

Chapter 8

Finland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council: Setting Priorities and Implementing Them



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Abstract Finland became the Chair of the Arctic Council in May of 2017. It has now passed the halfway point in its leadership term with its program of “Exploring Common Solutions” to Arctic needs. This chapter focuses its attention on how and why the specific elements of this thematic program were chosen and the progress that the Finnish Chairmanship has made, thus far, in advancing its objectives. The specific sponsored initiatives of the program are discussed as a reflection of both Finnish priorities and current institutional efforts. Finland’s leadership goals, methods, and roles are examined within the context of providing the Arctic Council with the necessary direction to achieve its long-term objectives. Consideration is given to the particularly challenging international environment in which the Finnish Chairmanship operates.

Keywords Arctic Council · Arctic affairs · Chairmanship · Chairmanship Program · International institutions · Finland

Finland assumed the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council from the United States on May 11 2017.¹ It chose as the theme of its leadership effort: Exploring Common Solutions. Traditionally, the country has had a strong focus on Arctic issues, given that it commenced the whole eight Arctic state co-operation by initiating negotiations for what became the 1991 Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS).² The AEPS was integrated into the Canadian initiative of the Arctic Council during

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¹During the same time, Finland became also the chair of the Arctic Economic Council, the Arctic Coast Guard Forum and the Arctic Offshore Regulators Forum. All these international forums are directly or indirectly catalyzed by the Arctic Council, even if they are independent from the Council.

²See Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, 14 June 1991 *ILM* 30, at 1624–1669 (1991) (hereinafter AEPS).

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a transition period from 1996 to 1998.³ Finland had previously served as the Chair of the Arctic Council from 2000 to 2002.⁴ Carrying out the current Chairmanship is more challenging than earlier, given that the Arctic Council has expanded, and become a more complex and ambitious inter-governmental forum.

The Chairmanship of any intergovernmental forum or organization is a role that is identified and defined by the specific international institution. Hence, the Chair is expected to advance the goals, values and objectives of that intergovernmental institution, rather than use the Chairmanship to advance its own interests.⁵ Drafting a Chairmanship Program differs from the process of producing a national Arctic strategy, which defines the main interests of a particular state with regard to the Arctic. For instance, when Finland revised its National Arctic Strategy in 2013, Finnish business interests in the Arctic received a lot of attention. There was a mistaken expectation on the part of some that a similar focus would be projected by Finland when it assumed the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017. It was a shock to some then when this did not happen. Some Finnish economic actors criticized the Arctic Council Chairmanship Program as being insufficient to advance national business interests.⁶ This was due to misunderstandings on their part regarding what should be the focus of a Chair of the Arctic Council. It is not supposed to directly advance national economic interests. Rather its attention should be on the collective needs of the Arctic. The organization has specific responsibilities to advance environmental protection and sustainable development throughout the region.⁷ It is the Arctic Economic Council (AEC), which exists as an independent international body that looks to advance business interests in the region.⁸

³ See the History of the Arctic Council at <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/arctic-council>. Also see Evan T. Bloom, "Establishment of the Arctic Council," *The American Journal of International Law* 93, no. 3 (1999): 712–22.

⁴ The Program for the Finnish Chair of the Arctic Council 2000–2002 can be found at <https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/1781>

⁵ This is at least so in principle. While national interests often loom in the background, the Chair's priorities also serve to consolidate that nation's Arctic expertise.

⁶ Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013 can be accessed at <https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/334509/Arktinen+strategia+2013+en.pdf/6b6fb723-40ec-4c17-b286-5b5910fbecf4>

⁷ Interviews with Aleksii Härkönen (2.5.2018) and Tero Vauraste (3.5.2018, done by Heikki Kontro).

⁸ For instance, the Canadian Chairmanship was more business-oriented, but this business orientation was manifested in facilitating the establishment of the AEC. It seems that these misunderstandings were solved when the AEC and the Arctic officials started discussions, which were seen as fruitful by both sides and led also to better understanding of what can be attained both with the AC chairmanship and the AEC chairmanship. The foreign ministry's Arctic officials perceive that Finland's chairmanship priorities also advance business interests, albeit indirectly. For instance, better connectivity and meteorological information provide information infrastructure for companies to function, not simply in the Finnish north, but in the entire Arctic region. It would be difficult to imagine how the Finnish Chairmanship could actually be more business-oriented, especially that digitalization is one of the priorities, which directly links up with the main focus of the current AEC work.

The main emphasis in this chapter is given to two issues. First, what are the priorities that Finland has chosen for its period as Chair of the Arctic Council and why exactly were these chosen? The second concern is: How has the country implemented its Chairmanship which is now halfway completed? An attempt is also made to identify some of Finland's good practices when developing and implementing the Chairmanship. The chapter concludes by taking a bigger picture on how can we evaluate Finland's Chairmanship of the Council in the long-term and with certain geopolitical perspectives in mind.

8.1 What were the Priorities that Finland Chose for its Chairmanship Period?

Like any state preparing for its Arctic Council Chairmanship, Finland was bound to define its priorities in a way that would serve the values, goals and objectives of the organization as a whole. These cross-cutting goals would speak to common concerns of the institution and reflect ongoing interest of the body. Its Chairmanship Program needed to be acceptable to the other seven Arctic Member States and also to the Permanent Participants representing a series of indigenous organizations.⁹ Yet, within these broad limits set by the Council, Finland also had the opportunity to advance some of its own priorities that, to a certain extent, may reflect its national interests. The main cross-cutting priorities for the Finnish Chairmanship Program became combatting climate change and advancing UN sustainable development goals (SDGs). The individual Finnish priorities for its leadership period were focused on connectivity, education, meteorology, and environmental protection.¹⁰

Finland's Foreign Ministry's Arctic officials commenced planning for its own Chairmanship Program almost immediately after the United States assumed the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council in Spring of 2015. At the time, two main persons led the preparations efforts: Aleksi Härkönen who was to become the Chair of Senior Arctic Officials under the Finnish Chairmanship and René Söderman who then later served as Finland's Senior Arctic Official during this period. Over time, additional members joined the Arctic team within the Foreign Ministry. The Foreign Minister of Finland has served as the formal Chair of the Arctic Council since the start of the

⁹Indigenous peoples organizations (Permanent Participants) have a unique role in the Arctic Council, since they need to be fully consulted before any decision-making. Hence, any future chair needs to pay attention to their acceptance of chairmanship programme as well. On the role and participation of permanent participants in the Arctic Council, see Dalee Sambo Dorough, "The Rights, Interests and Role of the Arctic Council Permanent Participants," in *Governance of Arctic Shipping: Balancing Rights and Interests of Arctic States and User States*, vol. 84, Publications on Ocean Development (Brill Nijhoff 2017), 68–103.

¹⁰See Exploring Common Solutions, Finland's Chairmanship Program for the Arctic Council 2017–2019 (hereinafter 'Chairmanship Program').

Table 8.1 Finland's Arctic Council Chairmanship Team

Timo Soini (Foreign Minister)	Chair of the Arctic Council
Aleksi Härkönen	Chair of Senior Arctic Officials
René Söderman	Finland's Senior Arctic Official
Pekka Shemeikka	Chair of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)
Tuuli Ojala	Head of the delegation of Finland to the SDWG

Source: Arctic Council Secretariat

Finnish Chairmanship in Spring of 2017. (See Table 8.1 above for a listing of the Finnish Chairmanship team).¹¹

Although the main officials preparing for the Finnish Chairmanship came from the Foreign Ministry, a concerted effort was made to consult and discuss their efforts with the responsible Arctic Affairs Committee, which consisted of various ministries and other officials. The main concern that arose during the initial period of preparation was to ensure that there was continuity in the transition from the U.S. Chairmanship to Finland. This was something that the officials saw as important in preparing for Finland's Chairmanship and hence there were extensive consultations with responsible U.S. officials during the Fall of 2015.¹²

At the beginning of the preparations, another issue of concern was whether Finnish economic interests would be sufficiently advanced through the Chairmanship. As mentioned earlier, these had formed the core of the Finland's National Arctic Strategy. This became a slightly contentious issue at the start as many of the leading Finnish economic actors did not really understand what the Arctic Council Chairmanship was all about. The issue was soon resolved, however, when Tero Vauraste, the future Chair of the Arctic Economic Council (AEC), was able to join the planning discussions. He better understood the distinction between the two undertakings and was able to assist Finnish business leaders to understand that their country's specific economic interests could not be directly advanced through the Finnish Arctic Council Chairmanship. They could be pursued, however, by means of the AEC.¹³ Nonetheless, Tero Vauraste has maintained a view that Finland's government could have done more to advance the nation's economic interests by emphasizing more some aspects of its Chairmanship Program.¹⁴

¹¹ In the Foreign Ministry, the Arctic team consists also of Harri Mäki-Reinikka, Annariina Kukkoen and Marta Rissanen. Obviously there are other officials in other ministries that have various duties during the Finnish Chairmanship. The current author is co-lead of the Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG) together with Saara Tervaniemi from the Sami Council. Arja Rautio from the University of Oulu is the lead of the Arctic Human Health Expert Group. Finland is also leading the Arctic Coast Guard Forum and the Arctic Economic Council, but these are independent organizations from the Arctic Council.

¹² Interview with Aleksi Härkönen (Done by Heikki Kontro, 2.5)

¹³ Interview with Aleksi Härkönen (Done by H.K, 2.5.).

¹⁴ Interview with Tero Vauraste (done by H.K 3.5.).

There were many other preparatory discussions that were held both within Finland and abroad prior to the first formal presentation of the Finnish Chairmanship Program at the October 2016 SAO meeting. Following the good practice established by the previous Chairs, Finland consulted with all the other Member States about its proposed priorities ahead of their announcement. Finland also organized a joint meeting with the Permanent Participants. This was apparently the first time that all of the Permanent Participants were able to comment on the proposed priorities of the Chair. As the most important indigenous representative body in Finland, the Finnish Sami Parliament was also consulted, despite the fact that it did not have a seat on the Arctic Council. This demonstrates how carefully Arctic officials in the Foreign Ministry wanted the country's priorities discussed and agreed upon, well ahead of the start of the Finnish Chairmanship.¹⁵ Some discussions were also undertaken with various Observers of the Arctic Council.

Everything seemed to be ready for Finland to commence its Chairmanship Program, given the fact that all the Member States and Permanent Participants had been consulted and had accepted the incoming Chair's priorities. However, something unexpected occurred. Finland received final confirmation that its priorities were acceptable during the October 2016 Portland SAO meeting. This was during the period of the U.S. Chairmanship when the Obama Administration directed that nation's Arctic affairs. This was potentially all to change when just a few weeks later it was replaced by the current Trump Administration which had very different policy priorities for the Arctic.

In fact, just before the May 2017 Fairbanks Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting, representatives of the new American government challenged the adoption of the Fairbanks Declaration. This placed a question mark over whether the U.S. would continue to endorse Finland's Chairmanship priorities. At the time, this was seen as a real challenge for Finland's ability to implement its Chairmanship Program.¹⁶ Fortunately, diplomats from all the other Arctic countries were able to convince the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, Rex Tillerson, of the importance of moving forward with the Arctic Council's declaration whose provisions had been negotiated prior to the change in American administrations.¹⁷ As such, the Fairbanks Declaration was accepted and references support for the Paris Climate Change agreement. This despite Secretary Tillerson noting at the final session of the Ministers Meeting that the current U.S. administration had not yet taken a final stance as to whether they would remain a Party to the Paris Agreement.¹⁸

¹⁵Interview with Aleksi Härkönen (done by H.K., 2.5.)

¹⁶Personal observations.

¹⁷Personal discussions in Fairbanks with officials from many Arctic countries.

¹⁸Personal observations from the Ministerial Meeting. Now we know what that stance is since Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris agreement. See Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord, June 1, 2017 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>; U.S. Department of State, Media Note dated August 3, 2017: Communication Regarding Intent To Withdraw from Paris Agreement, U.S. Department of State can be accessed at <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/08/273050.htm>

8.2 How Have the Priorities of Finland Started to Take Shape?

As noted earlier, Finland has organized its Chairmanship priorities around four individual goals (environmental protection, connectivity, meteorological cooperation, and education) as well as two cross-cutting priorities (the implementation of the Paris Agreement and advancing UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Arctic Council). In addition, its Chairmanship Program outlines areas of ongoing work by the Arctic Council (environment and climate, seas, people, and strengthening the Arctic Council) that Finland will continue to support and seek to advance through the efforts of the several Working Groups of the Council. Hence, Finland through its Chairmanship Program lists all the relevant actions that it needs to undertake in order to move forward the full agenda of the Council. Some of these undertakings are based on projects that were instituted prior to its Chairmanship. Others are more directly tied to its specific priorities. The following discussion focuses on these latter concerns, tracing the evolution of both individual and cross-cutting priorities of Finland's Chairmanship Program. The reader's attention will be first directed to the individual priorities of the Chair.

8.2.1 *Individual Priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship*

Finland's individual priorities stem, in part, from the areas in which it had already achieved a certain reputation and global status. Its education initiative was characteristic of this link. It focused on improving the capacities of teachers who are committed to educating the younger generation in the Arctic region. It is widely agreed in Finland that an emphasis on qualified, respected teachers is one main reason for the strong status of the country's own education system. Finland also took a strong role in creating the University of the Arctic (UArctic), which was the first organization to be catalyzed by the Arctic Council. The Circumpolar Coordination Office of the UArctic was established in 1999 as part of the University of Lapland, and in 2001 the official launch of the UArctic took place in Rovaniemi, Finland. Together with the UArctic, the Chair's aim is to create a network of educators, with a goal of developing new methods such as how to use the potential of digitization for education in the Arctic and best practices to assist Arctic teachers at early-childhood, primary and lower secondary education.¹⁹

Meteorological research has also had strong standing in Finland and with the Finnish Meteorological Institute forming the lead institution. Foreign Ministry officials perceive that cooperation in meteorological and oceanographic fields has much to contribute to understanding the Arctic, given that better ice monitoring and weather services are needed, and that air and ocean observation networks need to be

¹⁹ See Finland's Chairmanship Program *supra* note 10 at 9.

strengthened. Importantly, better meteorological and oceanographic cooperation will assist in attaining more accurate climate science results. With this in mind, Finland proposed in its Chairmanship Program that cooperation among the Arctic states also included “collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization”.²⁰ When the Finnish Chairmanship Program was being prepared, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) had already filed its application to become an Observer in the AC.²¹ This status was conferred during the Fairbanks Ministerial Meeting in 2017.²² Discussions with the leadership of the Finnish Meteorological Institute and the Foreign Ministry influenced how this priority area emerged.²³ The fact that the current Secretary-General of the WMO is a Finn (Petteri Taalas the former Director of the Finnish Meteorological Institute) quite likely had an impact on how this priority came to emerge and also included a role for the WMO.

Finland also has a strong high-tech track record, so connectivity was seen quite early on as a primary focus area. In the minds of the Arctic officials in the Foreign Ministry who were preparing the program, a good deal of preliminary work had already been done by the Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic (TFTIA) within the Arctic Council. This was important, as it made it easier to focus within the Finnish Chairmanship on connectivity in general. Also important here were discussions these officials undertook with the forthcoming chair of the AEC, Tero Vauraste. They agreed that the Chairmanship would be able to incorporate the strategic work that the AEC already had completed in the field of connectivity. Foreign Ministry officials said that these discussions with the AEC and its leadership were important in establishing the focus for this priority area: namely to create well-functioning communication networks and services, including basic infrastructures such as satellite connections, mobile communication systems, low-bandwidth transmission, and sea cables.²⁴ These are all seen as lifelines for human activities in the Arctic, given the region's sparse population and the long distances between communities. Additionally, the Finnish Chairmanship Program recognizes that broadband access facilitates e-learning, enables the development of digital health and social services, and also allows connectivity to media.²⁵

Finland also possesses a relatively strong environmental protection system. The country has actively participated in global environmental protection efforts in a number of settings but primarily as a member state of the European Union. When

²⁰Ibid., at 8.

²¹For more information on the WMO's Observer profile, see <http://aim-council.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work/8-news-and-events/461-observer-wmo>

²²See the Fairbanks declaration (specifically paragraph 44) https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/1910/EDOCS-4072-v5-ACMMUS10_FAIRBANKS_2017_Fairbanks_Declaration-2017.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y. For more information on the WMO's Observer profile, see <http://aim-council.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work/8-news-and-events/461-observer-wmo>

²³Interview with Aleksii Härkönen (H.K., 2.5.2018).

²⁴Interview with Aleksii Härkönen (H.K., 2.5.2018).

²⁵See Finland's Chairmanship Program *supra* note 10 at 7.

the Chairmanship Program was in its infancy, Finnish officials were thinking that Finland would have only three individual priority areas, similar to the United States Chairmanship Program. At first, environmental protection was seen as being too obviously represented by the overall efforts of the Arctic Council, especially in its work on climate change and biodiversity, both areas in which the officials from the Ministry of the Environment have been working from the beginnings of Arctic inter-governmental co-operation.²⁶ For this reason, the Foreign Ministry officials initially thought that a separate individual priority area was not needed. However, after meeting with the leadership of the Ministry for the Environment, it was decided that environmental protection still needed to be defined as an individual Chairmanship priority, in addition to being addressed in many other ongoing program areas. This rather late addition of a new priority area is reflected in the fairly meager descriptive content accompanying it. It emphasized that the Arctic Council should continue its focus on “biodiversity conservation and pollution prevention, as well as mitigation and adaptation to climate change”, given its more general attention to environmental protection and monitoring efforts.²⁷ Two specific issues remain as stand-alone goals for its environmental protection. First, Finland wants to place more emphasis on communicating the results and recommendations of Arctic Council assessments in global forums. Second, it proposed, albeit in a somewhat abstract fashion, to expand the exchange of information on best practices and emerging technologies it sees as promoting sustainable and responsible development in the Arctic. It is important to emphasize here that a good deal of the work in the Arctic Council is related to monitoring the state of the Arctic environment and its protection. These activities continue to be addressed within their respective Working Groups without interference from the Chair.

8.2.2 *Cross-cutting Priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship*

As noted earlier when Finnish Foreign Ministry officials also commenced drafting the program, one of the major agenda items was to consult with officials from the United States. The U.S. position has been highly visible, if occasionally inconsistent, with regard to climate change.²⁸ The international momentum leading to the adoption of the Paris Agreement was a highly influential element during the U.S. Arctic Council Chairmanship under the Obama Administration. Finland followed suit in choosing it as one of its cross-cutting priorities and in an effort to remain true to the Council’s policy of continuity. However, as mentioned above,

²⁶ Interview with Aleksi Hörkönen (H.K. 2.5.).

²⁷ See Finland’s Chairmanship Program *supra* note 10 at 6.

²⁸ See Proposed U.S. Arctic Council Chairmanship Program 2015–2017 (February 2015) at 22. https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/1433/USCHAIR_Doc1_Proposed_US_Chairmanship_Program_Feb_2015_AC_SAO_CA04.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

when the Trump administration came to power in the United States, different policy priorities started to shape that country's climate policy.

Of special interest with regard to the latter has been Finland's interest in the consequences of the adaptation to climate change. The Paris Agreement²⁹ deviates from previous decisions and instruments adopted in the global climate regime in that it no longer focuses primarily on developing states in the policy field of adaptation, but instead cover all states. Since climate change adaptation is more relevant in the Arctic and acknowledging work being done on mitigation such as the program aimed at reducing black carbon and methane, Finnish officials felt that focusing on this concern would be highly relevant. They felt that by doing so, the adaptation work of the Arctic Council would be strengthened and would receive more prominent visibility in the global climate change agenda discussions. As such it would be a good choice as a cross-cutting priority for the Finnish Chairmanship.

From the earliest stages of preparing the program, Finnish Arctic officials considered how the Chairmanship might include the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the work of the Council.³⁰ Although the organization has focused on sustainable development from the beginning of its existence, no previous Chair of the body has ever tried to allow UN sustainable development agenda to directly influence the work of the Arctic Council.³¹ Clearly, the UN SDG agenda is highly relevant to the Arctic.³² However, it was by no means clear that UN SDG should be introduced into the work of the Arctic Council, since until then sustainable development issues in the Arctic Council had not been connected to the UN's work on sustainable development. Therefore, it may be reasonable to ask: Why Finland included this as a cross-cutting priority in its Chairmanship Program?

Similarly to other Nordic states, Finland had made a substantial investment in putting the UN SDGs into domestic practice, and the country has progressed well with its national SDG implementation.³³ Hence, there was significant expertise and a political will in the country for broadening the work on the SDGs in other cooperative forums. Finland was also the first Member State of the Arctic Council to develop its Chairmanship Program after the SDGs had been formally adopted by the UN General Assembly in September of 2015.³⁴ The SDGs were also incorporated to

²⁹The Paris Agreement 12 December 2015, entered into force 4 November 2016 in accordance with Article 21(1) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) No. 54113. Article 7 of the Agreement has a special focus on adaptation.

³⁰Interview with Aleksii Härkönen (H.K. 2.5.).

³¹There is one tiny exception to this, since Finland as a chair gave a presentation on the work of the Arctic Council at the UN's 2002 Johannesburg Summit. The document can be accessed at https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/512/ACSAO-FI03_5_Johannesburg.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

³²SDG Conferences.

³³See the country ranking at <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/topics/aktuelle-meldungen/2016/juli/countries-need-to-act-urgently-to-achieve-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/>

³⁴See the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 25 September 2015, UN G.A. A/RES/70/1 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

form a significant part of the Arctic Council's SDWG Strategic Framework (2017–2030)³⁵ and that this undertaking would be initiated during the start of the Finnish Chairmanship. The SDGs also fit very well into the Arctic Council's overall work, since the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) seeks to advancing sustainable development in the region.³⁶

8.3 Finland's Current Chairmanship: What has Happened so Far?

Even if the Chairmanship leads the Arctic Council during its two-year term, as has been seen in previous chapters of this volume, this does not mean that it will individually supervise all of the work. Yet in order to provide adequate oversight, the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) needs to be aware of what happens in all the component parts of the body. Finland's responsibilities as Chair include organizing (together with the Arctic Council Secretariat) the meetings of SAOs, the sessions of the Sustainable Development Working Group, and obviously, the final Ministerial Meeting that serves as the culmination of its Chairmanship.³⁷

The Chair of SAOs is expected to oversee many issues in its Chairmanship period, based on the consensual approval of all of the Arctic Member States. For instance, the Chair is in charge of disseminating information and participating in relevant international seminars, conferences, and meetings of other intergovernmental organizations. Important duties include maintaining contact with the Observers and representing the Arctic Council in other forums, if so agreed in advance by the other Arctic states. Good leadership is not only about following procedural rules, but also includes ensuring compromise and steering countries toward consensus and away from tensions and disruptive issues which could bring multilateral cooperation to a halt. This point is aptly emphasized by Smieszek in Chap. 3 of this volume.

There are now several projects under the SDWG that advance the education goals of Finland's Chairmanship Program, perhaps most clearly the project on "Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic".³⁸ The goal of this

³⁵ See Arctic Council SDWG Strategic Framework

³⁶ See Terms of Reference of the SDWG <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/working-groups/sdwg>. Recently, high level Conferences were organised for promoting a better understanding of the SDGs for the Arctic. See 'The SDGs in the Arctic', International High Level Conference organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 1 December 2017. Available at <http://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/the-arctic/the-sdgs-in-the-arctic/>. See also Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit Conference: <http://www.rovaniemiarcticspirit.fi/news/UN-Sustainable-Development-Goals-in-the-Arctic-region---economy,-science,-and-the-next-generations/xcybq3lk/f6fa20d2-4ffc-47d6-b7c9-20833edc378e>

³⁷ This will be organized in May 2019 in Rovaniemi, Finland.

³⁸ More information on the project can be accessed at <http://www.sdwg.org/activities/sdwg-projects-2017-2019/teacher-education-for-diversity-and-equality-in-the-arctic/>

action is to advance teacher education as means to promote teachers to become creators of a sustainable future in the Arctic. This work is also aimed at continuing part of the University of the Arctic's thematic network in this area.

The Finnish Chairmanship's individual meteorology priority has led to the first Arctic Meteorology Summit that was held in conjunction with the SDWG and SAO meetings in Levi, Finland (March 2018). The results of the summit were presented during a recent SAO meeting.³⁹ The final Arctic Meteorology Summit during the Finnish Arctic Council Chairmanship will be organized in 2019.

The Finnish Chairmanship's individual priority on connectivity is advancing primarily through the Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic (TFICA).⁴⁰ The Task Force aims to "compare the needs of those who live, operate, and work in the Arctic with available infrastructure, and work with the telecommunications industry and the Arctic Economic Council to encourage the creation of required infrastructure with an eye toward pan-Arctic solutions, and report to Ministers in 2019".⁴¹ As mentioned above, most of the work in the Arctic Council is related to environmental protection. As the Chair of the Council, Finland's most concrete contribution to advancing this priority is the SDWG project "Good Practice Recommendations for Environmental Impact Assessment and Public Participation in the Arctic", which aims at "providing Arctic-specific recommendations that can be applied in the vulnerable and changing Arctic environment, taking into account the indigenous peoples and other inhabitants living there".⁴²

The cross-cutting priority focused on Implementation of the Paris Agreement is moving forward on several fronts. It is tied to many actions that are progressing in the Arctic Council, related to the scientific assessment of climate change, adaptation to its consequences in the region, and perhaps most importantly for advancing this priority, to reducing black carbon and methane releases. This work is currently carried out in an Expert Group in support of the implementation of the Framework for Action on Black Carbon and Methane.⁴³ Finland is currently heading this Expert Group. Its efforts have attained a fairly high-profile since the Member States were

³⁹ Personal observations from the SAO meeting. News from the meeting can be accessed here <https://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/486-sao-levi-2018-02>

⁴⁰ More information on the Task Force can be found here <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/subsidiary-bodies/task-forces>

⁴¹ See the Fairbanks declaration (specifically Article 19) *supra* note 21. Also Refer to the Senior Arctic Officials' Report to Ministers 2017, Fairbanks, Alaska, United States (11 May 2017) at 83.

⁴² See at <http://www.sdwg.org/activities/sdwg-projects-2017-2019/arctic-eia/arctic-eia-new/>. Of interest is that during the AEPS, the predecessor of the Arctic Council, there was a project that ended with the endorsement in 1997 of the Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment in the Arctic. See also Timo Koivurova et al., *Environmental Impact Assessment in the Arctic: A Guide to Best Practice* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016).

⁴³ See Black Carbon and Methane Expert Group <https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/1167>. See also Enhanced Black Carbon and Methane Emissions Reductions. An Arctic Council Framework for Action. Annex 4 Iqaluit 2015 SAO Report to Ministers.

able to come up with a political agreement to reduce black carbon at the Fairbanks Ministerial Meeting. Finland's President Sauli Niinistö has taken up the matter of black carbon in his bilateral talks with both President Putin of Russia and President Trump of the USA, which is perhaps surprising given the past public stances Putin and Trump have taken towards climate change. Recently, President Niinistö has suggested that a possible Heads of Arctic States Summit could be planned and organized around this issue.⁴⁴

Finland has also been able to catalyze efforts within the Working Groups of the Council to examine what UN SDGs might best be applied to their work. Some of these Working Groups have started to use SDGs as one set of criteria for use in the approval of projects. The SDWG has taken the lead on this but this practice may well spread to other Working Groups. Currently, one of the Expert Groups of the SDWG—the Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG)—is examining whether its future role could be to advance research and synthesis outcomes that embody these objectives. Clearly, under the leadership of the Finnish Chairmanship, the United Nations SDGs are likely to become deeply imbedded into the structures of the Arctic Council. As Finland is also tasked with leading the negotiations for the first ever long-term strategy for the Arctic Council, SDGs will likely serve as one of the guiding frameworks for developing the long-term strategy of the Arctic Council.

8.4 Best Practices Developed by Finland's Chairmanship

Finland has already demonstrated some leadership good practices while both preparing for Chairmanship Program and implementing its provisions. As mentioned above, Finland carefully consulted all of the Member States prior to the start of its Chairmanship. It also organized a special consultative session with all of the Permanent Participants and consulted Finnish Sami Parliament separately. This can be considered to be a very good leadership practice. For it clearly demonstrates the Chair's desire to take indigenous interests seriously and incorporate their views before preparing the Chairmanship's formal priorities.

Another good leadership practice stems from how Finland went about insuring that its top officials were familiarized with the broad array of Arctic issues and concerns prior to the start of the Chairmanship. Due to regular professional rotations, many foreign policy civil servants and their colleagues from other ministries and agencies who are given the responsibility of running a Chairmanship do not possess a long term background in Arctic affairs that would enable them to follow these matters within the context of the Arctic Council and wider circumpolar diplomacy. The Finnish government recognized early their need in this area and sought expert advice.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See in Finnish at <http://www.kaleva.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/ulkoministerio-lannen-medialle-suomivaivottelee-yha-arktisen-alueen-huippukokousta/791550/>

⁴⁵ The author would like to thank Gosia Smieszek for having identified this as a good practise.

The Finnish government and bureaucracy are generally seen as being open to bringing in expertise from the outside and a relatively broad system of advisory services have been developed in the country. Finland's Prime Minister's Office opens a call for advice every year on topics that are of immediate policy importance to the government. Of interest here was a specific call that was launched to provide analysis relevant to the Finnish Arctic Council Chairmanship in March 2016. It requested a proposal for a consortium of Arctic advisors.

The Arctic consortium was selected and put in place far ahead of the start of the Finnish Chairmanship. Under the leadership of the present author, it has been able to provide various briefings and background reports to those who are charged with directing it. Specifically, a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of Finland's ministries and official agencies charged with implementing the Chairmanship of the Council have received a series of briefings and background reports from members of the Arctic consortium. These efforts have continued throughout the Finnish Chairmanship and will continue until its formal conclusion in May 2019.⁴⁶

A third good leadership practice that Finland has advanced relates to the treatment of Observers of Arctic Council. The Chair of the Council has some discretion as to how it involves the Observers in SAO meetings, SDWG sessions and in the final Ministerial Meeting of its Chairmanship. Finland has indicated that it would like to see the Observers play a larger role within the Arctic Council and has already taken steps to actively include them in its activities. At the recent Oulu SAO plenary meeting (October 2017), the Finnish Chairmanship convened a session where attending Observers had the opportunity to present the type of pollution prevention work they have undertaken in conjunction with the Arctic Council.⁴⁷ In the SAO meeting in Levi (March 2018), Observers were given the possibility to directly interact with Working Groups of the Arctic Council.⁴⁸ In May 2018, the Finnish SAO Chair also took part in a meeting with non-Arctic state Observers of the Arctic Council (and the EU) in Poland, Adopting the so-called Warsaw format, this was to be the fourth such meeting where the non-Arctic states could have direct interaction with the Chair of the SAOs.⁴⁹ The previous Chair, the United States, had also

⁴⁶The consortium based at the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi won and is run by the current author. It includes experts from the Arctic Centre, the Finnish Institute for International Affairs (FIIA) and the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE). This is an inter-disciplinary (within social sciences) group of experts, many of whom have followed - and directly participated in the work of - the Arctic Council and/or Arctic affairs for years. See the website [https://lacris.ulapland.fi/en/projects/finlands-arctic-council-chairmanship-in-the-times-of-rising-uncertainty\(a485f3a2-8218-4696-8874-48aa1c1edb95\).htm](https://lacris.ulapland.fi/en/projects/finlands-arctic-council-chairmanship-in-the-times-of-rising-uncertainty(a485f3a2-8218-4696-8874-48aa1c1edb95).htm).

⁴⁷Summary Report, SAO Plenary meeting, Oulu, Finland, October 2017 10–11. Other documents from the meeting can be retrieved at <https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/2030>

⁴⁸See Summary Report, SAO Plenary meeting, Levi, Finland, March 2018 (especially item 14) https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2165/SAOFI202_2018_LEVI_Summary-Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁴⁹SAO Chair Aleksis Härkönen was invited to the meeting in Poland on May 11 2018 by the non-Arctic states Observers to the Arctic Council. This was an extension of a tradition begun under the Danish Chairmanship.

conducted these forms of engagement of Observers. Finland was clearly following the lead of the United States and seeking to emphasize the need for continuity in this area.

Still another good leadership practice continued by the Finnish Chairmanship was the increased involvement of northern regions of the host country in helping to organize the meetings and events associated with each Chairmanship. It has been a tradition within the organization to have some participation of this sort. However it was not until the time of the U.S. Chairmanship that a formal “host committee” was constituted by Alaskans⁵⁰ These most northern residents of the United States organized this effort both as an instrument to showcase their traditions, knowledge and capabilities and as a means to increase the leverage of Alaska in drawing the Chairmanship Program within the United States.⁵¹

Lapland, as the most northern region of Finland, decided to continue this tradition, and with a fairly similar set of purposes. The idea has been to showcase Lapland’s Arctic expertise in Arctic Council meetings, most of which are held in Finnish Lapland. The Finnish Foreign Ministry has overseen the official portions of each gathering, however, it does not have the capacity to do more than that. For this reason, it is useful to have a host committee that can provide a program for delegates outside of the formal meetings, and that showcase their local Arctic expertise in different ways. The Lapland Arctic Council Host Committee also has decided to use the increased attention that Finland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship brings to the region to further educate people through discussion forums and presentations about the Arctic Council and Arctic issues. The host committee has also served to create new connections between all regional actors, since it is steered by the main public and private agencies in Lapland, as well as by the Sami people.⁵² The host committee was present at the SDWG meeting in Inari in September 2017 and also at the meetings of the SDWG, the SAOs and the Arctic Meteorology Summit that all took place in Levi in March 2018.⁵³ The next Chair of the Arctic Council, Iceland, has also shown interest in the host committee idea and seems that this good leadership practice may well continue into the foreseeable future.

It is also worth pointing out that the chairmanship team in the Foreign Ministry has, together with WWF Finland, devised principles (and implemented those so far) on how to organize environmentally sustainable meetings. The guidelines, for instance, emphasize the purchaser’s responsibility for choices related to catering,

⁵⁰ See the Alaskan Arctic Council host committee webpage, at <http://fm.kuac.org/term/alaska-arctic-council-host-committee>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² The current author is the chair of the steering committee meeting, and in general the Arctic Centre (of the University of Lapland (especially Anne Raja-Hanhela) is part of a team that is planning the meetings in different Lappish localities. All the members of the steering committee can be seen from the website of the host committee.

⁵³ See the website of the Lapland Arctic Council host committee, at <https://www.laplandhostcommittee.fi/LaplandHostCommittee>

procurements and planning of informal events and programs. Since the planning of all the meetings that take place in Lapland are done by the foreign Ministry together with the Lapland Host Committee, also other than environmental concerns can be taken up. In the recent Levi SAO and SDWG meetings one restaurant option was abandoned due to the images that were seen as ethically controversial from the viewpoint of indigenous peoples. The Lapland Host Committee contacted its Sami representatives, who were against that restaurant, after which the Ministry decided that it will not be used.

8.5 Concluding Thoughts

When we try to find reasons for why certain priorities emerged within the Finnish Chairmanship Program, it is of utmost importance to perceive the Chairmanship as being part of the Arctic Council's history and ethos: a body in which a country is expected to serve the goals of the institution. Finland's current Chairmanship Program differs significantly both in scope and character from that which it pursued as a country when it first headed the Council from 2000 to 2002.⁵⁴ Today, Finnish Chairmanship Program is much more ambitious and broader in scope than it was in that period of time. Likewise the style and manner in which the Finnish government conducts its Chairmanship is much more publicly visible and monitored than 18 years ago.⁵⁵

The primary reason for the difference between the previous and current Chairmanships is not that Finland somehow wanted to invest more in its role this time than during its 2000–2002 tenure. Rather it is the character of the Arctic and the Arctic Council, itself, that have changed. Both have become much more visible and the latter has evolved to become an ambitious governance institution, with broader array of activity areas. This is well illustrated in the differences between the two Finnish programs approach to Arctic maritime matters. In Finland's first Chairmanship Program, the Arctic Ocean was not broadly discussed or addressed as a separate consideration.⁵⁶ The current Finnish Chairmanship Program addresses the topic of the Arctic Ocean at several points and contains a sizeable section on Arctic Ocean related policies. This is a reflection both of the growing international interest in the globe's "new ocean" and the fact that the Arctic Council's current work contains so many projects addressing the Arctic Ocean and its adjacent seas.

⁵⁴Timo Koivurova and Malgorzata Smieszek, *From the Rovaniemi Process to Exploring Common Solutions: Finland's Priorities in the Changing Arctic*, at <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2017/06/08/rovaniemi-process-exploring-common-solutions-finland%E2%80%99s-priorities-changing-arctic>

⁵⁵ See Finland's First Chairmanship program *supra* note 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Finnish Foreign Ministry officials also have repeatedly said that an important inspiration for prioritizing certain areas of action over others within the Chairmanship Program came from those institutions that had a deep understanding of what the Arctic Council Chairmanship entails, and who were committed to making a positive influence on it. For instance, their discussions with the leadership of the Arctic Economic Council and the Finnish Meteorological Institute were clearly important in influencing the fairly strong role of the AEC in the Finnish Program as well as the priority area of meteorological cooperation.⁵⁷ Ministry officials also felt that connections with the scientific and research communities were important including contacts with the University of the Arctic. Those research institutions that have had long-standing expertise in Arctic issues (such as the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland - lead by the present author) have been utilized in many ways by the Finnish Chairmanship team.⁵⁸ However, this is both a natural and logical result, given that the government officials who are now implementing the Finnish Arctic Council Chairmanship have focused on Arctic issues only for a few years due to the normal rotation of diplomatic personnel.

If we are to examine Finland's approach to Chairmanship in terms of the leadership styles identified in Chap. 4 of this volume (see also Nord 2016b), it can be seen to entail an element of all of them, but comes perhaps closest to being seen as a "professional leader" and to a lesser extent, an "honest broker". Characteristically, Finland's approach to organizational leadership sees as one of its most important task that of continuing the efforts of the previous Chair (the United States) and preparing the way for the next Chairmanship (Iceland). As has been discussed, it also has its own priorities but these are very much linked to the established interests of the institution it leads. Finland has very much focused on first serving the interests and goals of the Arctic Council. It has not advanced its own national economic priorities, even though there was an initial domestic effort to push the Chairmanship Program in this direction. Yet, it is also important to note that Finland does advance its national interests in a more indirect way, by taking up priorities that entail more possibilities for Finnish institutions to gain further competence and leadership in Arctic meteorology, education and connectivity.

Finland's approach to drafting its Chairmanship Program can be understood in light of what one might normally expect of a small state that relies heavily on international institutions and international law. Finland wants its program to make the Arctic Council stronger in many ways.⁵⁹ The country also places substantial empha-

⁵⁷ Interview with Aleksi Härkönen (H.K 2.5.).

⁵⁸ The Arctic Centre is currently leading the team that provides knowledge to the chairmanship team and is also leading the Lapland Arctic Council host committee. See the project 'Finland's Arctic Council Chairmanship in the times of rising uncertainty' *supra* note 41. The Arctic Centre is also disseminating information about Finland during the chairmanship via its Arctic-Finland portal <https://www.arcticfinland.fi/EN>

⁵⁹ For instance, cooperation between outgoing and incoming chairmanship, stronger co-operation with independent organizations that have been established directly or indirectly by the action of the AC (in particular the AEC, but also UArctic, and less so the Arctic Coast Guard Forum and the

sis on global regulatory developments that have been negotiated under the general auspices of the United Nations, such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. While this fits with Finland's foreign policy approaches, we have to also keep in mind that paying attention to global developments is a natural action for any country assuming the leadership role of the Arctic Council. This is due to the fact that as a regional intergovernmental forum with environmental protection and sustainable development as main parts of its mandate, the Council by necessity deals with global and regional normative developments.

This reliance on global regulatory frameworks is nowadays becoming more difficult to maintain because of the current geopolitical turmoil. It is fair to say that Brexit, the coming of the Trump Presidency, and the Russian annexation of Crimea have all served to lessen national reliance on global frameworks of law and governance. Finland has had to face some of these problems from the beginning of its Chairmanship. The new U.S. leadership tried to challenge the Fairbanks Ministerial Declaration. Since then, the United States has also consistently made sure that even if UN Sustainable Development Goals are mentioned in Arctic Council proceedings, no individual goals or sub-goals of the SDGs can be formally identified.⁶⁰

So far, the tradition of Arctic Council co-operation has shown its strength in dealing with these issues, even if the Russian and the U.S. leadership do not seem to fully support the values upon which the Arctic Council is founded and generally find themselves at loggerheads with each other on many foreign policy issues. The work on climate change by means of new meteorological co-operation and other ongoing projects in the Council has continued and the general geopolitical tensions between the Western states and Russia has not yet impacted the broad efforts of the Arctic Council.

In many contexts, Finland has been able to voice the importance of the Arctic Council co-operation in keeping channels of communication open, even during this difficult period. This is also something that Finland's officials perceive as a significant value of the current Chairmanship, that is, that Finland can continue to mediate relations between Russia and the United States and the other Western countries. Even if general relations between Russia and the United States continue to be difficult, the countries have still been able to work together within the Arctic Council and to advance Arctic co-operation in specific areas. An example of this can be seen in the recently concluded Arctic Fisheries Agreement.⁶¹ For Finland, overall, this has been important as its traditional role has been to mediate between Russia and the Western states, and via the Arctic Council this has been made concretely possible.

Arctic Offshore Regulators Forum) and long-term strategy for the Arctic Council. Finland also places strong emphasis on the work with the Observers, and has already presented the program to vast amount of Observers.

⁶⁰ Personal observations in SDWG meetings in Inari and Levi.

⁶¹ Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean (12 June 2018) can be accessed here <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A0453%3AFIN>

The role that Finland's President Sauli Niinistö has played within the Finnish Chairmanship is also interesting in this regard. Although it is the Foreign Minister that formally heads the Arctic Council, Finland's President has used opportunities provided by the Arctic Council Chairmanship to discuss issues with both President Putin and President Trump. In conjunction with his responsibilities in Finnish foreign policy, President Niinistö has the opportunity to raise Arctic issues in his meetings with various heads of Arctic states. His efforts might still result in a summit among the leaders of Arctic Council Member States that was mentioned in Finland's Chairmanship Program.⁶² Such an occurrence, during the Finnish Chairmanship would provide the country with a further opportunity to play its traditional role of mediating between the interests and views of Russia and the Western states.

At this half-way point, Finland's leadership efforts as Chair of the Arctic Council can be judged to be successful and highly effective. It followed a careful path that called for adequate preparation and consultation in its preparation of its Chairmanship Program. All of the Member States and Permanent Participants were fully consulted and their views taken into consideration. Finland has also been able to identify and advance its priorities in a relatively successful manner and also to promote a degree of continuity in the Arctic Council's agenda. It has also either created or continued good leadership practices that can inspire and enhance future Chairmanships. As the Chair of the Council, Finland is now hard at work leading the institutional effort to produce the first ever long-term strategy for the body. It is likely that this effort will enable longer term priorities favored by Finland to develop within the institution, and help to guide future Council endeavors.⁶³

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