

Dear Colleagues,

We hope this finds you well and rested after the summer holidays, and very much look forward to taking up our important work in the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation (TFAMC) in Oslo on September 21st and 22nd. To assist your preparation for this meeting, we write to explain the agenda for this first meeting of the Task Force.

We hope you have had a chance to consult the mandate for this Task Force, as set out in Paragraph 43 of the 2015 Iqaluit Declaration and pages 77-78 of the SAO Report to Ministers. In particular, the Iqaluit Declaration reflects a decision by Ministers to:

Establish a Task Force to assess future needs for a regional seas program or other mechanism, as appropriate, for increased cooperation in Arctic marine areas.

The detailed mandate in the SAO Report to Ministers elaborates that: “The Task Force should deliver a report to Ministers in 2017 identifying future needs for strengthened cooperation for Arctic marine areas, as well as whether the Council should begin negotiations on a cooperation mechanism for Arctic marine areas—ideally naming the specific mechanism—and/or any other recommendations it may deem appropriate.” The detailed mandate in the SAO Report to Ministers further identifies a number of questions for the Task Force to consider and address in its report.

The needs assessment component of our mandate is the logical starting point for our work. Accordingly, the agenda for the first Task Force meeting is focused on assessing needs for mechanisms to facilitate enhanced cooperation. We do not anticipate that this first meeting will address the components of our mandate concerning the nature and scope of future cooperative mechanisms. We will begin with the problem rather than the solution.

We hope that the September Task Force meeting, together with your preparations for it, will enable us make substantial progress on the needs assessment component of our mandate. In particular, the agenda is designed to contribute to a common baseline understanding of:

1. The Arctic Council’s body of work identifying needs for international cooperation in relation to Arctic marine areas (e.g., the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan for 2015-25); and
2. The cooperative tools we have at our disposal.

Toward this end, and to avoid duplication, we have invited representatives of the PAME, CAFF, and AMAP Working Groups to present brief presentations on their work that is relevant to our needs assessment task. In addition, the agenda for the first day of the Task Force meeting includes brief presentations by representatives of marine cooperation mechanisms for other marine areas.

The agenda is structured to facilitate information gathering and relatively informal discussion at this early stage. Toward this end, we do not expect delegates to deliver

settled positions on the needs question, or any other questions identified in our mandate. This meeting will serve as an opportunity to listen, discuss, and agree on working methods for both intersessional work and subsequent Task Force meetings.

The Co-Chairs intend to circulate a proposal on working methods (e.g., the order in which we will take up the questions in our mandate) in advance of the first meeting, and to discuss it on the second day of the meeting.

We request that delegates focus on the needs assessment component of our mandate in preparing for this first meeting. In particular, we recommend that delegates familiarize themselves with recent work by the Arctic Council working groups identifying strategic objectives for the Arctic marine environment necessitating international cooperation (e.g., the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan, see link below http://www.pame.is/images/03_Projects/AMSP/AMSP_2015-2025.pdf)

We encourage any delegation that wishes to share material on mechanisms for marine cooperation with other delegations to email it to the Arctic Council Secretariat, who will then distribute the material to delegates.

We look forward to seeing you in Oslo, and welcome your questions in the interim.

Sincerely,

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Norway

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