

Sustainable Arctic Observing Networks (SAON): External Review

1. Background

In the Salekhard Declaration (2006), the Arctic Council "Urges all Member countries to maintain and extend long term monitoring of change in all parts of the Arctic, and request the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) to cooperate with other Arctic Council Working Groups, the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and other partners in efforts to create a coordinated Arctic Observing network that meets identified societal needs".

The Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) was established following the Nuuk Declaration in 2011¹. In the report to the Nuuk meeting, the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) of the Arctic Council had decided that "The SAOs will review the SAON structure in two to four years' time and make any necessary adjustments to the structure at that time"².

This is further detailed in the SAON Terms of Reference³: "In order to both ensure the success of SAON, as well as the effective implementation of its tasks, activities and related operations, an external body will review SAON on a periodic basis to be determined by the SAON Board in consultation with the AC and IASC. The SAON Board will develop details for implementation of, and response to, the review during and in between its formal meetings".

This document is the plan for the review, and it has four parts 1) Background, 2) The Review Committee 3) The Survey, and 4) Timelines.

The review will be conducted by a Review Committee, and is planned to take place in early 2016. The review will have two goals: It will look backward and investigate how SAON has met its mandate in the past, but will also look forward and give future directions on the development of SAON.

AMAP, IASC, The Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS), and The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) have conducted similar reviews in the past years, and background documents from these reviews have been consulted in the preparations for this document⁴⁻⁷.

2. The Review Committee

2.1 Review Committee composition

The Committee members shall be experts of international recognition with a broad understanding of Arctic observations and policy. The expertise of the members shall cover the whole perspective of SAON goals and objectives, considering geographical, age and gender balance. The Committee will have five members, and in order to cover the breath of SAON, it will ideally cover these areas:

(1) Scientific community

- (2) Governmental agency
- (3) Indigenous
- (4) Industry
- (5) Global observing systems

The reviewers should be independent, have some knowledge about SAON, but not have been involved in SAON work for at least the past five years. Independent secretariat support will be provided.

2.2 Terms of Reference for the Review Committee

The Review Committee should evaluate SAON with particular focus on:

- The organisational structure of SAON
- The extent to which current SAON activities is fulfilling its original mission
- The SAON outreach and communication activities
- Providing suggestions for additional and future activities for SAON, including meeting frequencies and intersessional activities
- The question of funding and sustainability of SAON

A major activity of the review will be to conduct a survey among SAON stakeholders. The Review Committee will receive a proposal on the contents of the survey from the Board, but the Review Committee will make the final decision on the composition of the survey.

In addition, the Committee should study these background documents:

- SAON Terms of Reference
- SAON Overview document:
 - o SAON history before and after the Nuuk Declaration (brief)
 - o Committee mandates and activities (web site, work plans)
 - o SAON outreach activities (web site, newsletter, Facebook, Arctic Observing Summit, Polar Data Forum)
 - o SAON national and organisation reports
 - o Overview of networks and projects
 - o Funding (fiscal, in-kind, Secretariat)
- Selected SAON products: CBM Atlas, Project Directory and MetaData Search Facility
- Minutes from meetings of the SAON Board, Executive, and Committees

The Committee is welcome to interview persons that have been involved in SAON since the beginning, with the aim of providing insight into the relationship between the SAON mission and SAON's past and present activities.

The Committee should report back to the SAON Board on its findings in September 2016. The volume of the report is expected to be 5-10 pages + appendices

3. The Survey

The survey will provide feedback from the community and will be an important input to the Review Committee work. It is proposed that it should have a backward looking component and a forward looking component. The backward looking component would outline the visions and principles for SAON as formulated by the SAON Initiating Group, Steering Group and Board, and it would ask the reviewers if SAON has properly addressed these. In the forward looking component respondents would be asked to formulate wishes, recommendations and expectations with regards to SAON's future development.

It is expected that the knowledge about SAON among the wider group of stakeholders is limited. It is also expected that a second group of stakeholders (Board members, Committee members, AC SAOs, AC WGs, and IASC Council) has a more detailed insight into SAON and its business. The proposal is consequently to organise an open survey, in principle accessible to anyone, but also to have a closed part directed towards the second stakeholder group. Questions in the open part could be organized under the headings: 1) Introductions, 2) The Need, 3) Outcomes, and 4) Awareness and Outreach. Additional questions in the closed part would be included under the headings 5) The SAON Committees, and 6) The SAON Organisational Structure.

The secretariat supporting the work will send out the survey to the respondents and will provide the analysis to the Review Committee.

4. Timelines

- 2 December: Draft review plan presented to Board
- 15 December: Board to provide comments and provide reviewer candidate names
- 8 January: New version of plan circulated
- 15 January: Board approval of plan
- 15 January: Draft survey presented to Board
- 22 January: Overview document finalised
- 22 January: Review Committee appointed
- 22 January: Board provide written input to the survey
- Mid-End March2016: Review Committee telephone conference
- 15 April: Review Committee releases survey contents
- 4 May: Survey is coded by SAON Secretariat and made available
- 17 June: Survey is completed
- 1 July: Survey database and analysis handed over to Review Committee
- Mid-August 2016: Review Committee physical meeting
- Mid-October 2016: Review report published

5. References

- 1) Nuuk Declaration (2011): <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/92>
- 2) Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) Report to Ministers, Nuuk, Greenland, May 2011:
[http://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/5th_tromso/sao_report_to_ministers -
_nuuk_ministerial_meeting_may_2011.pdf](http://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/5th_tromso/sao_report_to_ministers_-_nuuk_ministerial_meeting_may_2011.pdf)
- 3) SAON Terms of Reference:
[http://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/4th_potsdam/34_saon%20terms%20of%
20reference.doc](http://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/4th_potsdam/34_saon%20terms%20of%20reference.doc)
- 4) An International Review and Strategy for the IASC Council:
<http://iasc25.iasc.info/images/history/reviews/IASC-2007-Review-and-Strategy-Paper.pdf>
- 5) External Review of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Strategy:
<http://www.amap.no/documents/download/985>
- 6) Survey on SCAR Organisational Structure (2015):
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=282292838637823&story_fbid=351728355027604
- 7) APECS Organisational Review (2015): [http://www.apecs.is/who-we-are/organisational-review-
2015.html](http://www.apecs.is/who-we-are/organisational-review-2015.html)
- 8) Plan for the Implementation Phase of SAON:
[http://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/5th_tromso/saon_report_february_2011
2.pdf](http://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/5th_tromso/saon_report_february_2011_2.pdf)