

Report from the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) Working Group to the SAO Meeting - Svartsengi, 23-24 October 2003

The following report summarizes EPPR Working Group activities since the April 2003 SAO meeting.

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1. Developments Since the April 2003 SAO Meeting

1.1 EPPR 2003 Meeting in Murmansk, Russian Federation

The EPPR Working Group met in Murmansk, Russian Federation 3-5 June 2003. The meeting was attended by delegations from Canada, Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the US, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and the Sami Council.

Ms. Laura Johnston of Canada was Chair, Mr. Kjell Kolstad of Norway was the Vice-Chair, and Ms. Vicki McCulloch was the Secretary. The host country arranged several tours during the meeting. One highlight of the meeting was the tour of a nuclear-powered icebreaker owned by the Murmansk Shipping Company. In addition to representatives from the Arctic Council nations and Permanent Participants, the meeting

was attended by local and national representatives from EMERCOM of Russia, as well as other organizations with responsibilities for emergency prevention, preparedness and response (e.g., the Nuclear Safety Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IBRAE); the Knipovich Polar Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (PINRO); the Federal State Unitary Enterprise; the Murmansk Marine Biological Institute and the Mining Institute of the Kola Scientific Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences (KNC of RAN); the Murmansk Shipping Company; and the Ship Research Institute, Department of Transport). This diverse group provided the participants with a wide range of insights into the contributions these organizations are making, and the progress that is being made in many relevant projects and activities in the Russian Federation. The meeting also benefited from the interventions made by the representatives from the RAIPON and the Sami Council.

A number of presentations were made on the projects or proposals being discussed at the meeting, and also on other related topics by Russian experts. A list of the presentations and copies of several are at: http://eppr.arctic-council.org/pwpa/m_present.html. The agenda, meeting report, record of decisions and updated tables summarizing the EPPR work plan for the period 2002-2004 can be found on the EPPR website (<http://eppr.arctic-council.org/WhatNew.html>).

The EPPR Working Group wishes to extend its gratitude and congratulations to EMERCOM of Russia and to the Russian Federation for hosting a most informative and interesting meeting.

1.2 2004 Meeting in Inuvik, Canada

The next EPPR Working Group meeting is scheduled for the week of April 20, 2004 in Inuvik, Canada.

2. Ongoing Activities

2.1 Status of EPPR Projects

For additional information on the status of EPPR projects, please refer to the 2003 EPPR meeting report (<http://eppr.arctic-council.org/activities.html>). For ease of reference, the number of the specific action item or decision for each is included at the end of the summary of each project's status.

The Secretariat has updated the EPPR work plan tables as discussed at the Working Group meeting. Revised tables have been distributed to the Working Group, and are posted on the website (http://eppr.arctic-council.org/pdf/EPPR_Work_Plan2002_04_Countries_August13_03.pdf).

2.1.1 Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology (SCAT) Manual

The project on developing an Arctic Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology (SCAT) manual is continuing mainly between US and Canada, with other countries providing input through correspondence. A possible experts group meeting to review the draft manual is tentatively scheduled for fall 2003. Countries are invited to participate in the review of the draft manual at the meeting or by correspondence. The SCAT manual meeting may also provide an opportunity to further discuss approaches to dealing with disposal of oily wastes. (4.1.1)

2.1.2 Circumpolar Map of Resources at Risk from Oil spills in the Arctic

The Circumpolar Map is accessible to the public through the EPPR website <http://eppr.arctic-council.org> as well as at <http://www.akvaplan.niva.no/eppr>. In addition, copies are available in CD format. The Working Group agreed to proceed with further discussion on the Circumpolar Map of Resources at Risk. The database will remain closed while countries consider the need for access to the database and for interactive capability. Norway will lead an effort to look at potential partners (e.g., AMAP, ACAP, IPIECA [the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association], industry) and funding opportunities, and report back to the Working Group so that decisions can be made at the 2004 EPPR meeting. Countries should also consider the relationship to other mapping projects. The US will furnish information on IPIECA and their mapping project to the Working Group. (4.1.3)

2.1.3 Table Top Exercise - Bilibino

The Working Group noted the completion of the August 2002 exercise described in the 'Final Report on Preparation and Organization of the Tabletop Exercise at the Bilibino Nuclear Power. (4.2.6) The report can be accessed via the EPPR web site (<http://eppr.arctic-council.org/activities.html>).

2.1.4 Source Control Management

The U.S. (Department of Energy) and Russia (EMERCOM and MINATOM), under the Joint Coordinating Committee for Radiation Effects Research (JCCRER) and the EPPR Working Group are conducting a series of pilot projects to develop a risk assessment methodology / source control process for reducing the potential for emergencies at facilities handling hazardous and/or radioactive materials. The June 2003 EPPR Working Group meeting noted acceptance of the:

- Report on Source Control Management And Prevention Strategies For Chlorine Handling At The Apatity Waterworks – Phase I (US and Russian Federation) - 'Analysis of Risks of Emergencies to Population and Territory, and Development of Measures to Reduce the Risks as Applied to the Apatityvodokanal Utility' 2002. (4.2.1)

- 'Working draft' of the Phase I 'Risk Assessment Methodology at Hazardous Industrial Facilities' Report, January 2002. (4.2.2)

Countries were asked to indicate potential interest in participation with the Russian Federation and the US on:

- Phase II of the emergency prevention/source control project - preparation of a refined risk assessment methodology document. (4.2.3)
- Phase II of the emergency prevention/source control project - NIIAR Fuel Research Department risk assessment. (4.2.4)
- A series of ISO 14001 training programs (first one-day session in Fall of 2003). (4.2.5)

2.1.5 Community Radiation Information Project

The joint US/Russia 'Community Radiation Protection Information' project is a new project. The US Department of Energy is working with IBRAE and EMECOM of Russia to study public information needs, develop a brochure and informational CD, and distribute the information once it has been prepared. The focus is on the Murmansk and Arkhangelskaya regions of Russia. The Working Group confirmed that the Russian Federation and the US will proceed with the Community Radiation Protection Information project, and that countries and Permanent Participants are invited to participate in the project or to receive the products for use and adaptation following completion. (4.2.7)

2.1.6 Survey of Past Natural Disasters

Based on a proposal presented by Finland, the Working Group agreed to undertake a Survey of Past Natural Disasters. The Working Group believes that the survey, along with related discussions, can contribute to a decision on the possible expansion of EPPR's mandate to include natural disasters (see S. 3.2, below). Finland, as lead, will prepare a proposal regarding the content of the survey. The survey will also address the following questions:

- What gaps would be filled by expanding the mandate?
- What is the 'value added' of EPPR expanding its mandate?
- What would the consequences (workload, financial) be if the mandate was expanded? (4.3.1)

2.2 Other Activities and Initiatives

At the June meeting, the US and Russia provided information on ongoing and planned research projects related to response in oil and ice, and member countries were invited to participate as appropriate (4.1.4).

Currently the Russian Federation is working on draft new projects, which are to be distributed among all countries and Permanent Participants through the EPPR Secretariat. (4.2.8)

Countries were asked to provide updates to the relevant sections of the on-line 'Arctic Guide' to the Secretariat within 30 days. Secretariat is to subsequently update the web site. (4.4.1) No comments have been received to date.

The Working Group was asked to take into consideration the 'Arctic Rescue' initiative tabled by the Russian delegation at the June 2003 meeting. Arctic Rescue is a proposed mechanism for coordination of international activities on prevention and liquidation of the consequences of the emergency situations in the Arctic. The rationale for the creation of this international structure was reviewed, and an overview of its possible structure, sources of funding, and potential results/benefits was provided (a copy of the presentation is available at: http://eppr.arctic-council.org/pwpa/m_present.html). All countries are kindly requested to inform the EMERCOM of Russia of their opinion of the 'Arctic Rescue' initiative. (4.4.2)

2.3 Updating the EPPR Web Site

The EPPR Secretariat is to continue work to refine the web site. Draft reports and other sensitive documents will in future be password-protected. (6.4.1) At the June meeting, the Sami Council suggested that the Russian pages of the website need to correspond to the English version, and asked if Canada can arrange for this, as the need for information is perhaps even greater in the Russian Federation. Updating of the Russian portion of the web site will be undertaken as soon as practicable. (6.4.2)

2.4 Administrative and Financial Matters

The Secretariat support for EPPR during the period 2002-2004 is being provided by Canada. The cost of Secretariat support is estimated at \$35,000 US per year. It is proposed that the EPPR website continue to be maintained at the Arctic Centre in Finland. The estimated cost is \$ 5,000 US per year.

3. Future Activities and Plans

3.1 Coordination and Cooperation

3.1.1 With Other Arctic Council Working Groups

AMAP

The SAO Report to the Arctic Council Ministers (October 2002, Section 2.2.3) recommended that the Ministers ask "...EPPR, in collaboration with AMAP on the basis of a clear division of labour, to give more emphasis to the prevention, preparedness and response to emergencies involving radiological and other hazardous material". EPPR has been requested to work jointly with AMAP on an international hydrocarbon conference to be held in 2005. In addition, discussions need to be held on the use of the Circumpolar Map of Resources at Risk from Oil Spills as part of the AMAP 2006 hydrocarbons in the Arctic assessment. The future of the Circumpolar Map was on the agenda of the last AMAP meeting.

PAME

The SAO report also recommended that "...EPPR to continue its efforts related to emergencies resulting from extraction and transportation of oil and gas, in cooperation with PAME." The Ministerial declaration (October 2002, S. 7) instructed that "...recognize the potential for the development of oil, gas, metals and minerals in many Arctic regions to impact on the local standard of living and emphasize the importance of responsible management of these resources, including emergency prevention, to promote environmental protection and the sustainable development of the Arctic indigenous and local communities;"

EPPR will cooperate with PAME on the preparation of the Oil Transfer Guidelines, and provide comments on the contingency planning chapter as requested by PAME. Countries can comment through EPPR or through their individual country. Countries are asked to distribute the draft guideline for 'on the ground' testing in at least one community in their country. (4.1.2)

Arctic Marine Strategic Plan

It was agreed at the June meeting that the EPPR Chair would participate in the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan workshop in October 2003, and that countries would provide their input to the process through their PAME country contact or the EPPR Chair as appropriate. (6.1) The U.S. Coast Guard will also participate in this meeting. A background paper on 'Environmental Emergencies and Risk Management' was prepared by the U.S. Coast Guard and the EPPR Chair for the workshop.

Arctic Climate Impact Assessment

The EPPR Working Group will not comment on the ACIA draft policy paper as a Working Group and members are requested to comment through their individual country processes. (6.2)

Sustainable Development Working Group

With respect to the SDWG's 'Information and Communication Technology in the Arctic Conference' and the Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force', it was requested that the US keep the Working Group informed of the processes and possible opportunities for coordination with EPPR. (6.3)

3.1.2 With Other Organizations Outside the Arctic Council

Several organizations operate within the same fields as EPPR, and the Working Group will continue to seek opportunities for co-ordination and co-operation with regional bodies, such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the International Maritime Organization, and the Northern Forum.

Northern Forum

At the 2003 meeting, the Working Group requested the US to develop a process for EPPR to review the April 2002 Severe Cold Climate Workshop (SCCW) recommendations, with a view to strengthening our cooperation with the Northern Forum. The Working Group is to invite the Northern Forum to the next EPPR meeting to have more in-depth discussion of opportunities for coordination and cooperation. (4.1.5). In September, a Discussion Paper prepared by the US (<http://eppr.arctic-council.org/pwpa/index.html>) was distributed to the EPPR Working Group and the Northern Forum seeking feedback on a number of recommendations regarding EPPR's relationship with the Northern Forum, as well as the recommendations from the SCCW; comments have been requested by October 6, 2003.

University of the Arctic

The University of the Arctic has requested that EPPR name a contact in the Working Group who could work with the U Arctic International Secretariat or the chairs of program departments to identify areas of common interest and to propose practical means to implementation. The Working Group will be pursuing the interest expressed by the US (University of Alaska at Fairbanks) and the Russian Federation (IBRAE) in this regard.

3.2 Possible Expanded Mandate

The SAO Report to the Arctic Council Ministers (October 2002, Section 2.2.3) noted that ...” that EPPR in the future should give more emphasis to prevention, preparedness and response to accidents involving radiological and other hazardous materials, which fits within the present mandate of EPPR. The SAOs further propose that it could be appropriate to expand the mandate of EPPR to include also prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters.” In this regard, the SAOs recommended that the Ministers “...request EPPR to complete the inventory of past natural disasters in the Arctic to determine if the mandate of EPPR should be expanded to include also prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters.”

At the June 2003 meeting, the Working Group agreed it was premature to make a decision on expanding the EPPR Working Group mandate to include natural disasters until the Survey of Past Natural Disasters is completed. (5.1) (see S. 2.1.6, above). The Working Group will make a recommendation on this matter at their next meeting (April 2004), for subsequent consideration by the SAOs and Ministers.

4. Questions to SAOs

Based on this report, the SAOs are kindly asked to take note of:

- The state of the ongoing / recently completed projects:
 - Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technology Manual
 - Circumpolar Map of Resources at Risk from Oil Spills
 - Bilibino Nuclear Power Plant Tabletop Exercise
 - Source Control Management Projects (Apatityvodokanal Pilot Project, Risk Assessment Methodology development, NIIAR Fuel Research Department risk assessment; training programs)
 - Community Radiation Protection Information Project
 - Survey of Past Natural Disasters;
- The EPPR Working Group’s future activities and plans with respect to cooperation and coordination with other groups within and outside the Arctic Council, and with respect to a possible expansion of mandate; and
- The request by the Russian Federation for countries to review and comment on the proposed ‘Arctic Rescue’ initiative (see Section 2.2, above).