

Terms of Reference for the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks Governance and Operations

Purpose: To provide processes for realizing SAON Vision and Goals, and criteria for membership to the SAON Leadership Team.

Introduction

The Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) process 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. The Terms of Reference provides a set of processes for programmatic implementation and overall strategic development of SAON, including:

- Promoting sustained Arctic observing and data management;
- Reviewing and coordinating work on current SAON Tasks;
- Identifying priorities for new SAON Tasks and potential Task leaders;
- Engaging with the existing observing and data management activities, and encouraging new activities as needed;
- Consulting with the broad science and user communities;
- Reporting and responding to co-sponsors;
- Publicizing SAON achievements;
- Other purposes to be determined.

Structure of SAON leadership Team:

The SAON Leadership Team, responsible for programmatic implementation and overall strategic development, consists of two bodies:

- A SAON Board, responsible for providing guidance and direction on programmatic operations, including science priorities, and project approval and integration, and
- A SAON Executive Committee, responsible for overall governance issues, including alignment of SAON strategic direction with the goals and objectives of both the AC and IASC.

The AC (via AMAP) and IASC will provide Secretariat support for the SAON Leadership Team as needed.

The SAON Board:

- The SAON Board shall be responsible for all programmatic and operational issues, including determination of SAON scientific priorities, approving new SAON Tasks and the continuation or termination of existing SAON Tasks (as described in the Rules of Procedure for the SAON Board in Appendix 1).
- Each AC member country is entitled to one seat on the Board, by selecting a member of that country's National SAON Coordinating Committee or its equivalent.
- Each of the AC Permanent Participants (PP) and each of the AC Working Groups (WG) are also entitled to one seat on the Board.
- The IASC and WMO will each have one seat on the Board.
- Non AC countries and international organization will be invited to have a seat on the Board. Their SAON Board membership terminates when they are no longer participating in the work of SAON at the Task level.

The SAON Executive Committee:

- The Executive Committee (EC) is comprised of the SAON Chair and vice-Chair, one of the eight AC country members, one of the six PPs and the SAON Executive Secretariat (ex-officio). EC participation by the AC country member and the PP will be rotational on a two-year basis. The EC is supported by the AC and IASC Secretariats.
- The Executive Committee will be chaired by the SAON Chair and vice-Chair.
- The Executive Committee operates as a board of directors and manages SAON's activities between SAON Board meetings.
- The Executive Committee will ensure that the SAON strategic goals and objectives are effectively met and that the overall governance of SAON does not conflict with the goals, objectives and procedures of either the AC or IASC.

Relationship of SAON to the AC and IASC (The SAON Co-Sponsors):

- The SAON Chair and the vice-Chair are responsible for reporting to the co-Sponsors, and for reporting to the Executive Committee and Board any information from the co-Sponsors.
- SAON is not bound to the rules and procedures of either the AC or IASC.

Reporting and Review Process:

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.

Appendix 1: Rules of Procedures for the SAON Board

Management of the Board:

- All SAON Board members have equal status.
- The Arctic Council will provide the Chair of the SAON Board. IASC will provide the vice-Chair of the SAON Board.
- The Board may establish other subsidiary bodies as needed.

Responsibilities of Members:

- Board members are responsible for representing the country or organization that appointed them as a point of contact for the relevant observing and data management activities and priorities of their country or organization and providing that knowledge to the entire SAON Board.
- Board members are expected to evaluate current SAON tasks and networks, identify new tasks or networks and encourage action(s) to implement them.
- Board members are expected to seek financial resources needed to undertake SAON tasks.
- Board members are responsible for the cost of their participation in SAON Board activities.

Frequency and Types of Meetings:

At a minimum, the Board will meet annually, and may hold additional meetings or tele-meetings as needed.

Decision-Making:

- 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.
- The Rules of Procedures may be amended by unanimous agreement of the full Membership.
- The agenda and final version of minutes of all Board meetings and decisions will be made available on the SAON website by the SAON Secretariat.