

Warsaw, February 18, 2015

Memorandum
on Polish activities and contribution to the work of the Arctic Council

1. As in previous years the Polish activities in the Arctic were developed in two areas: scientific and political. Poland has been actively involved in the exploration and research in the Arctic since the early 1930s. The Polish Polar Station Hornsund named by Stanisław Siedlecki located in the Norwegian Svalbard has been in operation since 1957. Today it is perceived as the most pro-ecological station in the whole Arctic. Almost 200 scientists from Poland and other countries visit Hornsund every year. The station permanently cooperates with about 60 scientific institutions from Poland and other countries. More than 100 scientific papers are produced each year by Polish researchers working at Hornsund. They cover a plethora of different areas such as geophysical studies, marine ecosystem research, glaciology, hydrology and social sciences. Two research vessels "Oceania" and "Horyzont II" operating in the Arctic significantly support to our presence there. Last year expedition of "Oceania" to Spitsbergen AREX'2014, lasted from June 7 to August 25.

An Additional detailed report concerning the activity of Polish scientists will be soon transferred to the AC Secretariat.

2. Poland's policy towards the Arctic is based on four pillars: observance of international law and the development of network of agreements, as well as conducting scientific and other forms of cooperation in the region; active participation in drafting EU policies towards the Arctic; Poland's cooperation with the Arctic Council; developing public diplomacy in fields relating to the Arctic. Poland attaches special importance to international law relating to the Arctic, in particular to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other relevant international instruments.

3. Poland's policy towards polar regions is presently coordinated by *Polar Task Force*. This working format established in 2011 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland represents an unique forum of dialogue and cooperation involving representatives of several agencies of government, most prominent academics involved in scientific research in the Arctic as well as representatives of business circles. Last meeting of *Polar Task Force* took place on December 16, 2014 and focused *inter alia* on various aspects of the Polish cooperation with the Arctic Council and Sustained Arctic Observation Network (SAON)

where we participate as a member of the Board. Three leading Polish scientific institutions active in the Arctic declared their readiness to host meetings of the Arctic Council working groups. That refers to the Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Science In Sopot, the Institute of Geophysics of the Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw and the University of Silesia in Katowice.

4. Growing geopolitical significance of the Arctic and increasing number of AC observer states creates new reality in the region. Therefore, the Polish initiative of pragmatic, regular dialog between AC Presidency and observer States has been initiated – the so-called Warsaw Format meetings took place in 2010 and 2013. All participating States expressed their support to the format and hope that Poland will continue with that initiative. In the letter to Ms L. Aggluqaq, the Canadian President of the AC, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland emphasized the importance of continuation of Warsaw Format meetings. We are very much looking forward to host the Canadian Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) of the Arctic Council during the third Warsaw format meeting in March 27, 2015 – *inter alia* to discuss on how the observers could effectively contribute to AC's works.

5. During the Canadian Chairmanship in the Arctic Council representatives of Poland participated twice in SAO meetings as of observers.

6. Poland considers engagement on the working level as the key element of exercising its observer status at the Arctic Council. This refers to both working groups and task forces. Working groups produce outcomes that are critical to the protection of the Arctic environment, sustainable development in the region and strengthening international cooperation in the Arctic. Poland strongly supports and intends to bolster its participation and involvement in Arctic Council's subsidiary bodies. Over the Canadian chairmanship period Poland has been examining, through an internal process, its potential and capabilities to actively and effectively engage in and contribute to the Working Groups' projects and programs. This was the prime focus in the last two years. To this end, Polish representatives participated in several meetings of working groups (EPPR, PAME, AMAP, ACAP), task force (SCTF) and other events connected with the work of the Arctic Council, such as the Arctic Biodiversity Congress (December 2014, Trondheim), Conference on Sustainable Arctic Shipping and Marine Operations (11 March 2014, London), and the accompanying workshop "Bridging the Arctic marine gap – linking ice condition to ice class requirements, the need for a cross Arctic Ice Regime" (12 March 2014, Lloyd's of London). One of the most important developments from Polish perspective are negotiations at the Scientific Cooperation Task Force, which

Poland closely follows. Poland was also pleased to host ACAP Meeting in September 2014, which was held in Sopot at the Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It is particularly significant since the last working group and SAO meetings outside AC countries were held in 1997 and 1998. Poland is willing to explore opportunities to engage more actively in this regard as a new form of observer contributions and facilitating interactions between Polish research community and working groups' members. Poland's long-standing scientific and monitoring capabilities in the Arctic and the paramount importance of subsidiary bodies' activities for Arctic Council's work, jointly determine the nature of Polish commitment to the Arctic cooperation. Poland perceives participation in AC working groups as the principal way of its engagement in the Arctic Council activities.

7. In April 2013, Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW) was held in Cracow, with the participation of several hundred scientists from all over the world. For the first time Poland was entrusted with the organization of ASSW, which confirms recognition of achievements and international prestige of Poland, also in the sphere of Arctic seas exploration. Also for the first time in the history of ASSW meetings, a political panel: *Arctic Dialogue, Science-Policy Interface* was organized, which enjoyed a considerable interest of conference's participants. The bulk of discussion was dedicated to various aspects of legal and economic actions as well as freedom of research within the limits of Arctic Ocean. The organizers of ASSW declared their will to continue that Polish idea.

8. Poland considers the Arctic Council the main actor capable to ensure a prospective (long-term) development in the Arctic and supports the strengthening of role and responsibility of the Arctic Council for the future of the region.

