

Department of State

The Department of State continues to be involved in multilateral and bilateral activities related to environmental protection, sustainable development, and scientific research in the Arctic.

In the international arena, U.S. policy in the Arctic focuses on environmental protection and sustainable development. In 1991 the United States, along with Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden, became signatories to the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), a high-level forum designed to identify priorities for regional cooperation with regard to environmental protection in the Arctic. Organizations representing the Arctic indigenous communities were admitted as Permanent Participants to the AEPS.

In 1996 the eight Arctic countries signed a declaration establishing the Arctic Council and expanding its mandate to deal with issues of sustainable development. The Council now includes four environmental working groups:

- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP);
- Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF);
- Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (EPPR); and
- Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME).

A fifth subsidiary body, the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), was established at the Arctic Council's Ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, Canada, in 1998. The Council's six Permanent Participants represent indigenous Arctic residents; four count Native communities in Alaska among their members. The Permanent Participants sit at the Arctic Council table and are a source of traditional knowledge for many council studies.

The U.S. served as the second chair of the Arctic Council in 1998–2000. The State Department's Office of Oceans Affairs, which represents the U.S. on the Council, housed the Council's secretariat during the U.S. chairmanship. During this time, the State Department improved the flow of communication among Council members and sup-

ported important initiatives on environmental protection and sustainable development. The U.S. continues to pursue these goals and remains a leader on the Council. In 2002 the U.S. assumed the chair of CAFF and in 2003 the chair of the Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution in the Arctic (ACAP). Finland chaired the Council in 2000–2002, and Iceland assumed the chair for 2002–2004. Russia has indicated its willingness to chair the Council for 2004–2006.

The State Department has provided financial support for many recent Council initiatives. The Department contributed to an ACAP activity to reduce dioxins and furans. The ACAP, approved at the 2000 ministerial meeting in Barrow, Alaska, outlines actions to address some of the pollution threats in the Arctic identified during the first AMAP assessments, such as PCBs, pesticides, and mercury. The State Department provided funds to support U.S. authors' contributions to the *Arctic Human Development Report*, a comprehensive and scientifically based overview and assessment of human conditions in the entire circumpolar region written for the nonspecialist. The State Department contributed to developing and implementing integrated ecosystem management strategies in the Russian Arctic, and it supported the Arctic Council's work at the New York preparatory meeting and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Department helped fund the participation of indigenous residents of Alaska in the Arctic Council, contributing to the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat and supporting indigenous Alaskan delegates' travel to Arctic Council meetings and an all-Alaska delegation to the Taking Wing conference on gender equality in the Arctic.

Another Arctic Council initiative backed by the U.S. is the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). With NOAA and NSF funding, this comprehensive effort, which has the support of all

Council members, will evaluate and synthesize knowledge on climate change, climate variability, and increased ultraviolet radiation and their consequences on the Arctic environment. The final reports are expected in November 2004.

In the area of sustainable development, the U.S. focuses on human health in the Arctic. The State Department, along with the State of Alaska, is coordinating Council members' activities in the area of telemedicine. The State Department supports the project led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on emerging infectious diseases in the Arctic. The State Department also provided funding to Alaska for the ecotourism

project of the Arctic Council over the last two fiscal years.

As coordinator of U.S. international policy concerning the Arctic, the Department of State welcomes input from individuals and agencies with an interest in participating in the work of the Arctic Council or contributing to the knowledge base that underlies the Council's working groups. Interested parties are encouraged to visit the Arctic Council web site at <http://www.arctic-council.org>. The web site lists current and future activities of the Council, as well as the names and addresses of individuals and secretariats related to specific aspects of the Council's work.