

Terms of Reference for SAON CON

1. Background

The Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) supports and strengthens the development of multinational engagement for sustained and coordinated pan-Arctic observing and data sharing systems that serve societal needs, particularly related to environmental, social, economic and cultural issues. SAON promotes the Vision of well-defined observing networks that enable users to have access to high quality data that will realize pan-Arctic and global value-added services and provide societal benefits. Its Goal is to enhance Arctic-wide observing activities by facilitating partnerships and synergies among observing and data networks, and promoting sharing and synthesis of data and information. SAON is committed to facilitating the inclusion of Arctic Indigenous Peoples in observing activities. The SAON Leadership Team was established in 2011 at the request of the Arctic Council (AC) and IASC to provide governance for SAON activities. The Team, including a Board and an Executive Committee, is responsible for creating its own operating guidelines in order to maximize its capacity to encourage activities that enhance relevant Arctic observations and associated requirements for data-sharing and knowledge translation.

In 2014 the SAON Board recognized the need for task-oriented committees to provide advice to the Board on securing and improving Arctic observations and networks and the accessibility of information and data. This resulted in the establishment of two SAON Committees: (1) Committee on Observations and Networks (CON), and (2) Arctic Data Committee (ADC).

2. Tasks and aims

The overarching goal of SAON CON is to promote and facilitate international collaboration towards the goal of a pan-Arctic observational system for long term acquisition and proliferation of fundamental knowledge on global environmental change, with a holistic/Earth System Science perspective. The specific Tasks and related aims of SAON CON include the following:

Task 1. Support to SAON

- Through the use of inventories, advise the SAON Board on co-ordination and collaboration of Arctic observing activities and address questions regarding
 - o provision of information on the baseline arctic observational assets that are currently available
 - o improvement of the Arctic observing networks (i.e. identify synergies, gaps, duplication)

- o sustainability of observational platforms among nations and organizations (including indigenous peoples)
- o effective planning (including funding) of current and future observational systems
- Coordinate and support of the relationship between CON and national SAON committees in terms of
 - o providing coordination
 - o acting as a platform into which national committees can feed information
 - o facilitating sharing of information and inventories of Arctic Observing Systems managed nationally
 - o supporting, where needed, the development of National SAON committees
- Work with the partner SAON committee, Arctic Data Committee (ADC) on common strategies, meetings and products and (e.g. arrange workshops, develop visualization methods, link inventories and data etc.).

Task 2. Policy support and inter-organizational collaboration

- Participate and support inventory requests/needs for Arctic Council -relevant themes. Ensure engagement and linkages with inventory activities carried out by the Arctic Council Working Groups (e.g. the monitoring programs of AMAP and the biodiversity programs with CAFF).
- Develop partnerships with other initiatives (e.g. WMO's Global Cryosphere Watch (GCI), GEO Cold Regions Initiative (GEOCRI) and projects (e.g. EU-PolarNet, INTERACT, INTAROS) by membership, joint meetings and/or collaboration on joint activities or products like inventories
- Facilitate interactions at the science-policy interface by helping to translate and communicate observation-based knowledge to decision-making in the Arctic regions and beyond.

Task 3. Building capacity for observing networks and observations

- Support, via participatory engagement (e.g. inventories, meetings, events and workshops) and where possible with resources, Arctic observational assets (project, programs, platforms, networks) that span across the environmental/natural, social, economic, and health and sciences
- Build and support the community of observing networks across domains by facilitating the sharing of best practises and creation of common guidelines via participatory engagement and consultations

Task 4. Knowledge exchange across scales of observations

- Inclusion of all scales of observations to SAON and SAON CON, spanning from local and community-based and in-situ observing to remote sensing observations and promotion of integration and collaboration across scales of observations

- Strengthening the role of community-based monitoring within the arctic observing activities and within SAON
- Work, jointly with traditional knowledge holders and local communities, on best practices for the utilization of traditional and community-based knowledge in arctic observing
- Build capacity and develop connections between scientists, community members and holders of traditional knowledge

3. Work planning for Tasks/Deliverables

Work plans will be developed to achieve identified tasks/deliverables. The work plan periods will follow the two-year AC chairmanship period. Tasks and deliverables must support the goals and objectives of the SAON and SAON CON and can be proposed by the committees, executive and board. Short and long term tasks must be agreed to at both the Board and Committee level. Once defined, the Committee will develop a work plan to achieve the tasks/deliverables that will be shared back with the executive and board.

Without dedicated funds to the SAON CON, the completion and work toward tasks is dependent on the participation level/ability of the CON membership, secretariat and external partnership support.

4. Membership, Chairs and Responsibilities

SAON CON is comprised of a Chairmanship, Secretariat and appointed representatives of SAON member countries, organizations, AC Permanent Participants and networks. CON National/Organizational Representatives are appointed by the SAON Board. To ensure broad engagement from all interested individuals and organizations, additional experts can be invited to join CON through an open nomination process, pending approval by the SAON Board.

The chairmanship can consist of Co-chairs, or a Chair and a number of Vice-chairs.

The National Representatives should be appointed according to the following criteria: They should a) be in a position to reflect national arctic observational interests and activities, b) be highly motivated to be able to network both at the national level (within and among agencies, universities, networks) and internationally within CON and c) ideally be a member of a National SAON committee/team (or inventory).

The SAON CON Chairmanship should, ideally, consist of representatives of different countries and organizations, to broaden up the SAON CON partnerships. The chairmanship are nominated among and

by the SAON CON members. The nominations are confirmed by the SAON Board for a term of two years. Cycles of chairs and deliverables should follow the two-year cycle of the Arctic Council.

The SAON CON members will participate on the meetings and ongoing activities, contribute a national perspective, and report updates and work to the associated SAON Board member. and SAON Board

Where the CON decisions require voting, the National Representative(s) and the Organizational representative(s) cast the votes. The outcome of the voting is determined by a simple majority.

5. Frequency and Types of meetings

The Committee will meet bi-monthly with the exception of the summer field season (June-August). Meetings can occur more frequently to reflect the needs of specific tasks or deliverables at hand. Meetings are held via teleconference supported by the SAON Secretariat. Face to face meetings will occur during the Arctic Observing Summit (AOS), a meeting hosted by SAON and IASC. Additional face to face meetings may be proposed with opportunistic gatherings/conferences.

6. Work Plan, Reporting and Review

The SAON CON activities will be organised into a two-year work plan. The work plan development is led by the CON Chairmanship, and it's following the two-year chairmanship terms. The work plan includes short and long term tasks, milestones and deliverables that support the SAON and SAON CON goals and objectives. The SAON Board will accept the work plan and follow its execution.

The SAON CON chairmanship will be responsible on reporting of the work plan, and the progress towards the tasks, milestones and deliverables at the Board meetings. The Chairs will report back to the Committee on Board updates, revisions and feedback on the work plan and its progress.

7. Secretarial Support

Secretarial Support for CON will be made available through the SAON Secretariat and includes, but is not limited to, assisting with:

- Preparing for, and reporting on all CON meetings;
- Maintaining the web site for the SAON CON;
- Organizing, facilitating and attending meetings of the CON;
- Developing and maintaining inventory work, lists of publications, workshops and other outputs for the Committee
- Responding to outside requests for information;
- Facilitating communication between the CON and other organisations