IPS Update

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1 **December 2002**

Balancing the Message on Contaminants and Food

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Telling people about the risks they face in going about their lives is a difficult thing to do. If you thought about the danger of getting run down every time you crossed a road, you might never go anywhere. People accept a certain amount of risk in their lives, especially from things that they have grown accustomed to, such as cars.

New and unfamiliar risks concern us more than those we are used to. So when northern peoples first started to hear about contaminants in some of the foods they eat, there was concern. There were stories that some Indigenous Peoples were so worried that they were refusing to eat their traditional foods. There were also stories that levels of contaminants in breast milk were persuading some mothers to replace breastfeeding with commerical baby foods.

In this case, telling people about the risks they faced from one activity actually increased the likelihood of adverse consequences. By not eating traditional foods, people put themselves at risk of diseases, such as diabetes, that can be triggered by a poor diet. By not breastfeeding their children, mothers can increase the risk that their children will pick up diseases that the breast milk helped repel. These arguments do not even begin to scratch the surface of the potential spiritual and emotional harm that can flow from alienating people from their land or the traditional foods that have long sustained them.

This is not to suggest that the answer is to hide risks from northern peoples. They have a right to know if contaminants pose a health hazard to them or their children. They need that knowledge so that they can act on it – and push governments and industries to halt the northward flow of contaminants. But merely making the information on contaminants available publicly is not good enough, nor is simply informing northern peoples about potential risks. Asking people to wade through large specialized scientific reports is not a realistic expectation. Media reports, where many people obtain information about contaminants, tend to sensationalize information leading to the sort of problem outlined above.

What needs to be recognized is that there is an ethical obligation on the part of the countries and organizations collecting contaminants information to partner with Indigenous Peoples in designing communication programs. Just as they need to be involved in designing the research, Indigenous Peoples must also play a lead role in developing communications plans and activities. Such programs will then be focussed on the specific concerns and situations of each region and delivered in a culturally appropriate manner. In this way the message will be balanced between the benefits of traditional foods and activities with the information on risks.

This edition of Update focusses on the results of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program 2002 report. Over the coming months, considerable effort will be expended in communicating this information throughout the Arctic.

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Old Threats Recede, New Threats Emerge

Four years ago, the first symposium of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program shocked Arctic peoples, and people around the world, with its revelations about the extent of toxic pollution in the Arctic. That report laid the ground for much of the action on toxics that has since been taken, including an international treaty to ban some of the most worrisome substances.

Now, four years after that first report, a second symposium has been held and a new report (Arctic Pollution 2002) has been issued. This new report, and the many research projects that led to its production, bring both good and bad news.

The good news is that levels of some Arctic contaminants appear to be dropping. These are chemicals already banned by most countries. One example is a chemical called hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH), which was used to produce a pesticide. One part of this mixture, called alpha-HCH has been measured over several years, and shows a marked decline.

However, stopping or limiting sources of contaminants, such as persistent organic pollutants or POPs, does not always result in an immediate drop in levels arriving in the Arctic. Some POPS can take many years to arrive in the Arctic, so that levels can climb after the chemical's use has declined. For instance, between 1993 and 1998, there were increasing levels of DDT in the atmosphere measured at the weather station at Alert, on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island in Canada. Existing POPs in the Arctic may also take many years to decline in the environment. Some longer-lived animal species will continue to accumulate POPs in their bodies, creating potential health problems for people who rely on the animals for food.

The bad news identified by the latest AMAP report is that some new toxic materials have been identified as threats to the health of Arctic peoples and the environment. In most cases, the substances have been produced for many years but are only now being identified as a concern, either because nobody was looking for them before, or because the amount reaching the Arctic is rising to levels of concern.

One group of chemicals now causing concern among Arctic environmental scientists is the polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs). These chemicals are used to prevent fabrics and equipment from burning. They are used for such things as furniture and home electronic equipment. The use of PBDEs has grown substantially over the past ten years. Annual production is estimated to be more than 200,000 tonnes.

PBDEs are increasing in Arctic animals, particularly in marine mammals such as seals and whales. The effects of PBDEs are not fully understood, but some studies have shown that they can have a negative effect on the ability of animals to fight off diseases.

PBDE's are not the only "new" chemicals discovered in the Arctic that are concerning AMAP researchers. Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS), short-chain chlorinated paraffins, and many more substances are on the lists of chemicals that have showed up in Arctic air and animals. Whether the levels of these chemicals are on an upward or downward trend, and whether they have the potential to cause serious effects in people and the environment, remain largely unanswered questions.

As Lars-Erik Liljelund, Director General of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency said during the closing plenary of the AMAP symposium, "A very important message to our governments is to continue with monitoring, because in future, you will ask for this information to see the results of your actions."

Concern over mercury increasing

Apart from the new POPs, the most alarming information at the recent symposium was the evidence suggesting the amount of mercury deposited in the Arctic is increasing, and amounts found in wildlife and humans are also increasing.

Proof of those increases has been found in a variety of ways. In humans, mercury concentrations can be measured in hair. Comparisons of hair from Greenland Inuit show that mercury levels are three times higher now than they were five hundred years ago. In animals, mercury can be measured in fur and teeth. Those measurements also indicate a sharp increase in mercury levels with increased human industrial activity.

While the presence of mercury in the Arctic can be measured, working out how the metal arrives in the Arctic, and where it originated are more complex tasks. It is known that mercury is emitted into the atmosphere by a variety of processes, particularly by coal burning. AMAP research shows that Asian coal burning is likely one of the largest and fastest-growing contributors to the production of atmospheric mercury. Coal is not only burned by power stations, but also by millions of people who use it as fuel for cooking and warmth. After mercury is taken up in the atmosphere, research has shown that it can stay there for up to a year, plenty of time to be transported thousands of kilometers from where it was emitted.

New research has shown that mercury is being dumped on the Arctic in larger amounts than had previously been guessed. The latest estimates show the amount of mercury deposited in the Arctic region each year is as much as 300 tonnes.

At present, there is no international agreement on what level of mercury in people is safe. Various countries have set levels of what they believe may be safe, and have issued dietary advice based on those levels. There is not yet enough

evidence to be sure what effects low levels of mercury may have on people. There is evidence in laboratory studies that particularly high levels of mercury can cause brain damage, particularly in young children or foetuses.

The latest AMAP report cites a study in the Faroe Islands, where many islanders have relatively high levels of mercury from eating whale meat. The study found a link between higher levels of mercury when children were in the womb, and slight developmental delays in the children. When people were advised to eat less whale meat, mercury levels in children went down.

High levels but risk unknown

As with all contaminants, it is impossible to assess risks without knowing something about the diet of people, and other factors that may affect their health. Researchers acknowledge that levels of mercury in some people in Canada's Eastern Arctic and Greenland are high enough to be of concern, but are unsure what effects may be seen as a result.

AMAP's chair, Helgi Jensen of Iceland, believes that there is now enough evidence of the potential harm of mercury in the Arctic to justify an international treaty to limit emissions. "I expect to see and hope to see a global movement towards trying to put a lid on the emissions of mercury. I really do not believe that it will be easy to get that because the emissions are coming from coal-burning, house heating and things like that, and industrial processes, but I think it is necessary to do it on a global scale."

The United Nations Environment Program is currently considering whether or not to try to put together an international treaty on mercury. A decision by UNEP's governing council is expected to be made in February 2003. As for the new POPs, international action on them could be taken by adding them to the existing Stockholm Convention on POPs, which allows for the addition of new substances. The only problem with that approach is that the Stockholm Convention still needs more countries to ratify before it comes into force.

Informing Without Fear

The information generated by AMAP studies on the Arctic environment is powerful. It has the power to persuade governments and individuals to take action on contaminants. It also has the power to persuade individuals or entire communities that that there are too many risks involved in eating their traditional foods, such as fish, seals, or whales.

The people in charge of the AMAP studies are well aware of the dangers presented by this powerful information. Helgi Jensson, an Icelandic researcher who is chair of AMAP, believes that the job of communicating the results of AMAP research to indigenous communities belongs to Indigenous Peoples.

"My personal view is that the indigenous people through their organizations have to come forward with an initiative how they see the message prepared so they can convey it to their local people. I cannot sit in my office in Reykjavik and say 'this is how you should say this, convey this message to your people back home.'"

Karen Perdue, Vice President of the University of Alaska remains troubled by the information reaching Arctic communities. She is especially concerned that information from the Arctic Council's Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), due to be completed in 2004, will feed too much negative information to communities already worried about contaminants.

"Two years isn't long for communities. They'll hear about AMAP then ACIA and these things generate feelings of anger and powerlessness. I don't know if that's a good idea in communities already dealing with depression."

Duane Smith, Canadian President of Inuit Circumpolar Conference, sees a lack of information as part of the problem. He says some researchers have not shared anough information with the communities they studied. "They never hear back from the researchers after they've gathered their information. They don't come back to give a summary of what they've been doing, and that's what we've been stressing in our area, otherwise they don't have our support any more."

Smith believes that indigenous organizations do have a place in communicating research results back to their members. But he says the answer goes deeper than that, starting with more indigenous involvement in the gathering of information. "It's not you informing indigenous people only, but they're providing you right on that spot with indigenous knowledge in the field. It's a cooperative approach to gathering the information. The people sit down together and the scientists sit together. They provide both their knowledges, that way you incorporate both the scientific and traditional knowledge right into the research being conducted as well as the follow-up."

Double Jeopardy – Contaminants and Climate Change

Rob Macdonald ends his presentation with a photo of a polar bear pondering the twin challenges of POPs and climate change. The cuteness of the image masks the seriousness of the problem. Macdonald, a scientist at the Canadian Institute of Ocean Sciences, has been examining linkages between climate change and contaminants.

One challenge is to attempt to predict how climate changes will affect the routes taken by contaminants that are transported by wind and water. Another challenge is to try to work out what amount of those contaminants will then be deposited in the Arctic, and what amount will stay in the Arctic.

For instance, it is predicted that climate change may affect currents in the Arctic Ocean. At the moment, these currents tend to sweep ice chunks containing heavily contaminated water from some Russian rivers out toward Greenland. Climate change may alter that path, so that those ice chunks migrate from the Russian coast to the Canadian Arctic.

Predictions that the Arctic will receive more precipitation also have implications for the deposition of toxic materials. Some pollutants that are carried by the air tend to be washed out of the air, onto the land and water, by rain and snow.

Macdonald has a long catalogue of pollution pathways and deposition mechanisms that are likely to change with a changing climate. He sees the interaction of a variety of climate change factors as the largest threat to Arctic ecosystems. He cites the example of a recent epidemic in seals in the Baltic Sea, which he blames partly on climate change, and partly on concentrations of persistent organic pollutants in the seals.

"We have a classic example of seals getting taken out in the Baltic by a distemper-kind of a virus. Normally this population would be able to handle that, but what happened was a virus was injected into that system, and it had sufficient PCB concentrations that its immune system was compromised. You got an epidemic, and they were taken out."

Macdonald says climate change can affect the nutrition of animals, such as the well-known example of polar bears which cannot hunt effectively when sea ice is late in forming. Because some toxic chemicals are stored in fat, when the animal is hungry, the fat is absorbed, and so are the toxic chemicals. Add new diseases which have migrated with changing weather conditions, and Macdonald says you have a potent mix. "The climate change changes the disease vectors, changes the exposure cycle of individual animals, changes the total amount of exposure, and put those together and you can get effects like epidemics that depend on that conspiracy. It's not just one factor. That's what I see the risk being that we have populations in nutritional stress, and the contaminants that are still going through a decrease phase or have flattened out, or even increased and mixed with new ones are still at a sufficient level to let this population be at risk."

Some answers to what sort of climate changes might be expected in the Arctic, and the measures that should be taken to either attempt to alter or adapt to those changes, are coming in 2004. That is when the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) is due to be released. The ACIA is a massive undertaking sponsored by the eight-member Arctic Council, involving the efforts of almost 300 scientists and combining the observations and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples throughout the Arctic.

Macdonald hopes researchers working on the ACIA and those working on contaminants issues pay attention to each others' work, and remember that all the factors that affect the Arctic need to be considered when trying to predict outcomes.

Iceland takes the Arctic Council Chair

During the October Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Saariselkä, Finland, the council gavel was passed to Iceland. Their were warm words for the Finnish Chair, Peter Stenlund, and the Arctic Council Secretariat, for their hard work over the last two years. Iceland will hold the chair until the end of 2004.

Heads of delegations at the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Saariselkä, Finland

Indigenous Peoples and contaminant studies

An interview with Saami Council President Anne Nuorgam

Arctic Indigenous Peoples are often mentioned in Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program reports as the people most affected by contaminants in the Arctic. Given this fact, Indigenous Peoples' representatives are very interested in the design and execution of the studies conducted under the AMAP. Several indigenous representatives who attended an AMAP symposium in Rovaniemi feel Indigenous Peoples are not sufficiently involved in the studies, or given enough credit for their involvement. Anne Nuorgam is President of the Saami Council, which represents Saami in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian Federation. She spoke with the editor of Update.

In your presentation to the AMAP Symposium, you spoke of wanting more Indigenous Peoples' input to the studies. What kind of input are you asking for?

All kinds of input. Firstly, to determine what is necessary to study. For example, within the Saami people, there is already traditional knowledge of certain things, then we get all these scientists coming in and starting to study the same thing. They don't bother to ask people what they know already, and they publish the results. It's sad to say, but it's still happening. So first, they should determine what to study, what are the needs for people to know at the moment.

They also need to know how to present the studies, how to take them to the communities. It is quite worrying when you hear that the results of these studies lead to some Indigenous Peoples abandoning their traditional food, so they won't get all these heavy metals or POPs or whatever in their body. By abandoning the traditional food then they get the western food, and then they have the possibility of getting diabetes and other problems that can be the result of eating western food.

I would like there to be a balance in the research that doesn't exist now. It's just research about the amount of pollutants, but there should be also nutritionists to tell people clearly to go for traditional foods, because it's still healthier, so after these studies there shouldn't be reactions from people who don't really know about the effects on their food.

But to go back to your question on what input we want, we should be able to control the research, what is done, where it's done and the ethics of the research.

If you had control of the research, how would the studies change, what would your vision be?

If Indigenous Peoples had more control, the basis would be existing traditional knowledge, our knowledge of how the food is, of how things are in nature, and building on that.

Also, it is important to consider how the results are used. For example in these poster exhibitions showing results from studies (exhibited during the meetings) there is some research about reindeer pastures and the shape they're in. The research results are used to determine how many reindeer you can have in certain areas, so that has a direct bearing on our livelihoods, the results of that research. People blame reindeer herders for the shape of the land, without taking into account other land uses such as tourism, forestry and mining.

What do you think is missing from the studies that have been done over the last four years?

I would like to have someone to tell me what these results mean, because in some cases I hear the results, but I'm missing the information that tells me what the results mean to me and to other people. Not coming from this kind of world, I need someone to translate these results to normal language, saying "okay, pay attention to this one". As a politician I need to understand what sort of decisions may be needed as a result of this information.

And we have concerns about whether some researchers have the competence to know the results of their information. For example if there was published research on reindeer herding saying that meat has heavy loads of heavy metals, that could lower the market value of the meat. There can be results from publishing these studies that the researchers don't anticipate that have the potential to affect our lives greatly.

Whenever the studies speak of human health, they speak of the health of Indigenous Peoples. What do people in your area understand of the health threats being discussed?

I think they understand quite a lot but the question is how much they are willing to start thinking about health threats. Will they go on living as before, or will they, because of this new knowledge change their dietary habits or something like that? It's a question of values.

From what you've heard of what's been presented here, what action on health threats would you expect?

For this area, nothing. Because when you look at results for Saami people, when you look at the results for heavy metals, POPs, the levels are quite low in this area, so we are lucky, very lucky. But the situation for some other Arctic Indigenous Peoples is not so good, and we expect governments to give them the support they need to meet their challenges.

Scanning the Horizon – The Future for Arctic Peoples' Health

With the amount of physical, social, economic and cultural change facing the Arctic right now, it takes a brave person to predict how all these changes will interact on human health. That is precisely the job taken on by Dr. Andrew Gilman of Health Canada, a vice-chair of AMAP's Health Expert Committee. During the Symposium in Rovaniemi, Gilman presented his view of the predicted health impacts, and also what those impacts say about the future directions for health research in the Arctic.

One thing he's always careful to emphasise is the difficulty of generalizing health affects across the Arctic, even of generalizing likely health effects between two different individuals in the same community. Diet, lifestyle, genetics, and a variety of other factors interact in a dynamic way and make it next to impossible to generalize about specific effects of contaminants or other changes such as those related to climate.

Having said that, Gilman does make some predictions about human health trends generally in the Arctic, both for the short term (up to 2010) and the long term (up to 2030). In the short term, he expects some diseases (heart disease, diabetes, obesity, AIDS) to increase, and dietary adequacy to decrease. He sees increases in the use of food bought from stores, food that is often high in fat and sugar, displacing the healthier traditional diet. "We need to look at some of the changes in non-infectious diseases that may be occurring as a result of changes in diet, because people are fearful of consuming a diet that contains contaminants. Switching to diets with significantly less traditional foods can lead to obesity becoming a problem, diabetes beginning to occur, or more cardio-vascular disease. These are things that need to be monitored."

An increase in disease is attributed partly to dietary change, but also to pressures such as globalization, which can erode traditional societies leaving them more vulnerable to health impacts related to depression, substance abuse and introduced infectious diseases.

The bad news he expects in the short term is balanced by some good news, such as an expected decrease in pollutants, such as PCBs. "For PCBs, I think we've learned that the emissions to the arctic are continuing however they are not rising. We may be beginning to see some declines in some of the wildlife species that have been measured. We can not tell whether levels are going down in human populations yet because the monitoring of human populations is not long enough. Monitoring will be one of the priorities if the AMAP continues. We need to get another data point to see whether or not we're starting to see those concentrations declining in human populations."

Gilman's long term predictions have a more optimistic flavour. He expects to see more balance achieved as Arctic communities come to terms with a changing world. He also expects better health care, healthy lifestyle promotion and disease prevention to start to make a dent in rates of illness and to lower rates of alcohol and tobacco use.

You are what you (can afford to) eat

People in Greenland are reducing their consumption of traditional foods, according to recent dietary surveys conducted there. In two of the Greenlandic communities surveyed, imported Danish food made up 75% of the diet of people who answered questionnaires. Bente Deutch, of the Centre of Environmental Medicine in Århus University, Denmark, says the results from Greenland follow an international trend, "Despite very large variations, the general tendency is clear that traditional country food consumption is gradually decreasing, as imported foods are becoming more available and culturally acceptable to Arctic peoples."

However, Arctic Indigenous Peoples in Russia appear not to be following this trend. Information from the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) suggests Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Arctic are actually *increasing* their consumption of traditional foods. "Recent economic changes in the country" are seen by RAIPON as causing the change.

Despite his rosier predictions for the future, Gilman cautions that Arctic countries should not become complacent. A short term increase in mercury and 'emerging (or new) contaminants' may balance decreases seen in contaminants already identified for action. He emphasises the urgent need for countries to ratify existing international agreements on pollutants and to ensure that dangerous 'new pollutants' are monitored for effects and included under the treaties.

For the future, Gilman sees a need for health research that attempts to capture the combined effects of all the factors affecting health in Arctic communities. He would also like to see areas such as Russia and Alaska become the focus of more health research to complete the information gathering occurring in other parts of the Arctic. An in-depth evaluation of Arctic diets is also on his wish list, to enable a better assessment of the risks and benefits of traditional diets.

Gilman realises the harm that can come from Arctic peoples constantly hearing about the contamination of their environment and food. His closing advice to people at the conference is to "balance the bad news with the good, continue to eat traditional foods even if moderation in the amount of some items consumed is recommended and continue to press governments to act quickly on elimination or control of the pollutants that move to the Arctic region. "

Gender Issues Take Wing at the Arctic Council

Two hundred women (and some men) from around the circumpolar region were in Saariselkä, Finland this August for "Taking Wing", an Arctic Council conference on gender equality and women in the Arctic.

The themes "Women and Work", "Self-determination" and "Violence" were discussed in both plenary sessions and workshops. The strongest feelings were raised during discussions on the theme of violence against women. The theme was introduced by the Swedish Minister for Gender Equality Affairs, Margaretha Winberg. She told the audience that prostitution and trafficking in women are crimes against women's human rights and dignity. Sweden is one of the few countries that have explicitly outlawed prostitution.

There was much in the conference of particular interest to Indigenous Peoples, and to indigenous women in particular who often experiences double discrimination. The conference recommended that Arctic states should ratify convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This United Nations-sponsored "*Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*" requires ratifying states to recognise the responsibility of government to develop, with the participation of the peoples concerned, co-ordinated and systematic action to protect the rights of these peoples and to guarantee respect for their integrity. People at the conference also recognized the need for capacity building in the Arctic region, and the promotion of balanced participation of decision-making processes in the Arctic.

In one workshop, people discussed the vulnerability of small Arctic communities, which are often the strongest repositories of indigenous culture. Participants noted that threats to health or well being of people in smaller communities, or a lack of opportunity, could drive people to urban areas. As an example of this kind of threat, a Saami delegate expressed concern for the growing problem of Russian prostitution finding a market in Saami villages. Threats to the existence of the smaller communities were therefore considered threats to Indigenous cultures.

Health issues in the Arctic were also discussed in workshops, and there was particular concern about the effects of contaminants on Indigenous women.

The conference proved fruitful for many of the participants, not only in the official discussions, but also in the exchange of experiences and weaving of new networks. The significance of the work completed at the conference has already been recognized. At the recent ministerial meeting, the Arctic Council ministers adopted the recommendations from the Taking Wing conference as advice for furture work.

Tourism Gets SMART

The Sustainable Model for Arctic Regional Tourism (SMART) is a project of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group and the Northern Forum. The program aims to assist the arctic tourism sector (see definition) to adopt economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable tourism practices. It was started under the lead of the USA (Alaska), Finland and Norway and has now expanded to an arctic–wide project. Several non-governmental organisations and institutions have been involved in the process and contributed to the development of the program.

SMART plans to provide resources, tools, professional training, or economic incentives that can be used directly by participants in local rural tourism development. Development specialists are working with local and Indigenous small businesses and communities. It is these groups that are the main beneficiaries of the project.

The program will identify best practises; market sustainable tourism by focusing on benefits; create incentives for the tourism sector; and provide information on how to implement sustainable tourism practises. SMART would like to ensure that the project takes into account the specific situations and well-being of indigenous inhabitants. Working with local and indigenous small businesses and communities will mainly take place via the pilot groups of enterprises in every country. Also, the results of the project will be disseminated in a way that will benefit local and indigenous groups that initially choose not to get involved in the project.

The program tries to be as inclusive as possible and recognises the different stages of tourism development throughout the individual participating countries. It is also recognised that the concept of sustainability, particularly with regard to industries such as tourism, is widely debated and needs further research.

Tourism sector: refers to the tourism industry as well as communities, groups, individuals or institutions that are involved in or provide tourism services or activities.

Sustainable tourism: refers to tourism activities and development within the broader concept of Sustainable Development. It was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The three pillars of sustainability are culture, environment and economy, and any development that claims to be sustainable needs to address all of these aspects equally effectively.

Latest on the Permanent Forum

It's a long process, but it looks like the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will get the tools it needs to pursue its goals. The recently established 16-member forum is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in UN, and will among other things provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, but had no budget or staff to help turn its mandate into action.

That situation will hopefully change following a decision by a UN committee to recommend that the UN General Assembly request the Secretary General to appoint a forum secretariat. It also recommended the establishment of a voluntary fund to support the forum's work.

The forum's importance was emphasised at a discussion organised this past September in the Danish Parliament by a network of Danish NGOs marking the United Nations Decade of Indigenous Peoples. The network invited two forum members, the chair Ole Henrik Magga, who is a Saami, and the European member Ida Nicolaisen, in addition to state and NGO representatives. Lack of a secretariat was one of the particular concerns of panel members taking part in the debate.

The panellists emphasised that the establishment of the Permanent Forum as a UN Agency is of great importance for Indigenous Peoples' issues. The forum will serve as a starting point for dialogue between states and Indigenous Peoples in eight regions covering the whole world. It will give Indigenous issues visibility and place on the United Nations agenda.

Environmental Protection and Indigenous Peoples in Russia

Scientists and western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Russia gathered for a three-day workshop recently in Hundested, Denmark. Hosted by the CHUM Network, participants received a thorough briefing on the state of environmental protection and Indigenous Peoples in that Arctic Council nation.

Galina Fedorova, an advisor on indigenous affairs to the Russian State Duma, reported on the situation of indigenous communities of the Russian Arctic. Ms Federova talked about Russian legislation affecting the Arctic and how indigenous peoples and their organizations could use it to protect their rights and further their interests.

The agenda included the protection of sacred sites, reindeer herding, the transfer of traditional knowledge and the role of women in indigenous communities.

CHUM is not an organisation as much as it is a network of people representing different NGOs in Denmark and other countries. Its members include scientists and western NGOs working with indigenous affairs in Russia and Russian NGOs working on the human rights, environment, capacity building and other initiatives. The meeting was organized by the Danish NGO, INFONOR.

IPS Update

The Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS) was established in 1994. The main task of IPS is to facilitate the involvement of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' organisations - the Permanent Pariticipants - in the Arctic Council, particularly with regard to sustainable development, the environment and traditional knowledge.

The Indigenous Peoples' organisations approved as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council are:

- Aleut International Association (AIA)
- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)
- Gwich'in Council International (GCI)
- Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- Saami Council (SC)

The IPS board is made up of one representative from each of the Permanent Participants and from three member countries of the Arctic Council, among them a representative of the Danish Government in its capacity as the main funding agency, as well as the current and past chairs of the Arctic Council.

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The small image that occurs in this issue of the IPS Update is a symbol from Saami Mythology and have traditionally been found on the Shaman's Drum. The image we have used is taken from the Swedish Saami Parliament's web-site: http://www.sametinget.se

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

January

4 - 7 **NAMMCO Conference on User Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge in Management Decision Making**
Contact: NAMMCO Secretariat
Tel./Fax: +47 77 75 01 80 / +47 77 75 01 81
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10 - 11 **Barents Euro-Arctic 10 Years Anniversary, Kirkenes, Norway**

February

21 - 26 **Snowchange 2003, Murmansk, Russia**

24/2 – 1/3 **Environmental Change research in Northern Europe, Arctic and Alpine areas". Polar Environmental Centre, Tromsø, Norway**
Fax: +47 77 75 05 01
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March

4 - 7 **Northern Contaminants Program symposium on Contaminants in the Canadian Arctic, Ottawa, Canada**
Contact: Jennifer Baizana
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E-mail: baizanaj@inac.gc.ca Web-site: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ncp/

Week 11 **CAFF Managenmet Meeting, Alaska**

28/3 – 4/4 **7th International Symposium on Mining in the Arctic, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada**

April

9 - 10 **SAO Meeting, Reykjavik, Iceland**

22 - 25 **Northern Forum 6th General Assembly, St. Peterburg, Russia**

June

6 - 7 **9th International Conference on Minority Languages, Kiruna, sweden**
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June / July **EPPR Meeting, Murmansk, Russia**

September

8 - 17 **5th World Parks Congress – Benefits beyond Boundaries, Durban, South Africa**
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October

23 - 24 **SAO Meeting, Svartsengi, Iceland**

God Jul Och Gott Nyttår
Glædelig Jul og Godt Nytår
Buerie Jåvle Jih Lahkoe Orre-Jaepie
Juullimi Ukiortaassamilu Pilluaritsi
С рождеством и Новым годом!
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
Huvaa Joulva Ja Onnellista Uutta Vuotta
Quyananlghii Kuusma, ama Quyanalghii
Gleðileg Jól og Farsælt Komandi Ár
Buorit Juovllat ja buorre oddajahki
Nutaghaq Ayumiqulleq
God Jul og Godt Nyttår

From Arctic Council
Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat