

## Cover sheet

Kingdom of the Netherlands

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

☒ Yes ☐ No

## Observer Report

The Netherlands has been an active contributor to the work of the Arctic Council since its establishment and regards the Arctic Council as the primary circumpolar policy forum for sustainable Arctic developments and management of the area. This translated in active Dutch participation by experienced Dutch polar researchers in three working groups of the Arctic Council (AMAP, CAFF and SDWG), participation by government officials in meetings of the Council (SAO, ministerial) and Observer meetings organised by the Arctic Council, and promoting and supporting Netherlands scientific research in the Arctic.

Dutch polar researchers are active in a variety of fields, but have especially good reputations in glaciology, oceanography, biology, international law and the human and social sciences. The Netherlands polar research programme enables the Dutch experts to make a substantive contribution to the work of the Arctic Council. The Netherlands stimulates participation by experts – policy makers, researchers and representatives from industry and NGOs – in seminars/workshops/expert groups on the Arctic, for example Arctic Frontiers and the Arctic Circle.

### AMAP

The Netherlands has participated in AMAP since 1993 when the Netherlands was an observer to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). Frits Steenhuisen (Arctic Centre, University of Groningen) has represented the Netherlands as an observer in AMAP working group meetings. He participates in the AMAP Mercury Expert Group and the AMAP Radioactivity Expert Group, contributing to work on the spatial distribution of global emissions inventories (SO<sub>2</sub>, lead, mercury) that have been compiled for AMAP since 1995, including work in the framework of the AMAP/UNEP collaboration. Several peer reviewed papers have been published in relation to this work. Steenhuisen also works with the AMAP secretariat on spatial analysis and map production of AMAP reports and collaborates with the Norwegian Radiation Protection Agency in hosting of the AMAP Radioactivity Thematic Data Center. Steenhuisen is co-author of the AMAP Assessment 2015, Radioactivity in the Arctic and several other AMAP reports.

Dutch researchers Ko van Huisteden and Jorien Vonk participate in the SWIPA Expert Group and several Dutch Research Institutes provide input to AMAP assessments, for example the Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research, Utrecht University, (Greenland Icesheet Report) and the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (Ocean Acidification).

## CAFF

The Netherlands has been active in CAFF since 1992. Maarten Loonen, Dutch polar researcher (Arctic Center Groningen), participates on behalf of the Netherlands in meetings of the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative and the CBIRD working group of CAFF. Within the CBIRD working group, Loonen actively contributes to the circumpolar geolocator with his Arctic tern studies.

The Netherlands has a special connection with Arctic migratory birds and the work of AMBI. The Wadden Sea is an important stop over site for Arctic-breeding migratory birds and has been given UNESCO world heritage status, with the obligation to invest in flyway management. The Netherlands hosted the CAFF-AMBI implementation meeting on Texel on 5-7 April 2016, to support the work of AMBI and to show the continuous commitment of the Netherlands to the work of AMBI.

Both Loonen (specialist on geese) and Jeroen Reneerkens (specialist on waders, University of Groningen) played an active role at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress in Trondheim on 2-4 December 2014.

## SDWG

Annette Scheepstra (Arctic Center Groningen), the Dutch observer in the SDWG, is actively involved in the Adaptation Action for a Changing Arctic project. She currently works on of the report for the Barents region, one of the three parts of the report of the Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic part C. She is one of the leading authors of the chapter on local and regional perspectives. Scheepstra is also one of the task leaders in the EU PolarNet project.

## EPPR

Though the Netherlands does not participate in the EPPR working group, it has recently contributed to the EPPR report on Standards for the Prevention of Oil Spills from Offshore and Maritime Activities in the Arctic, through its national standardization institute (NEN), which is also active in ISO. The EPPR has accepted many suggestions made by NEN.

Closer cooperation with Arctic indigenous peoples is one of the aspects of the Dutch polar policy. To share the perspective and knowledge of Arctic indigenous peoples on adapting to climate change in the Arctic with the broader public, the Netherlands invited Ms. Javo, President of the Saami Council, to participate in the closing plenary session of the Adaptation Futures Conference. This conference took place on 10-13 May in Rotterdam and was organised by the Netherlands in cooperation with the European Commission.

Future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups.

The Netherlands recently published its new polar policy, entitled 'Netherlands Polar Strategy 2016-2020'. In the new policy, the Netherlands reaffirms its commitment to contribute to sustainable development of the Arctic region, primarily through contributing to scientific Arctic research, promoting international cooperation and supporting the development of sustainable guidelines for Arctic operations. The Arctic Council remains the most important forum for the Netherlands to realize its policy goals. To continue the contribution to the work of the Arctic Council and to intensify the participation of highly qualified experts in AMAP, CAFF and SDWG, the Netherlands increased its budget for polar research. A separate budget has recently been created, that can be used to host meetings or co-finance studies of the Arctic Council working groups or expert groups, or finance specific small-scale projects and outreach initiatives (e.g. the CAFF-AMBI meeting on Texel in April 2016 was financed from this budget). The Netherlands therefore welcomes requests to this extent by the Arctic Council and the Permanent Participants.

An important part of the new Netherlands polar policy is the recent appointment of an Arctic Ambassador. The Ambassador will participate in some of the Arctic Council meetings and engage in talks with Arctic and Dutch stakeholders with three objectives: increase international research cooperation, enhance cooperation between different stakeholders and raise sustainability standards. All objectives are in the interest of the Arctic Council.

As a maritime nation with experience in offshore energy technologies, infrastructure development and marine protection and monitoring, and with a strong endeavor to contribute to cleaner, safer and sustainable shipping, the Netherlands has a growing interest to contribute to PAME. While a Netherlands representative (Erik J. Molenaar, Utrecht University) participated in some PAME meetings, the Netherlands is currently investigating the possibility of participating in PAME more consistently. Furthermore, the Netherlands intends to submit its national report on black carbon in 2016, as requested by the Arctic Council.

Contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections.

The Netherlands industry is very much interested to make a contribution to sustainable development of the Arctic. The oil and gas industry in general has contributed to the Arctic Council and its working groups and task forces through the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) primarily through its Arctic Committee which is chaired since its inception in 2008 by Shell and key members of this committee. IOGP applied for observer status to the Arctic Council (Kiruna 2013). Since then, Netherlands industry representatives have been contributing, on invitation, to Task Forces and expert groups.

In 2015, the largest ever Dutch polar research expedition visited the island of Edgeøya, Svalbard. On board were 55 scientists, a member of Parliament, four journalists and some VIPs. The overarching goal of the expedition was to identify climate change in the Arctic by reexamining an area that has remained untouched for 40 years. At the moment, the multidisciplinary research team is mapping the consequences of climate change for the area by comparing the data they've gathered during the expedition with the scientific data from 40 years ago. The results will be shared with the members of the Arctic Council and the Arctic research community.

In 2014 the Royal Netherlands Navy led a scientific expedition to Jan Mayen. On board were scientists from the Willem Barentsz Poolinstituut (University of Groningen), TNO and the Royal Dutch Geographical Society. During the expedition, the scientists studied the influence of sonar from surface vessels on Bottlenose whales, moss cultures from Jan Mayen and they compared the bird populations with data from the bird populations in the 1980s.