

An Arctic Action Agenda

Arctic Governance Project Recommendations

In the course of its work, the Steering Committee of the Arctic Governance Project (AGP) has developed the policy recommendations set forth below.¹

The accompanying document entitled “Arctic Governance in an Era of Transformative Change: Critical Questions, Governance Principles, Ways Forward” develops the rationale underlying these recommendations. The AGP also has created an Arctic Governance Compendium accessible on the project’s website (www.arcticgovernance.org) and containing an extensive collection of documents relating to Arctic governance.

1. Honor, implement, and enhance existing Arctic governance systems

Good governance in the Arctic will be best served, at least for now, by honoring, implementing, and enhancing existing treaties among nation states, e.g. the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), other intergovernmental agreements, treaties and other arrangements between States and indigenous peoples, and relevant practices that together constitute a living network of relationships designed to promote sustainability, environmental protection, social justice, and responsible economic development in the Arctic and to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making.

2. Strengthen the Arctic Council

The Arctic Council has been remarkably successful as a policy-shaping body. But there are opportunities to strengthen the Council’s mission, scope, structure, and functions.

- a. Reaffirm the primacy of the Arctic Council as the principal forum for the consideration of Arctic policy issues.
- b. Reframe and broaden the mandate of the Arctic Council to include issues relating to security, health, and education and to highlight stewardship as the overarching objective of Arctic governance.

¹ Steering Committee members include: Hans Corell, Robert Corell, Udloriak Hanson, Paula Kankaanpää, Jacqueline McGlade, Tony Penikett, Stanley Senner, Nodari Simoniya, and Oran Young. The Project’s Executive Secretary is Else Grete Broderstad.

- c. Take steps to enable the full participation of the Permanent Participants in all Arctic Council activities, including providing a funding mechanism to cover the costs of such participation.
- d. Admit key non-Arctic States (e.g. China, Italy, Japan, Korea) as well as the European Commission to Permanent Observer status in the Arctic Council.
- e. Establish more systematic and efficient procedures for communicating with local and regional authorities and administrators in the Arctic.
- f. Create explicit mechanisms to provide regular input from the business community and environmental organizations in the deliberations of the Arctic Council.
- g. Institutionalize integrative and holistic perspectives in Arctic policy processes; assemble data and develop analytic tools needed to do so.
- h. Establish a reliable funding mechanism for the Arctic Council, so that the Council can select and launch projects without relying on the willingness of individual members to contribute to projects on a case-by-case basis.
- i. Establish a permanent secretariat for the Arctic Council located in a member state.
- j. Hold a meeting of the Arctic Council at the level of heads of state and government at the first available opportunity.

3. Establish regulatory mechanisms to address proactively key functional and sectoral issues through appropriate international bodies.

There are good reasons to establish regulatory mechanisms in anticipation of economic development and industrial activities in the Arctic along with the emergence of new issues of environmental protection. The way forward in this realm is to work through existing intergovernmental bodies where possible and to focus on the most important and promising areas first. Developing a legally binding Polar Code covering Arctic shipping and including strong environmental protection measures under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization is a good place to start. Legally binding agreements on search and rescue (SAR) and emergency responses should be included as a part of this effort. Other areas, such as fishing and tourism, may require the development of free-standing bodies, much like the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO).

4. Institutionalize the science/policy interface in the Arctic.

Science has played an important role in the development of Arctic policy. The work of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) is a clear case in point. But there is a need to establish a closer relationship between science and policy to ensure that research agendas focus on issues of clear relevance to policy and that scientific findings are conveyed on a regular basis to policymakers in a manner that emphasizes their implications for making and implementing policies. The Arctic Council provides an excellent forum for experimenting with procedures designed to achieve this goal. This should lead over time to the development of a broader Arctic science agreement to promote, on a cooperative and transparent basis, enhanced interactions between science and policy relating to the protection of ecosystem services, the pursuit of sustainable human-environment relations, and, more generally, the achievement of stewardship in the Arctic.

5. Create non-governmental Arctic stakeholder forums or roundtables to build trust and stimulate dialogue on Arctic issues.

There is a need for mechanisms to promote interactions among individuals interested in the Arctic in off-the-record and relaxed settings to build trust among a wide range of actors, to facilitate knowledge exchange, to encourage innovative thinking, and to stimulate learning among those concerned with Arctic issues. The goal is to enrich the efforts of bodies like the Arctic Council rather than to dilute or detract from their efforts.

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