

Report from the EPPR (Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response) working group to the SAO meeting in Barrow 2000

1. Introduction

Since the last SAO meeting in Fairbanks (April 2000) the EPPR working group has had its annual meeting in Keflavik, Iceland, on 13-15 June 2000. Delegations from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States attended the meeting.

2. Status of the ongoing EPPR projects

2.1 Analysis of agreements and arrangements

In the Inuvik Ministerial Declaration (1996) EPPR was given the following task:

- analyzing of the adequacy and effectiveness of existing international agreements and other arrangements in the Arctic within EPPR's area of expertise.

To meet this objective EPPR conducted a risk analysis to identify activities posing high risks in the Arctic. Based on this risk analysis EPPR determined which existing arrangements and agreements related to these activities posing high risks. Via a questionnaire the coverage and gaps of the existing arrangements and agreements were identified. Also ongoing deliberations that will address activities posing high risks not presently covered by existing agreements and arrangements were identified.

Based on this analysis of the adequacy and effectiveness of existing international agreements and arrangements the EPPR working group finds that the international agreements and arrangements currently in force, agreed to, or under consideration appear to address the present needs for trans-Arctic cooperation in the field of emergency prevention, preparedness and response.

For a more detailed presentation of the Analysis of the Adequacy and Effectiveness of Existing Agreements and Arrangements, please see Annex 1.

2.2 EPPR website and the Arctic Guide

The EPPR website address is currently <http://www.ims.uaf.edu/8000/EPPR/> and can also be reached through the Arctic council website <http://arctic-council.usgs.gov/>. During the autumn 2000 the EPPR website will be moved to another address, but will also in the future be reached through the Arctic Council website. The website is continuously updated and improved to meet the needs of EPPR, including providing information on national response plans and procedures.

The Arctic Guide is an integrated part of the website, and it will be updated once a year in connection to the annual EPPR meeting. No paper copies of the Arctic Guide will be distributed.

2.3 Circumpolar map of resources at risk from oil spills in the Arctic

The aim of the project is to produce a series of GIS-based circumpolar maps showing the areas of highest risk of an oil spill and those areas with sensitive natural resource or subsistence

communities. The idea is to highlight a limited number of "conflict areas" where the high risk of oil spills and very sensitive resources overlap, and in this way facilitate the prioritizing of response actions.

The conversion of the existing data into the right format has proven to be more time-consuming than expected. However by now most of the member countries have submitted their data to the lead country Norway, who is currently compiling the existing data to come up with the final product. The complete Circumpolar Map will be presented and adopted at the next EPPR meeting in February 2001. The idea has been expressed that the project could continue by adding more risk activities to the existing database. This possibility will be explored in the future.

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

The EPPR working group is conducting a pilot project at the Apatity waterworks in Murmansk region. The aim of the pilot project is to develop and test a methodology for reducing the potential for emergencies at facilities. The process will include a facility risk assessment, application of international standards such as ISO 140001, Environmental Management Systems Standards, and recommendations as to what should be done to reduce the threat. The resulting methodology will be applicable to a broad spectrum of Arctic activities. Results from the pilot project are expected in August 2001. Experts from US, Russia, Canada and Finland take part in the project.

2.5 Development of standardised approach to shoreline cleanup assessment technology (SCAT)

As shoreline cleanup actions may itself damage the environment, if conducted in the wrong way, and as response actions often involves personnel with various levels of training shoreline cleanup manuals are valuable tools in preparedness.

In this project the other countries have provided Canada, who is acting as lead country, with information on their national shoreline cleanup policies and procedures. Based on this preliminary survey EPPR decided to arrange an expert workshop on shoreline cleanup assessment technology in Canada in January 2001. The purpose of the workshop is to determine if Arctic specific information in this area is needed.

The continuation of the SCAT-project will depend on the outcomes of the workshop, and will be discussed at the 2001 EPPR meeting.

3. New projects

In compliance with the EPPR Strategic plan and Work plan endorsed at the Iqaluit Ministerial Meeting EPPR is about to start the following new projects

3.1 Training course for oil spill response in the arctic environment

A pilot training course for oil spill response in the arctic environment will be arranged by Norway in Svalbard in September 2001. The aim of the course is to provide realistic oil spill response conditions to exercise in: that is real oil in real ice and on real shores. Depending on the success of the course, future courses might be arranged at regular basis.

3.2 Projects on radiation monitoring and communication

Two possible new projects concerning airborne radiation monitoring and communication have been discussed and supported by EPPR in principle. Both projects involve airborne radiation monitoring stations, called NEWNET, that collect data including gamma radiation measurements and make the data available via satellite links and the Internet to interested parties. The data may be used for public information as well as for emergency response.

In US/Alaska an ongoing data collection project currently uses four NEWNET stations. The specific goals of the project in addition to data collection are development of a communication plan to disseminate results of measurements and involvement of Alaska Native undergraduate students.

The second project also involves the NEWNET system and monitoring stations, however the location of the new stations would be surrounding Bilibino Nuclear Power Station in Chukotka, Russia. This project would also include development of public information tools and training of station managers. This project is in the development stage and further discussions between US and Russia is still about to take place. The installation of stations is expected in summer 2001.

Specific project proposals will be presented for evaluation and consideration by EPPR at its next meeting (2001).

4. Other EPPR issues

4.1 Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters

Almost all copies of the Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters (printed in 1998) have been distributed, therefore new copies will be made. The Field Guide is extensively used in all the membercountries.

4.2 EPPR and PAME

The two working groups EPPR and PAME have made efforts to clear out the distribution of work between the two groups to avoid overlaps, as well as efforts to increase co-work in fields of common interest.

EPPR welcomes the wish from PAME to use the Circumpolar Map data in their current and future work on shipping in the Arctic. The connections between PAME's International agreements matrix and EPPR's Analysis of Agreements and Arrangements have been discussed. It has been suggested that the follow up of these two projects could be a joint project between PAME and EPPR (possibly also incorporating the other AC working groups).

4.3 EPPR and proposed ACAP projects

The 2000 EPPR meeting discussed the role of EPPR in connection to the proposed ACAP projects. Two projects were considered having connection to the work of EPPR: Assess risks connected with releases from reprocessing plants in Europe and Eurasia and the Environmental Management Program for the Murmansk region. The latter project being similar to EPPR's project on Source control management.

4.4 Election of Chair and vice-chair

The 2000 EPPR meeting elected Mr Olli Pahkala from Finland for Chair and Ms Laura Johnston from Canada for vice-chair for the years 2001-2002. Finland will provide EPPR with the secretariat during this period.

4.5 Next meeting

The next EPPR meeting will be held in Kiruna, Sweden on 20-22 February 2001.

5. Actions by SAOs

Based on this report the SAOs are kindly asked to:

- **endorse** the election of Chair and Vice-chair for 2001-2002, and **take note** of that Finland is providing for the secretariat support during this period.
- **endorse** that, based on a comprehensive risk assessment process, country surveys of bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements, and a detailed analysis of the arrangements related to the identified risks, the EPPR conclude that international conventions and instruments currently in force, agreed to, or still under preparation appear to cover the present needs for Arctic cooperation in the field of prevention of, preparedness for and response to pollution incidents
- **take note** of the state of the ongoing projects (EPPR website, Circumpolar Map on Resources at Risk from Oil Spill, Source Control Management, Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology)
- **take note** of the new projects (training course, and two radiological projects)
- **take note** of the dialogue between PAME and EPPR concerning the distribution of the work and co-work