



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
Working group of the Arctic Council

Resolution on Cooperation between the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group

Background

The Arctic plays host to a globally significant array of biodiversity. The size and nature of Arctic ecosystems make them of critical importance to the biological, chemical and physical balance of the globe. Dramatic changes (e.g. climate change) now underway are threatening the resiliency and sustainability of the Arctic's biodiversity and the overall balance of its ecosystems. Continued rapid change in the Arctic will have global repercussions affecting the planet's biodiversity as a whole.

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF):

The Arctic Council (AC) is an international, intergovernmental circumpolar forum with eight member states (Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States) and six Indigenous Peoples' organizations, which are known as Permanent Participants (The Aleut International Association (AIA), The Athabaskan Arctic Council (AAC), the Gwich'in Council International (GCI), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and the Saami Council (SC)).

The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) program is the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council. Its mandate is to address the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, and communicate its findings to the governments and residents of the Arctic, helping to promote practices which ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources. In order to successfully conserve the natural environment and allow for economic development, baseline data on long-term status and trends of Arctic biodiversity, habitats and ecosystem health is required. CAFF's projects provide data for informed decision making on biodiversity issues. Possible joint activities in the future could include such key CAFF activities as the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA), the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP), and work under the present CAFF expert groups on Seabirds (CBIRD) and on Arctic Flora (CFG).

The core objectives of CAFF are:

- To monitor Arctic biodiversity;
- To conserve Arctic species and their habitats;
- To consider the establishment of protected areas;
- To conserve nature outside of protected areas; and
- To integrate both conservation objectives and measures into the economic sectors of society.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):

Although the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has not adopted a specific programme of work on Arctic biodiversity, the issue is, nevertheless, reflected in many aspects of the Convention's work. This is particularly true when considering the importance of Arctic

biodiversity to indigenous and local communities and the threats posed to Arctic biodiversity from climate change.

A number of activities requested by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD reflect the particular vulnerability of Arctic ecosystems to the impacts of climate change. This was highlighted during the recently convened ninth meeting of the conference to the parties to the convention in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008.

These impacts also strongly affect traditional lifestyles in the Arctic.

Both the CBD and CAFF objectives and activities complement one another in that CAFF as a Working Group of the Arctic Council provides a vehicle for knowledge and action in the Arctic region while the CBD provides an important global framework for biodiversity efforts. The CBD can help place Arctic Biodiversity within a global framework while CAFF can help inform the CBD on the status and trends of biodiversity in this globally significant region.

Objectives

In the face of increasing threats to Arctic biodiversity, cooperation towards the enhanced phase of implementation of the CBD within this fragile and unique ecosystem is extremely important. A memorandum of cooperation between the Secretariats of the CBD and CAFF can contribute to building and sharing knowledge, creating awareness and enhancing capacity for implementation of the Convention in the Arctic Region, as appropriate. Governments and other Stakeholders may see the activities of CAFF and the CBD as mutually supportive.

The CBD Secretariat intends to use relevant and available opportunities to promote the importance of Arctic biodiversity, including status, trends and threats, including the sponsorship of Arctic side-events at CBD meetings and the dissemination of CAFF material where appropriate.

CAFF intends to seek opportunities to raise awareness of and develop supportive actions for the International Year on Biodiversity (IYB). CAFF intends to have some of its outreach projects, such as the first phase of the ABA ready for IYB in 2010. CAFF also intends to seek to ensure that the ABA may contribute information on Arctic biodiversity to the third Global Biodiversity Outlook, which is scheduled to be released in 2010, and to the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (2010 BIP).

Objectives may also include other areas of cooperation as may be mutually determined by both parties.