programmes and the AEPS Secretariat, as well as conducting an assessment of the present organizational structure of the AEPS with a view to ensuring cost-effective and well coordinated programmes, developing a framework and estimate of common cost-sharing..."*.

Working under this mandate, the author of this report has focused on the organizational structure of the AEPS. With regard to the demand for cost-effectiveness and good coordination, it is the author's interpretation that what is requested is a more streamlined organization. A further interpretation is that it is the Ministers' opinion that streamlining the organization will facilitate the development of a more efficient organization. A brief comment should be attached to this view.

There are various opinions about in what respects the AEPS has proven itself an efficient arrangement. Viewing it as a process, one could claim that it has indeed been efficient, bearing in mind all the activity and the international cooperation that it has generated. Concerning the Arctic environment itself, on the other hand, improvements that may be attributed to AEPS are most probably very modest at the current stage.

As an organization, the AEPS can hardly be said to stand out as a smoothly administered and tightly operated apparatus. Rather on the contrary, it looks more like a freely growing collocation of activities of which none of those who are to steer them, really know what is going on – to put it quite bluntly.

Consequently, we must ask: what kind of efficiency is meant when streamlining the organization is the issue? Is it the efficiency of a well run organization where steering and overview is good, where the resources are spent rationally, and where work is shared without overlapping and duplication? Or is it the efficiency that manifests itself in steadily growing activity, more networking, tighter international cooperation, greater involvement and responsibility by a rising number of stakeholders – a proliferation of activity and devotion which comes from a flexible arrangement where the participants are free to unfold creativity, innovation and expansion?

We end up with two interpretations of effectiveness that have a strong bearing on the current evaluation of the AEPS: On the one hand, effectiveness in terms of a flexible organization, where top-down steering may be more withdrawn, but where the bottom-up processes provide for the versatility of the overall cooperation process. On the other hand there is the effectiveness which may emerge from a well administered organization where responsibilities are clear, and where the various actors play their roles accordingly. While the former type encourages considerable

room of maneuvering for the processes from below, the latter responds to a stronger need for steering and control from above.

This report has presented an analysis of how the system has performed, and the subsequent recommendations concerning the "Streamlining" perspective – for the simple reason that this is what the mandate says. However, the critical reader should bear in mind that this does not imply any recommendation from the author's side about what kind of effectiveness is desirable for the AEPS. The author's perspective should instead be understood in the sense that *"If streamlining is the aim, then certain observations should be noted, and certain measures undertaken"*.

In the analysis, it will be reasonable to emphasize the organizational aspects. However, the process perspective constitutes an important backdrop. This backdrop is necessary in order to understand the framework for the working of the AEPS. Its working is constituted by an interlinkage of a "technical" work process for the environment, and a political process of cooperation between states and organizations.

The current situation in the AEPS gives rise to many intriguing questions about the connections between policy guidance and management, as performed by the Senior Officials (the SAAOs) and the "technical" expert work carried out in the Working Groups under the AEPS and their subgroups. In this report, these connections will be the main topic. The topic covers a number of issues regarding the SAAOs and the Working Group system. Coordination of programs, activities and processes is a key concept in this respect.

Funding restraints have constituted a serious obstacle against exploiting the full potential of AEPS. The current report takes, however, this situation as a given factor, and looks narrowly at the possibilities for making improvements in the organizational sphere. The financial issues are dealt with in two separate reports prepared by the Norwegian Chairmanship's AEPS Secretariat.

Method

The investigation that is being carried out is highly empirical. Only some minor use of theory of international management regimes has been undertaken. This has been done mainly in order to support an explanation of the current situation in the AEPS as a possible stage in the development of a future regime for Arctic affairs. The main **data basis** for the analysis is primary source data that have been provided through interviews and AEPS documents. Secondary source data (books and articles) have been used to assist in the development of perspectives and research questions, and to provide a background for interpretation of data.

The essential part of the information that underpins the current investigation, comes from interviews with a broad range of AEPS players. These are currently, or have formerly been, involved in AEPS work. The interviewees represent all eight Arctic states, Permanent Participants, and Observers. They represent all levels of the AEPS organization, with the exception of the Ministerial level.

A total of 56 persons have been interviewed, during two phases. During the startup phase, 15 persons were interviewed, mainly on telephone, in order to clarify the essential topics for further investigation. The findings of this phase were presented to the SAAOs at the Oslo SAAO Meeting in November 1996. During the winter and

spring of 1996/97, a wider selection consisting of 41 persons were interviewed personally, with the exception of two, who for time reasons had to be interviewed on telephone.

The **research strategy** has been to identify the organizational landscape, observe the actions that the players undertake, and then identify the patterns of actions and influence. As the anthropologist would put it, a strategy of “watching and wondering”, has been chosen.

By applying the broad term “players”, it has become possible to identify an “average attitude” towards the successes, shortcomings and possible needs for improvement of the AEPS. The personal “narratives” of individual players have brought forward a vivid picture of the “life in the AEPS”. This has provided important information on the nature of the work, communication processes and influence patterns in the organization. The viewpoints and statements that were collected, were in turn analyzed against the background of AEPS documents, and literature about AEPS in particular and Arctic cooperation in general.

As the work progressed, discussions of the findings were undertaken with a small group of people who are either involved in AEPS-related activities, or work as social scientists in the field of Arctic studies. In this way, the work of **interpreting the data** was kept on track.

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The structure of the report was cleared at the outset, and work has afterwards been repeatedly commented upon by a number of highly competent persons holding different positions. However, the ideas that are put forward and the conclusions that are drawn reflect the author’s interpretations only.

Annex 2: List of interviewees (by country and organization)

Canada

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa
Environment Canada, Hull, Quebec
Directorate for Indian and Northern Affairs, Hull, Quebec
Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Ottawa

Denmark/Greenland

Danish Polar Centre, Copenhagen
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen
National Environment Administration, Copenhagen
Greenland Home Rule Office, Copenhagen
Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, Copenhagen
United States Embassy, Copenhagen

Finland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Helsinki
Ministry of Environment, Helsinki
University of Helsinki, Geophysical Department

Iceland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reykjavik

Germany

Ministry of Environment, Bonn

Great Britain

Foreign Office, London

The Netherlands

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague
Arctic Centre, Groningen

Norway

AEPS Secretariat, Oslo
Directorate of Nature Management, Trondheim
International Arctic Science Committee/Secretariat, Oslo
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo
Ministry of Environment, Oslo
Norwegian Polar Institute, Oslo
Norwegian Pollution Control Authority, Oslo
Sami Council, Kautokeino
Regional Authority of Northern Norway (Landsdelsutvalget for Nord Norge), Bodø
World Wide Fund for Nature, Oslo

Russian Federation

State Committee for Environmental Protection

Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (AIPON)

Federal Service of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Planning

Sweden

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stockholm

Ministry of Defence, Stockholm

Directorate for the Protection of the Environment, Stockholm

Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm

USA

Department of State, Washington, DC

Department of Commerce, Washington, DC

Office of the Governor of Alaska, Washington, DC

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Administration, Anchorage, Al.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Washington, DC

Number of telephone interviews: 15

Number of personal interviews: 41 *)

*) Among the 41 respondents that were interviewed personally, were 6 persons interviewed in 2 meetings with 3 participants each, and 4 persons interviewed in 2 meetings with 2 participants each.

Annex 3: Questionnaires

The questioning was carried out in two phases: Phase I was carried out initially, with the aim of clarifying the central issues for study. This was accomplished by speaking with an average selection of players. The questions were all of a general nature, and the same questions were posed to all the respondents. All interviews were carried out on telephone, and lasted from 30 minutes to one hour.

Phase II was carried out in order to undertake detailed discussions of the issues in focus of the study, such as it had become clear in the previous round of interviews. The Phase II discussions were undertaken with a large number of players representing all components of the organization. They were carried out in personal meetings, which could be of one to two hours duration. During Phase II, the lists of questions were designed differently, according to the various groups of respondents.

Before the interviews started, each interviewee was informed that the question lists were meant as a framework for a discussion, and not as a list to go through in detail. It was left to each individual to respond in the way that she or he felt most appropriate, and to add additional viewpoints if so wished.

The wording of the questions were occasionally adjusted slightly. This was done in order to make the questions more clear and precise, and was done in the course of the experience and insights that were built up on the part of the researcher during the process.

Phase I questionnaire

Each interviewee was sent a letter with a message that they would be contacted and asked some general questions with reference to the following topic list concerning the operation of the AEPS:

- Administrative problems
- Structural problems
- Strategic problems
- Problems of implementation and the follow-up of common decisions
- The role of Observer Countries and Permanent Participants

Phase II questionnaires

Questions for Heads of and members of the SAAO Delegations of the Arctic States.

1. Policy formulation

- How has **the SAAOs' managerial role** in providing overall policy formulation and policy integration for the AEPS process been carried out?
- How would you describe **the process between the SAAOs and the Working Group experts?**
- What would be the impact for policy formulation of assigning a **technical/scientific body** the task of sorting out and suggesting recommendations on policies?
- Problems connected to the relationship between **Foreign Ministries and Environment Ministries** in dealing with environmental matters at the SAAO level.
- The issue of SDU may have shown that the AEPS has produced some effects that increasingly affect interests within a wider range of issue areas. Could you please comment upon your views as to how the AEPS' relationship to different kinds of **interests and stakeholders** is currently being managed?

2. Priorities setting

- What have been the SAAOs' **priority issues** from the viewpoint of the environmental agenda of the AEPS? What are the choices that have been made?
- To what extent are the Working Groups determining their own work **agendas?**

3. Coordination: Communication between AEPS bodies

- How do you feel that Working Group experts **respond to guidance** by the SAAOs?
- What are the reasons for the general reluctance to create a **permanent secretariat** for the AEPS? To what degree is this issue connected to financial considerations, and in which ways is it connected to national political factors?

4. Follow-up/responsibility

- Which patterns of good/poor **implementation** can be found? Are there specific elements of the AEPS Programs that may have been weakened due to poor implementation?
- What is the relationship between the organizational form of AEPS and the states' willingness to consider greater cost-sharing and commitment to funding beyond immediate pressing needs?
- What would you describe as main problems concerning interpreting and **communicating the directions of the Ministers** on to the Working Groups?

5. Structure

- What are the advantages of the present **flexible structure** of the AEPS? How does it affect the states' commitment?
- What other international organizations in the field could provide organizational **models** - what kinds of solutions could prove applicable?
- What are your perspectives upon the cross-sector character of the SDU Group's work as in contrast to the specialized work of the other Working Groups: What management problems could you foresee concerning coordination of the two types of groups?
- What would be the advantages/disadvantages of a **common secretariat** for the Working Groups.

6. Procedures, rule system

- What are, in your opinion, the main weaknesses in the existing routines and rule system, **with regard to the guiding role of the SAAOs**?
- The Inuvik Declaration strengthens the role of the SAAOs in giving guidance to the AEPS process. Do you think that it by this step has been sufficiently clarified by what means this role may be implemented? **Is there a need for clearer rules?**

Questions for Working Group Heads and Members.

1. Structure and working mode of the Working Groups

- What are the **advantages and disadvantages** of the present flexible structure of the AEPS?
- To what extent are the Working Groups determining their **own work agendas**?
- What are the reasons for the general reluctance to create a **common Secretariat** for the AEPS Working Groups? In which ways is the uneasiness on this issue connected to financial considerations, and in which ways to national political factors?
- How would you describe the lessons to be learnt from the current system of **rotating chairmanships and lead countries** in some Working Groups?
- What are the “**logistical**” **difficulties** connected to the rotating Working Group Chairmanships?

2. Focus of Working Groups' activities

- Do you consider that there is much **overlap** of the work carried out by the Working Groups. In case, to what extent is it your opinion that this is a fruitful overlap, and to what extent is it a waste of resources?
- Do you consider yourself satisfied with the present focus of your Group, its present structure, and its current types of participants?

3. External relations of the AEPS

- Have adequate mechanisms been established for managing the **dialogue with international science bodies** and knowledge communities?
- Have adequate mechanisms been established for ensuring **that advice from international science bodies** is received and dealt with systematically?

Questions for Permanent Participants and IPS

1. What do you consider most important for your organization for influencing the AEPS process:
 - SAAO meetings and process between meetings?
 - Expert work in Working Groups?
2. In which ways do you think that traditional ecological knowledge may be used in combination with natural science
 - In which contexts
 - at what stages in the advisory process
3. Are there any gaps between the form of participation that your organization actually pursues and what it in your opinion should pursue?
4. How could common interests and conflicting interests among the individual IPOs be described?
5. How do you consider your organization's access to decision making in the AEPS?
How does your organization use AEPS as an instrument in its dealings with the central government of your country?
6. Do you see problems of increasing the activities of your organization in the AEPS Working Groups if you so wish?

Generic questions: Indigenous Peoples' Organizations

1. How representative are the three IPO Permanent Participants?
2. Have they squeezed out other Arctic stakeholders; have they taken over the agendas of other groups?
3. Were the three IPOs allowed to achieve their prominent position for "political correctness" reasons, at the expense of other stakeholders?

Questions for Observer Country Representatives

1. How has the current system of differentiated observer/participant status affected the effectiveness of the AEPS in terms of **commitment** to the AEPS process?
2. Your reflections on the influence relationship between the **Observer Countries** and the various **accredited participants** in the AEPS.
3. What do you think that one could realistically opt for **improving** the whole participant and observer regime in the future?
4. To what extent has one succeeded in utilising the **knowledge base** that is provided by the accredited observers and participants?
5. Would it be an improvement having a **science body/technical body** to do the sorting out of the issues to be run by the SA(A)Os.
6. What are the main controversies connected to the **use of science** in the Arctic environment/development context, and what **models** exist that could be used for finding solutions?

Generic questions for all relevants

The science input to the AEPS

1. Have adequate mechanisms been established for ensuring that advice from relevant international science bodies is received and dealt with systematically for policy formulating purposes?
2. Have adequate mechanisms been established for managing the dialogue with relevant international science bodies and knowledge communities, with regard to having their viewpoints as organisations communicated?
3. What would be the impact for policy formulation of assigning a scientific body the task of sorting out and suggesting recommendations on policies?

The relationship between natural science and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK):

1. Which mechanisms have so far been established for research partnerships between TEK and science?
2. According to the ICC report to the Nuuk meeting in 1993, two main issues are to be addressed by the AEPS:
 - Developing a process for collecting and integrating TEK
 - Better defining and facilitating the participation of indigenous peoples.What is your comments as to the follow-up in the AEPS?

Sustainable development and utilization (SDU)

1. What are your perspectives upon the cross-sector character of the SDU group's work, in contrast to the specialized work of the other Working Groups?. For example, what management problems, if any, could you foresee concerning coordination of the two types of groups?
2. Should there be a common secretariat for all the Working Groups? What would be the advantages/disadvantages?
3. What are your views upon the idea of a common set of rules for all the Working Groups?
4. Should a common secretariat, and common rules be for all the WGs, or for the "technical" ones only, leaving out the cross-sector SDU Group/program?
5. What are, in your opinion, the main weakness in the existing rule system, with regard to the guiding role of the SAAOs? What new questions about political steering are raised by the SDU issue?
6. In which ways is the question of representation (accredited participants and observers) affected by the SDU issue?
7. What kind of relationships with other international organizations and regimes can be conceived in light of the extended agenda that the SDU issue implies?

Annex 4: The current AEPS organization

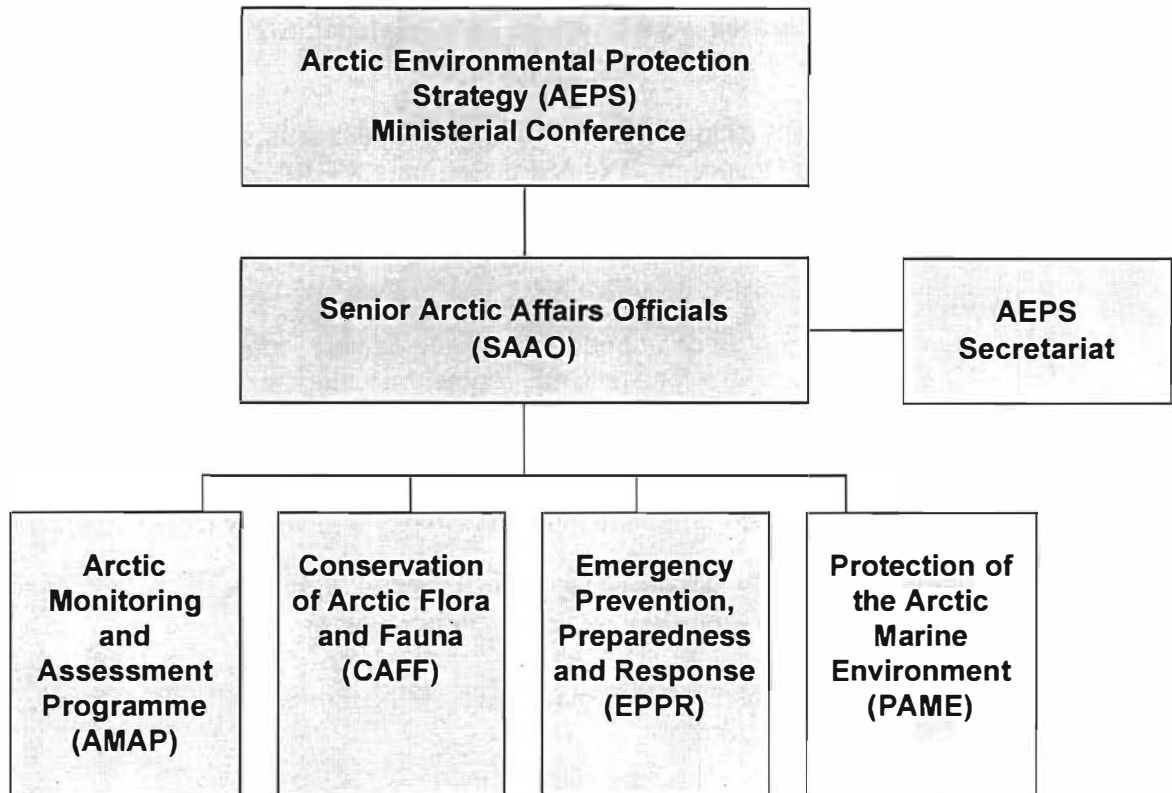
The **objectives** of the AEPS are:

- to protect the Arctic ecosystems, including humans;
- to provide for the protection, enhancement and restoration of natural resources, including their use by local populations and indigenous peoples of the Arctic;
- to recognize and, to the extent possible, seek to accommodate the traditional and cultural needs, values and practises of the indigenous peoples as determined by themselves, related to the protection of the Arctic environment;
- to review regularly the state of the Arctic environment;
- to identify, reduce and, as a final goal, eliminate pollution.

To meet AEPS objectives, the following **Programmes** have been established:

- **Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)**
to monitor the levels of, and assess the effects of, anthropogenic pollutants in all compartments of the Arctic environment, including humans.
- **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)**
to take preventative and other measures directly or through competent international organizations regarding marine pollution in the Arctic, irrespective of origin.
- **Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)**
to provide a framework for future cooperation in responding to the threat of environmental emergencies.
- **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)**
to facilitate the exchange of information and coordination of research on species and habitats of flora and fauna.

Organizational chart of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS)



MEMBERS

Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, USA

PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS

Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)

Saami Council

Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (AIPON)

OBSERVERS

Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom

International Arctic Science Committee (IASC)

Nordic Council, Northern Forum

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE)

UN Environmental Programme (UNEP)

Roles of AEPS Bodies

AEPS Structure

Members of the AEPS are the eight Arctic Countries (Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, United States of America). The Arctic governments are represented by: Ministers, Senior Arctic Affairs Officials (SAAOs), and AEPS Programme (Working Group and Task Force) National Representatives. SAAOs are assisted in their work by the AEPS Secretariat. Some AEPS Programmes are assisted in their work by Secretariats.

Observers to the AEPS include AEPS Permanent Participants, AEPS Accredited observers and *ad hoc* Observers. The AEPS Permanent Participants are assisted in their role by the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat.

Ministers

Ministers of the eight circumpolar countries are the decision-making body of the AEPS. Ministers responsible for Arctic environmental issues, or their representatives, meet approximately every two years to:

- consider reports tabled by SAAOs and the AEPS Programmes;
- review and endorse recommendations and workplans tabled by the AEPS Programmes;
- determine future directions for the AEPS;
- discuss and decide on other issues tabled at the meeting.

The location of Ministerial meetings rotates with the host country. The Chair is appointed by the host country.

Senior Arctic Affairs Officials (SAAOs)

The SAAOs are the principal advisory body of the AEPS, and are responsible for steering the process of the AEPS during the period between Ministerial meetings. The SAAOs are responsible for national coordination of the AEPS, in accordance with relevant national procedure. The SAAOs report to Ministers, and act as the intermediary body between Ministers and other AEPS bodies. The SAAOs give policy and management direction to the AEPS Programmes and to the AEPS Secretariat.

Among other, the roles of **SAAOs** include:

- coordinating AEPS work in their respective countries;
- providing policy advice to AEPS members on behalf of Ministers.

SAAO meetings are held on a regular basis, at least once a year or more frequently as required. The host country chairs the SAAO meetings. SAAO meetings include SAAOs and their delegations, AEPS Permanent Participants, AEPS Accredited Observers, AEPS *ad hoc* Observers, AEPS Programme Chairs, heads of the Programme Secretariats, the Executive Secretary of the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat and the AEPS Secretariat.

AEPS Secretariat

The AEPS Secretariat acts to coordinate effective delivery of the AEPS on behalf of the host country during its tenure. The AEPS Secretariat is headed by an Executive Secretary who reports to SAAOs, through the SAAO of the host country. The AEPS Secretariat is housed and staffed for a two-year period in the presiding AEPS host country.

Among other, the roles of the **AEPS Secretariat** include:

- working with the AEPS bodies to facilitate effective delivery of items for tabling with Ministers;
- preparing agendas and minutes of Ministerial and SAAO meetings;
- organizing logistics for SAAO meetings and the Ministerial Conference;
- leading communication for the AEPS on behalf of SAAOs including the distribution of SAAO and Ministerial documents to all the AEPS bodies;
- maintaining AEPS archival materials.

AEPS Programmes

The AEPS Programmes (Working Groups and Task Forces) carry out work to fulfill the commitments of the AEPS, as approved by Ministers, under the direction of SAAOs. Each Programme is headed by a Chair and a Vice Chair, or by a lead country providing Chair or Secretariat support. A national representative from each of the eight Arctic countries is appointed to each Programme. The representative may choose national experts to assist them in their work. Individual work items are often organized through a lead-country system, whereby countries assume responsibility for completing a portion of the workplan on behalf of the group.

The roles of the **AEPS Programmes** include, among other:

- carrying out specified work items using existing national programmes as far as possible;
- reporting on progress at SAAO meetings;
- developing a biennial work plan, budget, progress report and recommendations for presentation to Ministers;
- liaising and coordinating work with other AEPS bodies and international organizations;
- developing strategies to advance the AEPS;
- contacting SAAOs for direction on any policy, financial, or administrative issues which arise in the interim between Ministerial meetings.

AEPS Programme meetings are held at least annually.

The roles of the **Chair and Vice-Chair** include:

- directing and managing work plan implementation in cooperation with group members;
- advising SAAOs, on behalf of members, on Working Group or Task Force issues, including financial issues.

Two of the AEPS Programmes, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) and Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), have formal

Secretariats. The Secretariats are responsible for organizing and coordinating the activities of their respective Working Groups. The Secretariat takes direction from the Programme Chair and Vice-Chair. The role of the **Working Group secretariats** includes:

- preparing draft reports for approval by the Working Groups and presentation to SAAOs and Ministers;
- administering programme activities and managing the programme budget;
- liaising among Working Group members and with other AEPS bodies and international organizations;
- leading communications initiatives on behalf of the Working Group;
- organizing meetings;
- preparing and distributing documents;
- attending meetings of the SAAOs, Ministers, and other meetings relevant to the Working Group mandate;
- carrying out other tasks as assigned by the Working Group or SAAOs.

The other AEPS Programmes have secretariat support from in-house resources provided by the Programme lead country.

All Permanent Participants and Accredited Observers may attend AEPS Programme meetings, according to guidelines. The AEPS Programmes may also accredit additional observers. The participation of AEPS Programme Observers is restricted to the particular Programme to which they have been accredited and does not extend to other meetings of the AEPS.

The AEPS Programmes vary in their procedures. For example:

Only AMAP and CAFF have adopted formal rules of procedure. Only AMAP and CAFF have management boards. CAFF's national representatives function as the CAFF management board. AMAP's board conducts inter-meeting business as entrusted to it by the Working Group and consists of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretariat (referred to as a "bureau" in other international fora). CAFF's Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretariat also function as an Executive Body for day-to-day management of program activities.

AMAP and CAFF differ in their definition of a Working Group member. AMAP considers members as the eight national representatives (what CAFF refers to as a management board). CAFF defines members as including the eight national representatives, other national delegates, Permanent Participants, AEPS Accredited Observers, Working Group Accredited Observers and *ad hoc* Observers.

Two of the AEPS Programmes (PAME, EPPR) are organized through a lead country, which appoints a Chair. The AMAP Working Group elects a Chair (from any of the eight countries). The CAFF Chair is selected from among the National Representatives and the position rotates among the countries.

AEPS Observers

The role of the observers to the AEPS are to contribute to the AEPS process on the basis of a documented commitment to, profound interest in, and readiness to contribute to, the protection of the Arctic environment. As stated in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, "the decision to invite observers should be based on a pragmatic and functional evaluation of their involvement in and contribution to Arctic environmental questions".

Annex 5: Principles of AEPS, as stated in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy Document

"The AEPS and its implementation by the eight Arctic countries will be guided by the following principles:

i) Management, planning and development activities shall provide for the conservation, sustainable utilization and protection of Arctic ecosystems and natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, including indigenous peoples;

ii) Use and management of natural resources shall be based on an approach which considers the value and interdependent nature of ecosystem components;

iii) Management, planning and development activities which may significantly affect the arctic ecosystems shall:

a) be based on informed assessment of their possible impacts on the arctic environment, including cumulative impacts;

b) provide for the maintenance of the region's ecological systems and biodiversity;

c) respect the Arctic's significance for and influence on the global climate;

d) be compatible with the sustainable utilization of arctic ecosystems;

e) take into account the results of scientific investigations and the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples;"

(AEPS Strategy Document 1991, pp. 4-5)