

Memorandum 2/11/2018

## **Plenary Panel 2: The Arctic in a global context: biodiversity targets, Sustainable Development Goals and a post-2020 agenda**

This memo provides a summary of reports submitted on the Plenary Panel 2 organized at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress in Rovaniemi, Finland, October 9-12.

- Moderator: Martin Breum, Denmark
- Panelists:
  - Melanie Virtue, Head of CMS Aquatic Species Team, Convention on Migratory Species
  - Alexander Shestakov, Head of Division, Scientific and Policy Support, Convention on Biological Diversity
  - Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
  - Dalee Sambo Dorrough, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council
  - Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the Environment, Finland

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZgJry2RprU>

Attendance: 200

**Arctic Biodiversity Assessment recommendation themes most prominently addressed in the session:**

- Climate change
- Mainstreaming biodiversity
- Improving knowledge and public awareness
- Addressing stressors
- Identifying and safeguarding important areas

**Key points raised in the session that were important to note:**

- With the Post 2020 Framework for Biodiversity in formulation and the focus, in part, on streamlining this with SDG Targets that are biodiversity related (e.g. SDG 14 and 15), there is an opportunity for the Arctic/CAFF to position itself well to support target tracking, indicators and linking to existing global platforms for visualizing biodiversity indicators.
- Need to foster ownership and interest in non-Arctic countries that host migratory species that breed in the Arctic.
- Globally, wetlands are being lost at three times the rate of forests. We have 80 Ramsar sites in the Arctic across the 8 arctic Ramsar Contracting Parties. these sites are often, critically important to support migratory species. 50% of all wetlands in the world are found in the Arctic. Therefore, Arctic nations have an outsized responsibility to protect wetlands. We need to raise awareness of this.
- Need to step down these global commitments to on the ground local actions and involvement (e.g. Indigenous involvement and links to food security) and build upon existing successful partnership models.

- The conventions have common threads whereby actions for one can be seen as actions for others and can deliver on the SDGs and biodiversity underpins almost all SDGs.
- There are opportunities to link tourism operations to migratory species.
- There is a risk, that with the multiple reporting requirements derived from the conventions/SDGs, Parties simply 'go thru the motions' in order to meet their reporting commitments but the SDGs can potentially lead to transformational change
- CAFF can link with existing mechanisms (e.g. CHM's, BIP Dashboard) to bring its data into global biodiversity outlooks and directly via its National Reports - the Arctic nations should include strong Arctic information.
- Wetlands which is only 3% of the land, store twice as much carbon as the forests of the world - conserving wetlands lead to climate change mitigation.
- Need to leverage the CAFF partnerships with Ramsar Convention and CBD
- Post-2020: assessment of achievement and also looking forward
- Migratory species connect the Arctic to the rest of the world and have many roles and economic advantages in terms of e.g. tourism potential; governments are interested in how they can make their economies stronger.
- Scientists are working on how ecosystems and species can be economically advantageous.
- SDG's (sustainable development goals) are a platform to unite for action: both new ambition and umbrella for existing measures; allow for flexibility while some elements are legally binding.
- Biodiversity is going through all 17 sustainable development goals: achievement of all other goals is impossible without the achievement of biodiversity goals.
- Sustainable development plans are being developed in several sectors of the society; SDG's are not only environmental but concern whole societies.
- For 2020, targets should be achieved and reported back, scientists from the Arctic are underrepresented in the CBD process; Global Biodiversity Outlook 5th ed. will be published in 2020, ABA feeds into the GBO.
- Next national reports for the CBD due mid-December 2018, national plans can incorporate Arctic biodiversity issues.
- Coherence should be built between different efforts.
- Wetlands are disappearing faster than other ecosystems, important for food security and flood protection, 60 % of the Arctic are wetlands, 50 % of the wetlands of the world are in the Arctic, wetlands store more carbon than other ecosystems, important for indigenous people, environmental impacts and solutions are global.
- When conserving wetlands, countries are also meeting the targets of the Paris Agreement, and responding to development needs, and water scarcity.
- Knowledge gaps exist for wetlands; traditional knowledge is part of that initiative.
- Role, place, and status of indigenous peoples in relation to the international instruments: indigenous peoples and indigenous knowledge should be taken into the realm of discussion about Arctic biodiversity and discuss how they can contribute into achieving the targets
- There is very little data about how goals have been achieved in indigenous communities as there are no baseline data.

- Matters are communicated in a complicated way, should be popularized.
- A lot of science is being used in different processes, but it also seems that knowledge gaps or perception of knowledge gaps is often hindering action.
- Linking biodiversity loss to impacts directly to humans will build more understanding among society.
- Need to put a focus on what individuals can do, how can they contribute, to maintenance of biodiversity.
- Focus more on how wetlands are solutions, not just on problems of wetlands
- Need to be more conversations between Arctic Council and local and regional levels

**Recommendations/actions identified for how to deal with the issues raised in the session:**

- Build upon existing successful local governance models to ensure that convention commitments are met, on the ground in the Arctic, through meaningful Indigenous involvement and leadership for sustainable and equitable development.
- CAFF should raise the profile of the Arctic's outside role in maintaining 50% of the world's wetlands
- CAFF can lead on indicator development that links to the SDGs via the statistics bodies (this can be done, in part, via the CBMPs membership in the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership) - this can be a means to link CAFF data to indicators to policy-relevant outputs such as visualizations, linking to existing global platforms for visualizing biodiversity indicators.
- The Arctic can use its close partnerships between Indigenous organizations and national governments, lead the world on the implementation of transformational change - bringing the multiple benefits under the SDGs
- The Arctic should accelerate its efforts to meet the Aichi Targets in the next two years
- CAFF needs to step up its efforts to translate its data from the CBMP into indicators. Harness/harvest the abundance of knowledge already generated to guide Arctic biodiversity conservation
- CAFF needs to address the gaps in knowledge of Arctic wetlands
- There is a need to translate the data to simple policy relevant outputs ('keep it simple') that include simple, understandable messages for policy-makers and the public
- Messaging needs to include the consequences of the loss of Arctic biodiversity for those outside of the Arctic and give them solutions and actions that people can easily implement.
- Communication should be made simpler and issues popularized.
- The role, place, and status of indigenous peoples in relation to the international instruments should be assessed and taken into account.
- Knowledge gaps should be addressed and non-crucial gaps should not prevent action.
- People need to know what they can do on individual level

**Take home message from the session:**

- Achieving SDGs will require cooperation by scientists, managers, and local people. Arctic wetlands are globally relevant and need for attention.

- Scientists need to remember to KEEP IT SIMPLE (for children and ministers) when communicating results of work to decision makers, and if not, science-based decision making becomes much more difficult. And, if we are to make any progress, we need to ensure our mothers understand what biodiversity means, and what it means to human survival and well-being.
- CAFF and the Arctic Council, as a whole, should focus efforts to harness the existing abundance of knowledge to deliver on multiple targets and goals for the Conventions and SDGs that are action oriented and policy-relevant and build upon existing indicator science, reporting platforms and visualization systems that engage policy-makers and the public, inside and outside the Arctic, that foster collective and individual action. This includes making the message simple and focused on clear actions that can be taken.
- Biodiversity is going through all 17 sustainable development goals: achievement of all other goals is impossible without the achievement of biodiversity goals.
- SDG's are not only environmental but concern whole societies.
- Communication should be made simpler and issues popularized.
- The Role, place, and status of indigenous peoples in relation to the international instruments should be taken into account.
- Knowledge gaps should be addressed and non-crucial gaps should not prevent action
- People need to know what they can do on individual level, post-2020 will build on the contribution of everyone.