**Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON)**

**Points of contact**

SAON Chair: Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, The Icelandic Centre for Research – RANNÍS, Iceland; email [Thorsteinn.Gunnarsson@Rannis.is](mailto:Thorsteinn.Gunnarsson@Rannis.is)

SAON Vice-Chair: Larry D. Hinzman, Vice Chancellor for Research, University of Alaska Fairbanks, USA; email [ldhinzman@alaska.edu](mailto:ldhinzman@alaska.edu)

SAON Secretary: Jan Rene Larsen, Arctic Monitoring and Assessment (AMAP) Secretariat, Norway; email [jan.rene.larsen@amap.no](mailto:jan.rene.larsen@amap.no)

**Background**

The Arctic is one of the fastest changing regions on the Earth where impacts of major changes are felt both early and more strongly than elsewhere on the globe. The Arctic is shaped by global processes, and in turn, influences living conditions not only of the people living there and depending on it, but also of hundreds of millions of people at lower latitudes.

One of the main themes at the 2016 Arctic Science Ministerial[[1]](#footnote-1) was *Strengthening and Integrating Arctic Observations and Data Sharing***.** The ministers committed to the “*shared development of a science-driven, integrated Arctic-observing system*” and saw “*a critical role for the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) initiative*”.

In the 2017 Fairbanks Declaration[[2]](#footnote-2), Arctic Council governments *“recognize the need to increase cooperation in meteorological, oceanographic and terrestrial observations, research and services, and the need for well-maintained and sustained observation net-works and continuous monitoring in the Arctic”*.

**The role of SAON in building and sustaining a pan-Arctic Observing System**

SAON's vision is a connected, collaborative, and comprehensive long-term pan-Arctic Observing System that serves societal needs. SAON facilitates, coordinates, and advocates for coordinated international pan-Arctic observations and mobilizes the support needed to sustain them.

SAON has the mandate to mobilize new/additional resources to meet observing needs as well as promote cooperation and coordination among existing initiatives. To that end, collaborating nations must ensure long term support and engagement for Arctic Observations based upon consideration of the main societal benefits of long-term monitoring.

SAON is a joint initiative of the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) that aims to strengthen multinational engagement in pan-Arctic observing. The SAON process was established in 2011 at the Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council (AC) via the *Nuuk Declaration***.**

**SAON capacity**

A new strategy for SAON was approved in May 2018. It describes SAON’s vision, mission, guiding principle and goals, and outlines in concrete steps the manner in which the goals will be achieved[[3]](#footnote-3).

SAON has adopted the following three goals and SAON’s guiding principles support its work across these:

* Create a holistic roadmap to a well-integrated Arctic Observing System;
* Promote free and ethically open access to all Arctic observational data; and
* Ensure sustainability of Arctic observing.

Addressing SAON goals requires a wide range expertise, knowledge and cooperation of rights- and stake -holders. SAON collaborates with policy-makers at all levels, Arctic Indigenous Peoples organizations, academicians, civil society and the private sector. SAON currently has 18 member nations, two AC Permanent Participants (Arctic Indigenous Peoples organisations) and partnerships with numerous regional and international organisations including the European Union/European Commission (EU/EC), European Space Agency (ESA), the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), International Study of Arctic Change (ISAC), the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and many more[[4]](#footnote-4). Our strong connections to the research policy priorities of our member nations and our partner organizations enable SAON to play the central coordinating role in integrating observing systems and networks throughout the circumpolar Arctic. SAON is currently in the process of applying for status as a regional initiative within GEO as the ArcticGEOSS.

Sustainability of Arctic observing, requires improved coordinated of national programs and improved sharing of data by all relevant entities. SAON will play the liaison/advocate role between the research communities and policy makers. This approach must include a balance of national priorities vs circumpolar coordination priorities, and assessment of the benefits of Arctic coordination for the respective national observation priorities.

**Recommendation**

Following the recommendation from ASM1 and the Arctic Observing Summit in 2016 and 2018[[5]](#footnote-5) (see also the ASM2 Deliverable on Arctic Observing Summit 2018), it is recommended that SAON is supported and resourced at levels sufficient to enable international coordination for building of an Arctic Observing System.

1. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/28/joint-statement-ministers [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/1910/EDOCS-4339-v1-ACMMUS10\_FAIRBANKS\_2017\_Fairbanks\_Declaration\_Brochure\_Version\_w\_Layout.PDF?sequence=8&isAllowed=y [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.arcticobserving.org/strategy [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.arcticobserving.org/partners [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.arcticobservingsummit.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)