



ISIRA Advisory Group Meeting  
St Petersburg, Russia  
22 October 2004

*DRAFT*

## REPORT

### 1. OPENING AND REPORTING SESSION

#### 1.1. WELCOME AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The Chairman, Academician Vladimir Kotlyakov, welcomed the members to the meeting. Dr Sergey Priamikov welcomed everyone to the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute (AARI) and provided some practical information as the local host.

The Chairman welcomed Prof. Ohta as the alternate for Dr Watanabe. Further, he noted that Drs Björk, Sweden and Cooper, USA, were unable to attend. However, they had both done their homework and the information for Sweden and USA is available in the agenda papers.

#### 1.2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted. However, a few issues were raised during the meeting, see item 2.7 Any Other Business.

#### 1.3 MINUTES OF THE 2003 ISIRA MEETING

No comments were received prior to or during the meeting. The Minutes were adopted.

#### 1.4 MEMBERS OF THE ISIRA GROUP

.\ An up-dated list of members is enclosed as **Appendix I**.

## 1.5 THE TASKS

As the Group only meets once a year, members were reminded about the Tasks. They are included below both for members and for informing others reading these Minutes.

*The tasks of the Group are:*

- *Serve as a consultative forum for major research stakeholders, and consider possibilities for:*
  - *Identifying common research interests*
  - *Integrating and coordinating scientific efforts*
  - *Advising on linkages, organisation, and recommended ways of field access.*
- *Advise on major project ideas received by IASC with regard to determining which project ideas/proposals are to be considered by the Executive Committee, including links to be created, how the project idea could be organised, and suggested next steps.*
- *Encourage and promote smaller cooperative projects, especially for younger scientists.*
- *Provide a forum where Russian scientists have a possibility to introduce and test new project ideas.*
- *Inform about major planned bilateral or multinational research programmes in the Russian Arctic.”*

## 2 MAIN ISSUES

### 2.1 ONGOING PROJECTS

The projects under this heading were initiated in the ISIRA Group, therefore members were briefly informed about their development. However, most of the original projects have been finalised.

#### 2.1.1 LOIRA: LAND-OCEAN INTERACTIONS IN THE RUSSIAN ARCTIC

LOIRA is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary project, devoted to investigations of the exchange processes of matter and energy in the coastal zone of the Russian Arctic.

This project is under Russian leadership with Russian and non-Russian participants. Both fieldwork and scientific output have been comprehensive. After considerable fieldwork in the Pechora Sea area, they have now moved to the coastal area of the White Sea.

More details about LOIRA are available in the IASC Project Catalogue.

After about 10 years of successful planning and implementation, LOIRA will be concluded in 2005. LOIRA has produced a significant output under wise management and leadership.

**2.1.2 NUHIP: NUTRITION AND HEALTH OF THE NORTHERN INDIGENOUS PPEOPLE – THE INTERACTION WITH ETHNICITY, SOCIAL STATUS AND ENVIRONMENT.**

This project grew from an earlier ISIRA project, and is intended to become circumarctic. So far, most of the field work has been carried out in the Russian Arctic under Russian leadership.

The methodology is based on internationally agreed standards, and the geographical extensions (as well as the scientific contents) are this year being developed through international workshops in Moscow and Oulu, as well as by bilateral discussions in Canada and Alaska.

NUHIP is being supported by IASC, who has pressed for an increase in the non-Russian participation.

**2.1.3 RUSSIAN GOVERNMENTAL PROJECTS**

At the 2003 meeting, the Russian governmental representative reported on two initiatives of potential interest to the ISIRA Group. However, as there was no governmental representative at our 2004 meeting, the up-dating was limited to the following:

- **The Sustainable Development Action Plan**, which is a Russian proposal agreed upon as an initiative of the Arctic Council with Russia as the Lead country.

During this year, Russian institutes have been reviewing a Russian sustainable action plan. However, the final outcome is not yet known.

- **Development in the Russian North**

Last year, we were also informed about new project opportunities announced by the Ministry of the Economy, in such areas as: Climate change impacts; Environmental and industrial impacts; Rehabilitation of previous military sites; History of the Arctic; and Problems of the indigenous peoples

The website address for the Ministry of the Economy is:

<http://www.economy.gov.ru> (in Russian)

Russian institutes have been invited to propose projects under this scheme, and some projects have been selected for implementation, see the website mentioned.

## 2.1.4 NEW INITIATIVES

### 2.1.4.1 JAPANESE PROPOSALS

Prof Ohta briefly presented two projects for which Japanese scientists are seeking Russian partners:

- **Hepatic Stellate Cells in Arctic Animals**

Arctic animals are able to store a large amount of vitamin A in their liver, and Japanese scientists have investigated the cellular and molecular mechanisms in storage of vitamin A in arctic animals in Svalbard.

They are now seeking collaboration with biological and medical researchers who are interested in vitamin A in Russia, and to extend the project into the Russian arctic area comparing with results and data already achieved in Svalbard.

.\.

Brief summary and abstracts are enclosed in **Appendix II**.

**Action: Russian Academy of Science to search for interested Russian partners**

- **Advanced Bio-logging Systems**

The National Institute of Polar Research in Japan has developed an advanced animal borne data collection system for marine living animals, which allow them to obtain direct information about their behaviour, ecology, physiology and living environment. The system is now further miniaturised so that it can be applied to fish. This system has been used in Antarctic marine research, and they are now looking for partners for arctic marine investigations.

.\.

See **Appendix III** for further details.

### 2.1.4.2 IMPACTS OF OIL DEVELOPMENT

Impacts of industrial development in the Arctic was discussed at our 2003 meeting, and Dr Gareth Rees agreed to develop this discussion further by a proposal to the 2004 meeting.

.\.

Please find his proposal for a scoping workshop enclosed as **Appendix IV**.

.\.

Dr Winfried Dallmann tabled a related proposal on “Oil development and indigenous peoples”, see **Appendix V**.

During the discussion it was noted that AMAP had initiated a circumarctic **assessment** of oil development, and it would be logical to combine the research and assessment efforts.

Further, impacts of oil spill on tundra had been a research issue for the International Permafrost Association. It was further noted that it may be wise to focus any research on old sites rather than sites with ongoing oil drilling.

See 2.7 Any Other Business regarding Nordic funding, which may become relevant to this issue.

**Conclusion: The Secretariat to contact AMAP and IPY for a possible joint initiative.**

## **2.2 BILATERAL ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS**

One of the main tasks of the ISIRA Group is to.

- Serve as a consultative forum for major research stakeholders, and consider possibilities for:
  - Identifying common research interests
  - Integrating and coordinating scientific effort
  - Advising on linkages, organisation, and recommended ways of field access.

Each member had been requested to send to the Secretariat (or to bring to the meeting) an annotated list of bilateral (and multinational projects). This information was briefly reported at the meeting.

The material will be used for up-dating the ISIRA website and be divided into bilateral or multilateral projects.

See the ISIRA website at <http://www.iasc.no/isira>

All members had collected and/or updated information on bilateral and multilateral projects. This is very comprehensive material that was made available to all members prior to or during the meeting.

This information is also being made available on the ISIRA website as fast as the capacity at the Secretariat allows.

Some additional information from the presentations at the meeting:

- **QUEEN** is formally concluded. However, a need for continuation will be discussed at a meeting in Denmark later this autumn.
- **NARP** (Nordic Arctic Research Programme) is also completed. However, the NARP network will continue and at a meeting in December this year, a possible continuation of NARP will be discussed. If this is agreed to, there are 9 projects with Russian participation (see also 2.7 Any Other Business: Nordic funding).
- **Circumarctic Geological Maps**  
The Geological Surveys of the Arctic countries have initiated a circumarctic 1:4 mill. bedrock map series.
- **Finnish IPY Committee** plans an active programme backed by national funds. Several of these potential projects will include cooperation in the Russian Arctic.
- **BOREAS**  
A meeting held in September 2004 (sponsored by the European Science Foundation) to explore ways of strengthening European collaboration and funding in humanities research in the Arctic.

**Action: As the part of this meeting relating to the Russian Arctic will be of interest to the ISIRA Group, Dr Rees was kindly requested to inquire about a summary report or similar information.**

- **Japanese information** is delayed this year due to internal reorganisation. However, all information will be made available on the ISIRA website as soon as it becomes available.  
However, Prof. Ohta reported on:
  - “Anthropogenetics on Paleomongoloids in Pan-Pacific and Arctic Regions” and
  - “Siberian Taiga Fire Control Initiative”

Copies distributed at the meeting and these summaries are now being added to the ISIRA website.

- **Norwegian-Russian projects** constitute a very comprehensive cooperation, and the overview document distributed will be up-dated with contributions from the Norwegian Radiation Authorities.

**Other new information:**

- Russian students to attend UNIS (University Studies in Svalbard)
  - Norwegians intend to take part in the Russian drifting station
  - The Barents Programme contains a diversity of smaller projects, some of which are research-related.
- **Canada, Sweden and USA:** As members from these countries were unable to attend, their written contributions were briefly commented upon. Priamikov reported that there had been a Russian-US joint expedition to the Chukchi Sea with a first deployment of moorings. The Swedish-Russian BERINGIA expedition will continue in 2005, see further information at:

<http://www.polar.se/english/expeditions/beringia2005/index.html>

- **Russia**  
As bilateral information given earlier is covering both sides, the following additional comments were noted:
  - POMOR studies: 20 Russian students are obtaining German and Russian MA diplomas. The Russian side expressed their satisfaction with this outstanding cooperation. They had had a similar experience with the UNIS studies (reported earlier), and with the Sámi studies at the University of Tromsø, attended by 4 students from Russia.

## 2.3 MULTILATERAL PROJECTS

Information about these projects was given under bilateral projects. However they will be listed in this category on the web site in order to avoid duplicating information.

## 2.4 THE ISIRA WEBSITE

The website contains a wealth of information, and is often a first guidance for many scientists interested in the Russian Arctic.

As the number of projects has increased significantly, it is now becoming difficult to obtain an overview of projects in the same thematical area (or geographical regions).

At our 2003 meeting, Dr Dallmann had agreed to draft a discussion paper on possible ways of identifying projects of interest more easily for a website user.

.\ Please see his paper as **Appendix VI**

The discussion revealed a willingness to add keywords to the annual country contributions. It was also suggested that alternative 3 would be preferred if secretariat resources become available.

Today projects are sorted by countries (and bilateral). An alternative could be to list them by topics/disciplines, as in this way users could benefit from 'browsing-the-shelves-effect' as in a library.

As the implementation of these proposals depend on increased resources, and as the location of the future ISIRA secretariat is not finally clarified, the issue was left to the present secretariat to explore.

It was also noted that using an international standard list of keywords could be beneficial.

## 2.5 INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

As some major international initiatives are likely to impact on future research in the Russian North, information on the following was given:

### 2.5.1 IPY (INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR)

will be ongoing 1.3.07 – 1.3.09 and about 20 countries have national IPY committees, coordinated internationally by a joint committee of ICSU and WMO. The deadline for national project proposals is 10 January 2005, and the IPY plan is to be ready by 1 June 2005. More information is available at:

<http://www.ipy.org>

In Russia, IPY has high-level support, and a federal IPY committee has been established (including representatives from the Russian Academy of Science). Project proposals have been worked out within Roshydromet and within the Russian Academy of Science. These proposals will be merged into joint proposals.

As the Russian Arctic constitutes a significant part of the Arctic, Russia has proposed an IPY Secretariat to be located at AARI in St Petersburg (alternatively as a sub-secretariat to the international secretariat(s)).

**Conclusion:** As the Russian IPY plans are of interest to all ISIRA members, Russia was encouraged to circulate them as soon as they become available in English, including the address of any website.

### **2.5.2 ICARP II – THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARCTIC RESEARCH PLANNING**

ICARP II is a major circumarctic planning process involving 150 scientists in the formulation of draft science plans for 13 themes. These documents will constitute the input of an international science conference to be held 10 – 13 November 2005 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Participants at the conference will be invited to review the draft plans, and the output is expected to guide circumarctic research cooperation in the next decade.

The ongoing planning is likely to overlap partly with IPY, hence a close connection is being developed as IPY is welcome to capitalise on this planning.

Further information is available at: <http://www.icarp.dk>

### **2.5.3 ISAC: INTERNATIONAL STUDY ON ARCTIC CHANGE**

ISAC is a planning process focussing on Arctic change.

The planning process was initiated earlier this year by an international group tasked to work out a science overview document (SOD). This SOD will be considered by AOSB and IASC, and provided there is a positive response to the SOD a planning process for formulating specific science plans will be initiated.

The idea for ISAC came from the American SEARCH programme, and there will be close cooperation between them. However, they are not identical as ISAC will focus on those issues being of international and circumarctic interest.

The SOD will become available this autumn.

## **2.6 THE ISIRA SECRETARIAT**

As ISIRA was initially proposed by the present IASC Executive Secretary, the secretarial functions for ISIRA have been taken care of by the IASC Secretariat. However, as there will be a new Executive Secretary of IASC within a year, the secretariat issue should be considered.

There seem to be two options:

- The ISIRA Secretariat to remain within the IASC Secretariat, or
- An ISIRA Secretariat in Russia

The first solution may depend on who will be recruited as the new Executive Secretary of IASC, as being secretary to the ISIRA group would require a considerable insight into Russian institutions and their northern policy and research issues.

Who the future IASC Executive Secretary will be was not known at the time of the meeting. However, only one of the top candidates is likely to have insight.

A secretariat in Russia would benefit from better knowledge of the Russian Arctic, relevant institutions and active scientists. However, secretarial service to ISIRA is a limited need (10 – 15% of a position plus some website work), and any solution would have to be combined with other needs. Funding may be a key issue, and the



solution is likely to be found in the combination with other needs (IPY secretariat? etc.).

The conclusion was to await the outcome of the appointment of the IASC Executive Secretary, and encourage the Russian side to explore their opportunities.

## **2.7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Some issues not directly related to the agenda items were raised during the meeting. They are listed below:

### **2.7.1 NORDIC FUNDING**

The Nordic Council of Ministers has earlier supported projects in the Baltic States. As these states have become members of the EU, these funds are likely to become available for cooperation in NW Russia.

### **2.7.2 REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY**

The present member was once again unable to attend, and the ISIRA Group expressed strong concern. As having a well informed representative present would be of considerable mutual benefit, they encouraged the Chairman to clarify the situation.

### **2.7.3 REORGANISATION OF RUSSIAN SCIENCE**

A considerable reorganisation of Russian science has been initiated. Issues up for discussion are:

- How to build and organise scientific programmes
- Concentration of funding possibly with a reduction of fundamental science and changing to more applied science
- The more than 2500 scientific institutes and bodies are likely to be reduced significantly
- Opening up for more private funding
- Clarification of the division of labour between ministries and between each ministry and their agencies.

The final decision will be taken by the Scientific Council under the President of Russia. The present confusion is expected to be clarified within a few months.

The good news is that President Putin had expressed some very positive opinions on polar activities, including the IPY.

**2.7.4 CHAIRMAN OF THE ISIRA GROUP**

Because of his increasing IPY engagement and other commitments, Academician Kotlyakov expressed a wish to step down as Chairman of ISIRA. However members of the Group considered that changing both the Chairman and the Secretary in the same year would be damaging to the work of the Group.

**Conclusion:**

Academician Kotlyakov will continue for another year and chair the next meeting. He will ask the Academy to appoint his successor, who will also attend the next meeting.

**2.7.5 THANKS**

Dr Priamikov thanked the outgoing secretary for his outstanding services to the Group, and for his knowledge and concern about the Russian Arctic.

**2.8 NEXT MEETING**

To be held at AARI in St Petersburg. The exact date to be clarified before the summer of 2005. One of the first three Fridays in October 2005 were identified as the options.