

Report from the meeting of the EPPR working group in London 31 October 1998

Agenda item 1 Opening of the meeting

The chair opened the meeting and wished everybody welcome. As there were some new participants at the meeting a short presentation was conducted. Present at the meeting were delegates from Canada, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and the United States of America (Annex 1).

Agenda item 2 Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 3 Information exchanged

Norway informed the meeting on some important work concerning vessels left in the Arctic and the contamination and garbage threat they pose.

Denmark informed the meeting on discussions concerning the ferries that are taken out of use due to the new bridges and the possibility of exporting the ships for scrapping in developing countries. This procedure has raised public concern as such ships will contain hazardous substances and materials which cannot be disposed of in an environmentally safe manner in the receiving countries.

The Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark on Cooperation Relating to the Marine Environment, 1983, is going to be updated.

A bill on the extension of the territorial sea of Denmark from 3 nautical miles to 12 nautical miles has been submitted to the Danish Parliament. The bill includes the possibility to extend the territorial sea of Greenland to 12 nautical miles or less after the adoption of the bill by the Parliament. Such an extension can take effect through a Royal Decree after negotiations between the Danish Government and the Greenland Home Rule Authorities.

In Sweden some organisational changes within the Coast Guard HQ will take place in the near future.

Finland informed the meeting on the proposal for a new Act on Rescue Services that has been sent to the parliament and it might enter into force from the beginning of 1999.

Agenda item 4 Report from the Ministerial meeting in Iqaluit in September 1998

The chair informed the meeting of both the SAO meeting, the Ministerial meeting and the Iqaluit Declaration. Sweden pointed out that the Arctic Guide was not mentioned anywhere in the text.

For the updating of the Arctic Guide information has to be sent to Sweden during this year,

the changes will be made in the beginning of 1999.

Agenda item 5 Implementation of the Strategic Plan of Action

5.1 Analysis of Adequacy and Effectiveness of Existing Arrangements

Concerning the status of this project the meeting decided that it would be of importance to get information from all countries before drawing any conclusions. Therefore the chair will send a letter to the countries that have not sent any information (Iceland and Russia) asking them to fill out the forms during the coming 3 months. It very important that all countries answer the questionnaire to get a result that has any value.

Concerning the Summary of Recommendations it was decided that a discussion paper on the Memorandum of Understanding will be sent out by Finland during the spring and further discussions will be held at the EPPR working group meeting in 1999. On the agenda of the next EPPR working group meeting there will be information concerning The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) prepared by the USA and UNEP-OCHA activities that might be of interest for EPPR prepared by Finland.

Phase II of the Analysis of the effectiveness of existing accidental reporting systems will be up for discussion at the EPPR working group meeting in 1999 with the recommendation not to continue with it.

5.2 Development of the Circumpolar map of natural resources at risk from oil spills

Norway informed the meeting of the status of the project. The final endorsement for the project came in Iqaluit and it will now proceed as planned. The importance of the contact with other working groups was stressed. The different stages of the project are described in Annex 2.

5.3 Source control management and prevention strategies for high risk activities in the Arctic

Nothing has happened in this project since the Rovaniemi meeting and it was decided that it will be up for discussion at the EPPR working group meeting in 1999. Every country, where high risk activities are identified, is free to take initiatives in this project.

5.4 The development of an EPPR web site

The United States of America gave a presentation of the status of the EPPR web site. During spring 1999 further plans will be made and sent out to the countries for comments. A concrete proposal with information on costs, translation, possible documents, links and so on will be presented at the EPPR working group meeting in 1999. Our web site should be somewhat similar to the other Arctic Council web sites.

5.5 Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the EPPR working group

A discussion paper concerning the Operating Guidelines prepared by Finland was presented. It was expressed that the Guidelines only would contain the information concerning the EPPR working group and not duplicate the Rules of Procedure of the Arctic Council.

5.6 Possible future activities

Sweden proposed a project concerning the state of the art of research connected to special risks in the Arctic. This project would fit under Research, development and technology sharing in the Strategic Plan of Action of EPPR. The suggestion was endorsed as a project covering both response and prevention starting with response. Sweden was asked to deliver a written project proposal for the next meeting.

Canada proposed a EPPR brochure and it was decided that Finland and Sweden will go on with this idea. Canada also suggested a project concerned with the development of a standardised approach to shoreline cleanup assessment technology (SCAT). The suggestion is already in the Strategic Plan of Action as a possible future project and was endorsed by the meeting. A written proposal will be presented at the EPPR working group meeting in 1999. Canada also suggested that EPPR should give presentations and also sponsors seminars and workshops working with the same kind of issues as EPPR.

Agenda item 6 Any other business

Concerning publications it was decided that a disc with the text also should be sent to the countries when sending the publications. More copies of the publications should be sent to the countries. A similar front page for all publications should also be of great value.

Agenda item 7 Next meeting

The next meeting will be in Spetsbergen, Norway 8-10 September 1999. There will be possibilities for a field trip during the weekend. More information will be sent out later.

If there is need for informal discussions on the status of the preparations of the September meeting they will take place in London in June/July during the MEPC meeting.

Adoption of the report

The report was circulated to the Heads of Delegations, 19 November 1998, for comments and it was amended accordingly. EPPR Rules of Procedure, Rule 9

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