



Cover sheet

Full name of state or organization:

Japan

Date of submission:

16 December 2016

Observer's website, if appropriate:

Information for appropriate contact person

Full name: Ms. Kazuko Shiraishi

Email: japan-arctic@mofa.go.jp

Telephone: +81-3-5501-8329

Organization or department:

Job Title: Ambassador in charge of Arctic Affairs

Full mailing address:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2-2-1, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

Is your state or organization still interested in continuing as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

X Yes ☐ No

Observer Report

Please describe in no more than 2 pages your state or organization's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. If applicable, please include mention of collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

1 Japan's commitment to the Arctic issues

As a maritime state that has pursued a policy of "open and stable seas", Japan has recognized both the Arctic's potential and its vulnerability to environmental changes, and has played a leading role for sustainable development in the Arctic in the international community, with foresight and policy based on science and technology that Japan has advantage. Since the 1950s Japan has been conducting significant scientific observation and research in the Arctic. With its long years of scientific expertise and advanced technology in the field of the Arctic, Japan has been making tangible contributions to the Arctic Council (AC) since 2009 and has strengthened its contributions after becoming a permanent observer in 2013.

In October 2015, Japan adopted the first-ever comprehensive and strategic Arctic policy, "Japan's Arctic Policy" (See Annex 1). This is one of the most significant outcomes for the last two years to move Japan's Arctic policy forward more strategically. Based on this arctic policy, Japan intends to strengthen its policy measures in the Arctic and further contribute to the activities of the AC for the coming years as a valuable partner of the Arctic states.

2 Overview of Japan's contributions to the Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups for the last two years

Japan continues to contribute in the field of scientific research such as "Arctic Data archive System" (ADS). Japan always intends to make Datasets in ADS available for free for research use, and it represents Japan's absolute commitment to strengthening scientific cooperation on the Arctic.

In addition, our prominent experts and government officials have continuously attended the subsidiary bodies of the AC to contribute to the discussions by reporting our relevant research initiatives, writing reports on various programs, etc. as follows.

(1) Working Groups

AMAP: Researchers from National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR), Japan Agency for Marine Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), and Hokkaido University (HU) have been participating in AMAP WG meeting since 2013 (27th meeting), where they were reporting

Japan's relevant research activities such as the "Arctic Challenge for Sustainability" (details to be mentioned later) and ADS. Associate professor Mr. Jun Inoue from NIPR, Dr. Takashi Kikuchi from JAMSTEC, associate professor Michiyo Kawai from Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology (TUMSAT), professor Jota Kanda from TUMSAT and professor Shuji Aoki from Tohoku University have been joining in preparing and revising reports of "Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic (AACA) - C" project, such as AACA-C Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Regional Report and "Snow, Water, Ice, Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA)". In addition, they also contribute to write reports on "Arctic Ocean Acidification (AOA)".

PAME: Professor Natsuhiko Otsuka from HU participated in PAME in September 2016 to share the relevant information.

CAFF: Ms. Akiko Nakano, Deputy Director from Ministry of the Environment (MOE) and Dr. Masaki Uchida, researcher from NIPR participated in CAFF in February 2015, September 2015, February 2016 and September 2016, and contributed to the discussions. In particular, at the meeting of September 2016, Ms. Nakano made a presentation on Japan's relevant activities as "National Partnership of Flyway". In December 2015, Ms. Kaori Tsujita, Specialist from MOE was registered as an expert to "Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI)" to share the relevant information.

(2)Task Forces

SCTF: Dr. Hiroyuki Enomoto and Dr. Masao Fukasawa from NIPR participated in the 6th meeting of August 2015 and Japan dispatched Dr. Akiho Shibata, a professor from Kobe University to the 8th meeting of March 2016 and the 9th one of July 2016.

At the 8th meeting, Dr. Shibata, on behalf of the Government of Japan (GOJ), made a statement on drafted "Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation" and provided a lot of valuable inputs on the possible engagement of the non-Arctic states to make the agreement more effective.

(3)Expert Groups

EGBCM: In August 2015, Japan submitted its national report for "Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions - an Arctic Council Framework for Action" so as to help the AC's efforts to mitigate the emissions of black carbon and methane. Dr. Yutaka Kondo from NIPR participated in the 1st meeting of January 2016, the 2nd one of June 2016 and the 3rd one of October 2016. He reported Japan's relevant efforts and contributed to the discussions.

If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state or organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

1 Contribution by way of the "Arctic Challenge for Sustainability"

In 2015, the GOJ launched a research project in an unprecedented scale, the "Arctic Challenge for Sustainability (ArCS)" (See Annex 2). The ArCS project, a national flagship project, with a budget of 760 million yen, about 6.5 million dollars, for FY 2016, for strengthening scientific research on the Arctic, represents our absolute commitment to addressing Arctic issues. It should be noted that one of the main purposes of this project is to make a solid contribution to activities of the AC. In particular, Japan will strive to further strengthen scientific research under eight research themes based on the initiative highlighted in "Japan's Arctic Policy".

Overall aim of ArCS is to elucidate the changes in the climate and environment in the Arctic, clarify their impacts on human society, and provide accurate projections and environmental assessments for internal and external stakeholders, such as international organizations, national domestic and foreign policy-makers, and communities of indigenous peoples. ArCS will provide such information on the basis of scientific results through comprehensively organized research on climate, weather, ocean environments, short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon, and ecosystem and biodiversity, and also by providing a data management system (ADS) as well as examination from the point of view of the humanities and social sciences. ArCS will continue such attempt to provide the accurate scientific information to help them to adapt the changing environment. Through the dialogue with the local communities, Japanese scientists are seeking for co-working way of field research which utilize local knowledge and experiences.

ArCS also dispatches researchers to the AC's working groups such as AMAP, CAFF and PAME, task forces such as SCTF, and expert groups such as EGBCM, to provide useful inputs from a scientific point of view. ArCS will contribute to such meetings including SDWG, through the achievement of the project.

2 Research Vessels, Research Stations and Satellites

Japan is equipped with various advanced platforms to support scientific observation, such as "Mirai" (a research vessel), Ny-Ålesund Research Station in Svalbard, Norway and an earth observing satellite GCOM-W. Japan also jointly maintains Poker Flat Research Range Super-Site in Alaska with IARC, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Spasskaya Pad Forest Station in Yakutsk, with institute for Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, Russia. These platforms enable Japan to accumulate scientific data on atmospheric forces, marine environment, biological production, distribution of organism and Arctic sea-ice. In particular, GCOM-W is one of the most advanced satellites in that it can estimate not only the size but also the thickness of the sea-ice. Sharing information gained through these platforms with stakeholders, Japan will keep contributing to various activities of subsidiary bodies of the AC.

If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state or organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.

Japan has been engaging in various initiatives on international scientific cooperation and international forums on the Arctic as well as bilateral discussions with AC member states. These are expected to seek further contributions to the AC.

1 Strengthening international scientific cooperation

(1) Japan has been actively participating in "The Pacific Arctic Group (PAG)" established with the mission "to serve as a Pacific Arctic regional partnership to plan, coordinate, and collaborate on science activities of mutual interest". On top of that, Japan is preparing for participating in "Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate (MOSAIC)", the first year-round expedition into central Arctic.

Researchers from Japan have been deeply committed to this project since the planning phase. These efforts are also expected to help the activities of the AC in terms of monitoring of environmental changes in the Arctic.

(2) In April 2015, Japan hosted the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW), one of the most important international conferences on Arctic research, in Toyama. This conference has further generated the momentum for international scientific cooperation, which is one of priorities the AC identifies.

(3) Concerning Sustaining Arctic Observing Network (SAON) which is joint project of AC, International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Japanese scientists are on the board and attending most of the SAON Board Meeting and its Committee Meeting since 2011, to contribute to the SAON Objectives.

2 Participating in the international forums on the Arctic

(1) Government officials from Japan regularly attend the Arctic Frontier and the Arctic Frontier Plus meeting in January each year. At the Arctic Frontier Plus, where the role of AC observers is often at table, Japan actively participated in discussions to seek ways for more contributions to the AC.

(2) At the 4th Arctic Circle in October 2016, Japan held a breakout session under the theme of "Japan's contribution: Science challenge with Local residents – toward Arctic sustainable life" for the purpose of ongoing research project on sustainable life of Indigenous people. This breakout session has enhanced international awareness of issues surrounding indigenous people.

3 Bilateral Discussions with the AC member states

(1) In June 2016, Japan-Norway Arctic Science and Innovation Week was held in Tokyo, which aims to expand bilateral cooperation with Norway through discussions by those engaged in research, education, and industry of both countries

(2) Japan had bilateral discussions with AC member states to examine possible collaborative fields and further contributions to the AC such as;

- Japan – Norway Foreign Ministers' meeting in October 2016
- Japan – Iceland ambassadorial level dialogue on Arctic in July 2016
- Japan – Finland ambassadorial level dialogue on Arctic in November 2016