

Minutes of the SAON Board Meeting (teleconference)

6th March 2014

11-12:30 EST / 17-18:30 CET

Jan René Larsen (SAON Secretary) welcomed the participants to the meeting and draw attention to the outcome of the SAON Board meeting in Vancouver in 2013. At the meeting, a document had been presented with a proposal to establish two Committees in SAON. The SAON Executive Committee had been given these two actions:

- 1) Further develop the Committee structure to include CBM, and
- 2) Develop ToR for the two Committees

The Executive Committee had developed two draft documents, which had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting:

- 1) Implementation of the SAON Strategy, and
- 2) Terms of Reference for SAON Committees

The Board members had been asked to review the documents. Prior to the meeting comments had been received from

- Agnieszka Beszczynska-Möller, Poland
- Nicole Biebow, Germany
- Ulf Jonsell, Sweden
- Vito Vitale, Italy
- Yubao Qiu, GEO Secretariat

These comments had also been circulated to the Board members prior to the meeting.

Jan René Larsen explained that the purpose of the meeting would be to approve the documents. He made reference to the “Rules of Procedure for SAON Board”, according to which “the SAON Board will work to achieve general agreement (i.e., consensus) on issues. If consensus cannot be achieved, the SAON Chair will order a formal vote on the outstanding issues. A simple majority of Members present will be required to achieve approval of any action subject to a formal vote.”

Tom Armstrong (AMAP, SAON chair) also welcomed the participants and explained about the background for the two documents. From the first meetings the Board had been charged with formulating and implementing a SAON strategy. From the beginning, SAON had ‘owned’ a number of Tasks, but there was a need to develop a framework where SAON could add value to these Tasks and vice-versa. The two documents propose that two Committees (Committee on Observations and Networks (CON) and Committee on Information and Data Services (CDIS)) will be established and will be given four assignments:

1A) Collection of data/information from Arctic social, economic, health and environmental sciences and observations, including permission to access geographical areas and platforms, and to present financial options for long term funding of platforms and operations.

1B) Establishment of a Circum-Arctic set of early warning indicators (an indicators network), focused initially on indicators of climate change that link to existing and ongoing Arctic assessments and provide the Arctic community with a status of the health of specific Arctic natural and human systems.

2A) Free and easy access to data and information.

2B) Integration and dissemination of data and information will be provided through a SAON-led Circum-Arctic Information System (CAIS).

Tom Armstrong explained that members of the Committees will come from the Tasks, the Board and from the outside. He also explained that the Committees were meant to utilize existing initiatives and systems. If an initiative already existed to serve a particular goal, then it should be used. Tom Armstrong also pointed out that if the framework was accepted, then it should be realized that it may not last forever. The principle of utilizing existing resources means that these can come and go.

Another important assignment for the Committees would be to make proposals for new Tasks and to review new and existing Tasks.

In the following discussion, Mikko Strahlendorff (Finland) made the meeting aware of the new EU programme Copernicus. He believed that the programme would be a good opportunity to raise funding for new activities. The programme has approached Finland and other Arctic states for user requirements. He saw the SAON documents as fitting well with this initiative and supported them.

Erica Key (USA) stressed that goals for the work of the Committees should be clear, grounded and inclusive. She discussed the four assignments and mentioned the 'Arctic Observing Viewer' in the context of 1A). In the context of 1B) she mentioned the work in the USA on 'Adaptive strategic indicators'. For 2A) and 2B) she believed that focus should be on value-added products that are relevant for stakeholders. She finally mentioned the Belmont call where she saw an opportunity for SAON to obtain funding.

Tom Armstrong agreed that any of the SAON goals should be grounded and linked. The first things that the Committees should do would be to ensure not to duplicate existing initiatives. SAON should also have a client role and provide information into global initiatives like GEOSS.

Jim Gamble (AIA) said that it is a logical step to divide the work among the Committees. He expressed a concern that 'the devil is in the detail' in the sense that even though the assignments of the Committees are clear, it would require work to develop and execute these. He believed that the goals described in the document follows the original SAON idea. He finally mentioned Canadian work on human dimension 'adaptive capacity indicators'.

Nikolaj Bock (EEA) found that the documents were useful and helpful. He noted that in the history of SAON it was obvious that the sum of the Tasks would not necessarily be in line with the overall SAON goals. He believed that especially the assignments of the Committees to review existing and propose new Tasks would be useful, since SAON will soon need new Tasks in order to meet the overall goals. He expressed full support to the documents.

Yubao Qui (GEO) believed that the documents would support SAON efforts to deliver tangible outcomes. He discussed the four assignments and noted that 2A) is about data policy and that GEO supports the principle of full and open access to data. In the context of 2B) he mentioned that GEOSS is a global, sustainable and interoperability system of systems, , depending on underlying existing systems, like the proposed Circum-Arctic Information System (CAIS). GEOSS can provide an interface to this for the GEOSS member countries and participant organizations, and which would greatly expands access to CAIS for world-wide users. Its outcomes also provide guidance to the global GEOSS. He finally briefly described the “Cold Regions” initiative which includes the Antarctic and the Himalayas-Third Pole in addition to the Arctic.

Vito Vitale (Italy) said that the principles outlined in the documents would bring SAON in the right direction. He saw however, that problems might arise from the terminology and that it will take time to compile the relevant information. Overall, he believed that the proposed organization is good.

Peter Schlosser (ISAC) stated that the documents point in the right direction. Attention has to be paid on adding values to things that are already done. There is an increasing number of portals and data bases, and the problem is to use them effectively. The work will have to be a flexible process since requirements and data streams changes. Care should be taken not to build something that is static, but something that can be changed along with requirements.

Etienne Charpentier (WMO) believed that the strategy and structure proposed was appropriate. He said that WMO can contribute to the four goals. CryoNet of the Global Cryosphere Watch (GCW) would contribute to Goal 1A. For 2B, the WMO Commission for Climatology (CCI) has an expert team working on climate change detection and indices, which is also taking Arctic related indices into account. In the contexts of 2A) he mentioned the potential contribution of the WMO Information System (WIS) and that free and unrestricted data access consistently with WMO Res. 50 (Cg-12) data policy are also important topics for WMO. For 2B) the GCW is planning to identify key GCW datasets. This includes the development of an inventory of candidate *in situ* and satellite products for GCW that are mature (product quality) and generally accepted (credible) by the scientific community. GCW will facilitate the harmonization of products (e.g., multiple sea ice estimates), facilitate product intercomparisons, and oversee development of data policies for GCW. He agreed with earlier speakers that duplication should be avoided, and efforts should be made to make existing systems interoperable, and that this should be stressed in the Terms of Reference for the Committees.

Martin Jeffries (USA) discussed SAON from a broader perspective, noting that SAON currently is broad and all-encompassing. He asked if SAON is doing too much. He argued that SAON is not a funding agency and that SAON should focus on finding its niche. SAON should define the services to provide, and one example could be web sites (not portals) that could provide value added products. SAON could do an effort within data discovery and work across portals, and an outcome could be interoperability among existing archives. This would require and effort within the definition of metadata profiles.

Tom Armstrong responded that the current collection of Tasks does not make SAON a program. The key question continues to be ‘What is the value-added of SAON?’. The documents represent some ideas for developing a SAON niche.

Jackie Grebmeier (PAG) expressed support for the documents.

Ulf Jonsell (Sweden) supported the idea of establishing the Committees. He expressed some concern over the idea of establishing inventories, and stressed the importance of 'not reinventing wheel'.

Tom Armstrong asked the meeting if the documents could be approved, and the documents were approved by consensus.

David Hik (IASC, SAON vice-Chair) stated that the most important next step would be to determine the membership of the Committees

Erica Key asked how to ensure communication between the Committees.

Tom Armstrong responded that this is important and will have to be addressed in order to define the most efficient mechanism. He thanked the participants for their attendance and looked forward to the next Board meeting in Helsinki.

The list of participants is found in Appendix 1. Apologies had been received from a number of Board members. Eva Kruemmel (ICC) attended the meeting, but could not be heard by the other participants due to technical problems.

Appendix 1

List of Participants

Affiliation	Name	Email
Chairmanship		
AMAP	Tom Armstrong (Chair)	tarmstrong@usgcrp.gov
IASC	David Hik (Vice-Chair)	dhik@ualberta.ca
National representatives		
Finland	Mikko Strahlendorff	mikko.strahlendorff@lvm.fi
Italy	Vito Vitale	v.vitale@isac.cnr.it
Sweden	Ulf Jonsell	ulf.jonsell@polar.se
USA	Martin Jeffries	jeffriesmo@gmail.com
USA	Erica Key	ekey@nsf.gov
Representatives for Arctic Council Permanent Participant		
AIA	Jim Gamble	
ICC	Eva Krümmel	ekruemmel@inuitcircumpolar.com
Organization representatives		
EEA	Nikolaj Bock	nikolaj.Bock@eea.europa.eu
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