

Barrow, October 13, 2000

Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP)

Introduction

In June 1997, the report produced by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) entitled “Arctic Pollution Issues: A State of the Arctic Environment Report” was submitted to Arctic ministers under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. In the Alta Declaration June 1997, the ministers agreed to a number of actions in response to the findings of AMAP. These included increasing efforts to limit and reduce emissions of pollutants into the environment, and the promotion of international co-operation in order to reduce the identified pollution risks.

In September 1998, Arctic Council ministers instructed Senior Arctic Officials to develop an overall plan identifying actions to address the pollution sources identified through AMAP. The ministers requested that the resulting Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP) should:

- Complement existing arrangements. This should include existing legal arrangements, and existing structures and mechanisms under the Arctic Council, such as the Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment from Land-based Activities;
- Allow for actions on a wide scope of pollution prevention issues and corresponding remediation measures; and
- Include the identification of co-operative activities for implementation.

ACAP will act as a strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants. Co-operative actions will make an important and significant contribution to the overall international effort to reduce environmental damage on a global level.

The following ACAP consists of two parts, an overall strategy designed to provide a framework for co-operation and an accompanying Action Plan which can evolve dynamically on a shorter time frame in response to identified priorities reflecting specific projects and activities. The overall strategy is designed to cover all pollution issues of concern under the Arctic Council. The Action Plan will give priority to actions that are complementary to existing action plans and actions both under the Arctic Council and in other fora. The implementation of ACAP will be consistent with the responsibilities, capacities and work plans of the existing Arctic Council working groups as they pertain to pollution prevention.

Overall Strategy

1. Objective

The objective of the Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP) is to prevent adverse effects, reduce and ultimately eliminate pollution of the Arctic Environment.

2. Principles

In developing and implementing ACAP, Arctic States should be mindful of the following principles;

- application of the precautionary approach;
- polluter pays principle;
- promotion of the use of cleaner production methodologies and/or the application of best available techniques (BAT), best environmental practices (BEP) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA);
- recognition and use of traditional knowledge;
- the need to avoid transferring, directly or indirectly, damage or hazards from one area of the environment to another or transform one type of pollution into another;
- the need to co-operate on a regional basis for protection and preservation of the environment, including biodiversity and human health, taking into account characteristic regional features; and
- integration of Arctic environmental concerns in economic, administrative and research sectors.

3. Identifying Actions

3.1 Identification and Assessment of Problems

The identification of existing and potential threats will be based on all relevant information and sources. The significance of these risks will then be assessed by the appropriate Arctic Council working groups.

The severity of the problem to be addressed shall be determined in relation to its effect on the following factors:

- food security, including drinking water;
- human health;
- ecosystem health, including biodiversity;
- protection of living natural resources; and
- socio-economic benefits, including cultural values.

In addition, the assessment should identify the sources of pollution, be they point or non-point, and the affected areas of concern.

The identification and assessment of threats will be on-going. The importance of the application of the precautionary approach is emphasised.

3.2 Criteria for actions

Activities encompass:

- a. Shared problems – i.e. problems where there is an existing or potential risk of trans boundary pollution.
- b. common issues where there is existing or potential similarity in local and national problems which benefit from common approaches.

Proposals for activities to be taken will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- (i) severity of the risk (associated with observed pollutant levels) for adverse environmental, human health or socio-economic consequences;
- (ii) prevalence of a pollutant (e.g. if the pollutant has been found to be widespread in one or more compartments of the Arctic environment, or may endanger human health via consumption of food, including drinking water from the Arctic environment);
- (iii) indications, by models or other scientific predictions, that present and projected use, emissions, and other releases of the pollutants could cause serious negative effects on the environment or on human health;
- (iv) the sources and pathways of the pollutants as they relate to Arctic pollution;
- (v) the potential of the action to encourage countries to take measures (including under other international fora and agreements) that reduce the release to the environment of pollutants of concern;
- (vi) financial implications and cost effectiveness of the action; and
- (vii) local resources/participation;

When evaluating proposed activities, duplication with other national or international efforts should be avoided.

4. Implementation

Actions may be undertaken at national, regional or global levels as indicated below, and may involve developing stronger links with relevant international bodies.

4.1 National

At the national level, the ACAP will encourage and facilitate the development and implementation of national actions by the Arctic states that control, reduce or eliminate emissions, discharges and other releases of anthropogenic pollutants to the Arctic environment.

Resources to implement actions pursuant to ACAP within an Arctic state, including those undertaken as part of a co-operative project, will be the responsibility of that state, although supporting resources may be obtained from other sources.

4.2 Regional and Global

The Arctic States will, whenever possible, advance common positions and interests in international fora dealing with pollution matters of importance to the Arctic. To this end, there will be a focus on the conclusion, ratification and strengthening and financing of relevant international agreements, and on the initiation, where necessary, of new agreements.

To facilitate the ratification and further development and strengthening of international agreements, the Arctic States may develop cooperative activities related to awareness raising, technology transfer, development of alternatives to selected substances associated with Arctic pollution concerns and by exploring ways to finance such activities.

Consistent with ACAP and the Rules of Procedure of the Arctic Council, the Arctic States will urge countries through relevant international bodies (e.g. UNEP, UNECE, OSPARCOM, OECE, IMO, WHO and FAO) to take the necessary measures to control pollutants, or the use of products that may result in pollution of the Arctic.

Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations and financing mechanisms in the funding of concrete projects should be actively sought (e.g. the World Bank, UNEP, EU Commission and the Nordic Council of Ministers, EBRD, NEFCO, GEF)

4.3 Participation and Partners.

ACAP activities should be conducted in cooperation with all appropriate partners. These include, *inter alia*, international organizations and financial institutions, observers, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Local participation, transparency and involvement in the design and implementation of activities are key factors for public and political acceptance. Involvement of local and indigenous communities is essential to achievement of the overall objective.

4.4 The Action plan and functions.

The ACAP has been designed to facilitate expeditious response to identified priorities, and therefore to change over time. Annex A to this Action Plan sets forth a list of cooperative activities that are agreed ACAP actions. Annex A may be amended as additional actions are approved within Ministerial mandates. Annex B sets forth possible future cooperative activities that may be moved to Annex A in the future. Annex C sets forth a list of specific activities being conducted and reported by Arctic States, Permanent Participants and Observers that address issues relevant to ACAP. The implementation mechanism may amend Annexes B and C as appropriate. The updated Annexes should appear on the Arctic Council web site. Proposals shall be prepared in accordance with the Rules of Procedure and address the criteria set forth in 3.2.

ACAP will be implemented under the authority of a mechanism established by Ministers as a subsidiary body of the Arctic Council. The implementation mechanism shall report to SAOs

and shall prepare and oversee ACAP projects and review the ACAP Strategy. The functions and activities of the implementation mechanism shall be subject to the Rules of the Procedure of the Arctic Council and provide for a marketplace of ideas

5. Reporting and reviewing

The implementation mechanisms will report to the SAOs on the implementation and effectiveness of ACAP.

The ACAP strategy shall be reviewed and revised as needed.
