

Progress Report on the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 - 2020



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Name of the Region: Arctic

Name of the contact person for this report: Soffia Gudmundsdottir

Email: soffia@pame.is

Guidance: Please provide any updates since the 18th GMRS held in 2016 up to date

I. Progress in the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 -2020 since 2017 up to date

1. Reduce marine pollution of all kinds in line with the SDG Goal 14.1.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
1.1	Enhance data, information management, monitoring and assessment at national and regional level through development of guidelines, baselines, regional indicators, and monitoring programmes as well as identification of region-specific emerging issues through research	<p>Refer to PAME's Desktop Study on Marine Litter including Microplastics in the Arctic and the Arctic-RPA 2009</p> <p>PAME completed the <i>Desktop Study on Marine Litter, including microplastics, in the Arctic</i> (Phase I). The main task was to collect all relevant and existing literature and scientific studies on marine litter in the Arctic. The aim was to better understand the sources and drivers of marine litter, the pathways and distribution, the interactions with and impacts on Biota, and monitoring and responses. This is the first compilation of marine litter covering the circumpolar Arctic but is by no means comprehensive. It helps to improve the understanding of the status and impacts of marine litter, and in particular plastic litter and microplastics, in the Arctic region. A marine litter expert group was established to assist in this work, in addition to its collaboration with other</p>	<p>Development of a Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Marine Litter in the Arctic during the 2019-2021 period. This work builds upon the "Desktop Study on Marine Litter including Micro-plastics in the Arctic (2019)" with the aim to provide information on the current status on this topic in the Arctic. (further information here). The Desktop Study lists a number of findings, gaps, and recommendations on next steps for PAME's and other Arctic Council Working Groups' considerations as relevant to their respective mandates.</p> <p>It is envisioned that the RAP may be updated in subsequent bienniums to address new and emerging information and priorities, necessitating a realistic and flexible structure that remains adaptable. This project will address both sea and land-based activities,</p>	

		Arctic Council WGs. A workshop was convened in June 2018 in Iceland in support of this project.	focusing on Arctic-specific marine litter sources and pathways, which will play an important role in demonstrating Arctic States' stewardship efforts towards reducing negative impacts of marine litter, including microplastics, to the Arctic marine environment	
		Development of the Arctic Marine Shipping Traffic (ASTD) database with further information here	Online ASTD system launched in Feb 2019	
1.2	Raise the visibility of relevant pollution issues at all levels and facilitate science-policy interactions emphasizing socio-economic impacts and promoting relevant practices, tools, technologies and measures	<p>The communication and outreach activities on marine litter will continue from the 2017-2019 period and include the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Marine Litter workshop/conference ii. "Plastic in a bottle" iii. Project video iv. Arctic marine litter competition v. Marine Litter graphics site on the PAME website for outreach purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Link to workshop here ii. The Arctic Council's Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group launched the first bottle equipped with a GPS transmitter into the Atlantic today 12 September. Called "plastic in a bottle", the capsule will simulate how marine litter and plastics travel far distances into and out of Arctic waters. The collected data will serve as an outreach tool to create awareness around the growing concerns on marine litter in the Arctic. This first plastic in a bottle was sent off from the Reykjanes peninsula by Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Iceland's Minister for the Environment and Natural 	ongoing

			<p>Resources from the Icelandic Coast Guard vessel Thor in conjunction with the PAME Working Group meeting in Reykjavík. Iceland currently holds the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council until 2021 and places a special focus on marine litter and plastics in the Arctic.</p> <p>iii. Project video: here</p> <p>iv. Work in progress</p> <p>v. Work in progress here</p>	
1.3	Raise issues at global level and facilitate regionalization of outcomes of the GPA IGR4 and mandated global partnerships	<p>In the context marine policy related to Arctic marine pressures and challenges that require common solutions in the Arctic, PAME considers a range of marine issues, and promotes the knowledge, policies and approaches needed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase Marine Biodiversity Conservation: Advance the application of the ecosystem-based approach to management and MPA networks 2) Increase Sustainable Maritime Activities: Help define and promote low- 		

		<p>impact operations, including by reducing risk of pollution</p> <p>3) Tackle Stressors on the Arctic Marine Environment: Reduce and prevent marine pollution, and identify and address emerging risks, including those linked to climate change</p>		

2. Create increased resilience of people, marine and coastal ecosystems, and their health and productivity, in line with the SDG Goal 13 and decisions made at the UNFCCC COP21.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
2.1	Support mainstreaming of climate change into regional and national policies and institutional frameworks	The Arctic Council Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (AMSP 2015-2025) was developed by PAME in cooperation with the Arctic Council members, its subsidiary bodies and observers and approved by ministers in 2015.	The AMSP provides a framework to guide its actions to protect Arctic marine and coastal ecosystems and to promote sustainable development. It is inclusive of all marine activities addressing both short-term and long-term challenges and opportunities. . Its vision is: Healthy, productive, and resilient Arctic marine ecosystems that support human well-being and sustainable	

			<p>development for current and future generations. The AMSP addresses both short-term and long-term challenges and opportunities, through its forty Strategic Actions comprised under the four Strategic Goals:</p>	
		<p>PAME continues to follow national and international EA developments and integrate the principles of EA into assessments and management recommendations. This contributes to the follow-up to the recommendations in the 2013 Ecosystem-Based Management in the Arctic Report, building on previous work on Large Marine Ecosystems. The joint EA EG coordinates activities with participation from other Arctic Council WGs. The 6th EA workshop held in Seattle in January 2018 focused on the EA Guidelines and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment, and the EA EG developed <i>Guidelines for Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Management of Arctic Marine Ecosystems</i>. The EA EG also developed a plan for a 2nd International EA Conference in Bergen, Norway in 2019, with a focus on the issue of scale integration in EA implementation.</p> <p>PAME continues the joint effort by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)/North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES)/PAME WG on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the Central Arctic Ocean (WGICA) and notes the completion of the report on <i>“Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of</i></p>	<p>Guidelines for Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Management of Arctic Marine Ecosystems (May 2019) here</p> <p>Second International Science and Policy Conference on: Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Management in the Arctic: <i>Integrating information at different scales in the framework of EA implementation</i> here</p>	

		<i>the Central Arctic Ocean: Ecosystem Description and Vulnerability Characterization”.</i>		
2.2	Assess the impacts of climate change and the resilience of people, society and ecosystems in marine and coastal areas to propose adaptation strategies	AMSP Strategic Action 7.3.1 <i>Advance EBM as an overarching framework for conservation and sustainable use of living and non-living resources in the Arctic marine environment, taking into account cumulative impacts on the Arctic and the need for adaptation to climate change.</i>	Refer to 2.1: ongoing	
		Develop two factsheets on MPAs and Indigenous People’s Lives under change, starting with MPAs. The first factsheet will focus on impacts from changes to the marine environment and the role of MPAs in building resilience to these impacts, followed by the impact of these changes on indigenous people’s translation of the factsheet into the Arctic States’ main and minority languages would be a priority.	Work in progress for the 2019-2021 work plan period. Previous and ongoing MPA work here	
2.3	Create or support climate research, policy networks and inter-regional knowledge	Guidelines for Implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Management of Arctic Marine Ecosystems (May 2019) here	EA to Management Progress Report 2017-2019 here	

	exchange towards a better understanding of climate impacts on the marine and coastal environment			
2.4	Facilitate access to instruments for climate financing at national and regional levels	Not applicable	Not applicable	

3. Develop integrated, ecosystem-based regional ocean policies and strategies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, paying close attention to blue growth.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
3.1	Promote application of guidelines, rules and regulations for exploitation and exploration of living and non-living resources within Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and develop such instruments, where necessary, based on the ecosystem approach	Refer to 2.2		

4. Enhance effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as regional platforms for supporting integrated ocean policies and management.

No	Action by Regional Seas Secretariat	Related action/project	Results	Delivery date
4.1	Support science-policy dialogue, science-based decisions and provision of regional guidelines	AMSP 2015-2025	AMSP Implementation Status Reports published every 2 years.	
4.2	Support member states with developing integrated ocean policy and improve relevant national legislation to enhance chronological consistency and coherency across sectors	AMSP 2015-2025	AMSP Implementation Status Reports published every 2 years.	
4.3	Enhance information exchange and interregional cooperation towards common goals	<p>Through cooperative assessments in the working groups, the Arctic Council is developing knowledge and sharing best practices. Looking ahead, a number of cross-cutting issues provide opportunities for demonstrate good cooperation across the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies.</p> <p>PAME regularly reaches out to other WGs, industry and organizations with recognized competence as a mean to identify and where possible collaborate on issues of common</p>	Various PAME projects	

		<p>interest, of relevance to its work, including AMSA shipping follow-up activities. Examples of these during the 2017-2019 period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comite Maritime International ✓ Duke University ✓ EYOS Expeditions ✓ International Council on Clean Transportation ✓ International Seabed Authority ✓ Michael Kingston Associates ✓ Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center ✓ St. Lawrence Shipoperators 		
4.4	Encourage multi-stakeholder participation including NGOs and the private sector to promote compliance with Regional Seas instruments, existing guidelines and regulations of ocean management	Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum	<p>Online information established here</p> <p>Three annual Shipping Forum meetings held, and planning started on the 4th meeting in May 2020.</p>	
4.5	Ensure the highest standards of Secretariat performance in support in administration of	Not applicable	Not applicable	

	the Conventions and Action plan			

II. Challenges with the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017 – 2020

When the Arctic Council was established, sustainable development was one of two themes – with environmental protection – encoded in its genetic material. The Council’s founding document not only cited sustainable development as a key theme for this new forum to work on, it also mandated the creation of a sustainable development program. Why did the Arctic States focus so strongly on this issue for this region in particular?

The Arctic is one of the most important bellwethers of our changing climate around the globe. Indeed, the warming that we see elsewhere is taking place roughly twice as fast in the Arctic. But the region’s relevance to the wider world is much more than this. It is also a testing ground in which we see governments, indigenous peoples, and the scientific community working together towards a future for the Arctic that is peaceful, safe, healthy, and prosperous. It is a testing ground in which adaptation to climate change is being tried and explored in ways that the rest of the world can learn from. It is a testing ground in which we are working towards sustainable development against great odds, but with good faith on all sides. The Arctic might prove to be a model for inclusive sustainable development that other sensitive regions of the world can look to in the decades to come.

Arctic Council Working Groups:

- **The Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)** acts as a strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants.
- **The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)** monitors the Arctic environment, ecosystems and human populations, and provides scientific advice to support governments as they tackle pollution and adverse effects of climate change.
- **The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF)** addresses the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, working to ensure the sustainability of the Arctic’s living resources.
- **The Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group (EPPR)** works to protect the Arctic environment from the threat or impact of an accidental release of pollutants or radionuclides.

- **The Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group** is the focal point of the Arctic Council's activities related to the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment.
- **The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)** works to advance sustainable development in the Arctic and to improve the conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

[PAME](#) is one of the 6 working groups of the Arctic Council and serves as its ocean policy working group which focuses on policy-related initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment (Annex I: PAMEs mandate). PAME is an independent partner to the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. As such, reporting is primarily directly from its member states to relevant Regional Seas Programmes. PAME bases its work on the scientific findings and recommendations from a range of sources, both produced within and outside of the AC. Products often include best practices, guidelines and strategic plans.

III. **Lessons learnt (2017 – up to date)**

NA

IV. **Any other issues / decisions / case studies / experiences to be shared**

Attached as separate documents:

- PAME 2019-2021 Work Plan
- PAMEs summary of activities and contributions to SDGs 2018
- PAMEs Achievement Report 2017-2019

V **Emerging issues that have not been covered in the RSSD 2017-2020 but are proposed to be covered during the next RSSD**

NA

*Please submit this report to Nancy Soi at Nancy.soi@un.org by **30 August 2019**