

Arctic Council: Results from pilot projects in the field of hazardous substances, black carbon and waste under Norwegian ACAP Chairmanship

The Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment took over the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council Working Group Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP) in May 2019. The Norwegian Chairmanship highlighted the aim to achieve progress in the field of: Associated petroleum gas (APG) flaring project, mercury and the Circumpolar Local Environment Observer project.

Prior to the Norwegian Chairmanship an evaluation of ACAP Working Group was conducted by Fridtjof Nansen Institute. It was based on interviews with representatives in the Ministry, Norwegian Environment Agency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It provided ideas for strengthening of ACAP's Work, when it was released in November 2019 and it was translated to English and Russian and discussed in ACAP WG. All recommendations were followed up and implemented.

In particular the following measures have been important for the progress:

- A full time Executive Secretary for ACAP was provided by Arctic Council Secretariate to increase the capacity of work. Kseniia Iartceva was employed as Executive Secretary in November 2019. Strengthened work on communication (ACAP web page established in March 2020) and close co-operation with the new Arctic Council Secretariate Communications team.
- Green travel policy established and use of online meetings from June 2019 by use of the "Go-to-Meeting" platform. Online meetings have provided less travel cost and absence from office. In addition, less journeys means less emissions. It has worked well for ACAP WG. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only one physical meeting was held, at the Fram Center in Tromsø in September 2019.
- Increased use of workshops and webinars to stimulate awareness raising, engaging observers and capacity building within ACAP.

The ACAP web site was launched in March 2020, and ACAP WG started to produce articles on completed projects (on dioxins in May 2020, on the APG flaring report in June 2020) and on current projects (on mercury and other toxic substances and their effects on flora, fauna and ecosystems in October 2020). A webinar on mercury with about 70 participants was held on 22 September 2020. Another APG flaring webinar with about 90 participants was held on 27-28 October 2020 in co-operation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia and Fund Manager of Arctic Council's Project Support Instrument (PSI), NEFCO.

Significant progress has been achieved on the following projects, which also are deliverables to the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Reykjavik, 18-20 May 2021:

- Black Carbon and Methane: Mitigation of black carbon and methane emissions from APG flaring in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation project.
- Hazardous substances: Demonstration of Rapid Environmental Assessment of Pesticides Contaminated Sites project.

- Waste: Kola Waste project.
- CLEO Initiative: reporting tool (an online platform and an app) for observational changes in environment for local population.

In addition, substantial progress has been made in the projects with financial support from PSI in the field of mercury, POPs, solid waste, chemicals of emerging concern and several pilot projects on black carbon and other greenhouse gases.

The last 2 years have been productive for ACAP WG. There has been close co-operation with other subsidiary bodies of the Arctic Council as well. Most important there has been an increased understanding that ACAP can only demonstrate pilot projects to show possibilities to cut emissions and find solutions, and that the nation states have to strengthen their policies and engage observers to make decisions to significantly limit pollution and climate change in the Arctic through regional and global conventions.

US will take over the Chairmanship of ACAP WG from 20 May 2021.