



REPORT

1. OPENING AND REPORTING SESSION

1.1 WELCOME AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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

The Chairman also introduced Prof. Arkady Tishkov as his successor on the ISIRA Group. Prof. Tishkov is Head of laboratory at the Institute of Geography (RAS), Moscow, and appointed as member of the ISIRA Group by the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

1.2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

With the addition of a project proposal by Dr Winfried Dallmann (see 2.5.2) the agenda was adopted.

1.3 MINUTES OF THE 2004 ISIRA MEETING

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

1.4 THE TASKS

- *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.

The Secretary gave a brief overview of the history of ISIRA and the changing tasks over time. He challenged the Group members to comment if the present tasks are still viable or relevant.

Conclusions from the discussion:

- ISIRA should initiate a few projects of their own (see item 2.5 on past and present projects coming to an end).
- IPY will require circumarctic cooperation, and ISIRA can be a useful communication/coordination tool for projects in the Russian Arctic as members cover almost all bi-lateral projects ongoing or planned.

2 MAIN ISSUES

2.1 IPY

Academician Kotlyakov gave an overview of the IPY planning process, past and present.

After clustering of the earlier “Expression of Intent (EoI) there are now 100+ proposals being reviewed after the 30 June deadline. There are possibilities for additional proposals with later deadlines; see details on the IPY website at: <http://www.ipy.org>

With reference to Russian involvement in IPY, there is a national Organising Committee for IPY, co-chaired by Bedritsky (Director General of Roshydromet, as well as President of WMO), and Chilingarov (Deputy Chair of the Duma). Kotlyakov is a member of this Committee.

Dr Priamikov presented an overview analysis of the 100+ IPY proposals regarding which polar region, disciplines and from which countries the IPY project leaderships originated.

Although Russians were involved in 58 of the 100+ IPY proposals, Russia came second to Iceland **from the bottom** when it came to leadership.

Some possible explanations to this analysis:

- Comparatively speaking IPY has not been so widely promoted in Russia
- The Anglo-American dominance in IPY proposals has had to include Russian participants in their proposals in order to make them circumarctic/international.
- Russian IPY planning has awaited national funding, hence a delay but now imminent (see below)

Dr Priamikov gave an overview of Russian infrastructure attractive for coming IPY projects, including North Pole (a new ice camp will be launched), Svalbard and vessels.

There is a Russian IPY Programme in planning within RAS covering 20 major projects.

With regard to funding: The Government has not included a special IPY grant in the federal budget. However, they have encouraged all ministries to do so in their budgets (the outcome is not yet known).

Conclusion from the discussion:

- The Russian IPY Programme now in planning will be of great interest to all ISIRA members, and should be circulated to them as soon as it becomes available

- IPY is likely to impact on ongoing bilateral as well as multilateral projects
- The Russian IPY Programme together with bilateral/multilateral projects (information available on the ISIRA web site) should be combined whenever possible in order to make a strong and coordinated effort in the Russian Arctic.

(The presentation of the European Polar Consortium is recorded under item 2.7 as it may have a direct implication for the ISIRA web site).

2.2 IPY SUB-OFFICE IN ST PETERSBURG

The idea of establishing an IPY Sub-office in St Petersburg has been in existence for about a year. It is intended that this office should report to the IPY International Programme Office (IPO).

The proposal has created some differences of opinion as it was suggested it should have a coordinating role for the entire Arctic.

Dr Priamikov briefly presented the latest version of the terms of reference (ToR).

Comments by members:

- The earlier version of the ToR has been scrutinised. However, a full proposal explaining how it will operate, qualifications of personnel involved, funding etc. is not known.
Therefore, it is difficult to comment based only on the main ToR (regarding funding: Some Nordic countries, Germany and USA have expressed an interest in assisting with funding).
- There is a clear need for assistance on access and operations in the Russian (and adjacent) part of the Arctic.
- One option is to call it a **Eurasian sub-office**, which would cover the Eurasian continent and adjacent seas.
The intention is mainly “coordination by information” and only when it is needed.
- The need is not only restricted to IPY. Call it something else to avoid formal problems with IPY
- Such an office can be both useful and successful provided its staff is **proactive**

2.3 THE IASC SECRETARIAT

The IASC Secretariat has served the ISIRA Group, mainly for historical reasons (ISIRA was initiated by the present Executive Secretary). However, such a secretariat (or secretary) requires a good insight into the Russian Arctic and the Russian system in order to serve the Group well.

It was planned to move the IASC Secretariat to Tromsø by 1 August 2005.

However, as none of the qualified candidates accepted the position as Executive Secretary, an offer from Sweden to move the Secretariat to Stockholm was agreed.

The new IASC Executive Secretary is: Dr Volker Rachold from AWI, Germany. Dr Rachold knows the Russian Arctic considerably well, after several years of field research.

It has always been the intention that the IASC Secretariat would serve the ISIRA Group only initially and should be replaced by some other unit having time and opportunity to develop ISIRA as well as its website.

2.4 RUSSIAN CHANGES

During recent years, changes have been frequent in Russia. The intention of this item is to reveal some of the main changes related either to policy changes or more direct changes affecting Russian Arctic research.

2.4.1 ARCTIC COUNCIL

Russia assumed the chairmanship of the Arctic Council about ten months ago. Usually, the country chairing the Arctic Council designs a chairmanship programme outlining the issues they wish to accomplish.

No such programme has become publicly available yet. However, members reported that some agencies had been contributing to such a programme. More information may become available after the SAO meeting later in October, and, if so, should be circulated to all members of ISIRA, as the document may reveal some Russian governmental priorities of interest to research in the North.

2.4.2 REORGANISATION OF RUSSIAN SCIENCE

Last year we were informed that a considerable reorganisation of Russian science had been initiated. This process has now come to an end, and the outcome reported was:

- The goal was to modernise Russian science, putting an emphasis on innovation and attract fresh money to science
- The government had made some decisions with big changes to come. RAS (receiving about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Russian federal budget for science) have had a slight increase in their budget. The total budget for science is expected to be doubled in the next few years. The salaries will increase and the aim is to attract young scientists. The number of persons in science will be reduced by 7% a year. Innovation will be achieved by a combination of public and private funding.
The Russian Foundation for Basic Research (the Russian NSF) will change their policy on “salary improvement support” (no longer needed with a general improvement in salaries) to funding of instrumentation and research projects. As the Northern regions are important to the Russian economy, Arctic research (including social sciences) may benefit
- Roshydromet (including AARI) is likely to receive an increase

- RAS has the general support of the Russian President, so they are optimistic. However, as of next year they will lose their tax exemption. As RAS is the second largest landowner (next to government) in Russia, losing this tax exemption (“nobility favour”) may become a serious strain for some of their institutes and land properties.

2.4.3. ANY OTHER RUSSIAN CHANGES

2.4.3.1 ACCESS

The Access Rules are the same as previously (see the ISIRA website). However, the procedures are frequently changing. The best advice to foreign scientists and institutes is to find a Russian partner institution fully up-to-date on these procedures. The Group also noted that this issue was on the agenda for the forthcoming SAO meeting of the Arctic Council.

2.4.3.2 MINISTRIES

The Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Economic Development are important ministries for northern Russia. However, they coordinate less well between themselves, which leads to contradictions. The Ministry of Economic Development has devised a new strategy for the Arctic with a special regime for the use of natural resources (and for the companies involved). This strategy also includes Arctic seaway development, especially aiming at the increased transportation of oil.

2.4.3.3 RUSSIAN ARCTIC RESEARCH PROJECTS

A review of Russian Arctic research projects had been undertaken, covering both national and international projects and comprised 160 projects. The ratio national:international was on average 1:1. Otherwise the GEF projects (investigations of environmental issues) have funded a series of projects, including some research.

2.5 ISIRA PROJECTS

ISIRA started as a tool for creating cooperative projects in the Russian Arctic, for the following reasons:

- The Russian Arctic covers almost 50% of the Arctic. For understanding a circumpolar issue, this part of the Arctic has to be included,
- There were considerable barriers between East and West after the Cold War, such as language and communication, funding systems, cultural differences etc. In order to achieve a balanced cooperation, these barriers had to be overcome.

The need in the first period was to help individuals/small research groups to find suitable partners. Later, some joint projects were initiated, and we are now at a stage with bilateral projects being the main activity.

All projects initiated in the ISIRA group have been implemented or have developed into circumarctic projects. The last of these old projects: LOIRA – Land Ocean Interactions in the Russian Arctic will be finalised this year.

2.5.1 PAST PROJECTS

Due to a comment at the end of the meeting, the following clarification may be needed about LOIRA:

- LOIRA is based on the international LOICZ and the ELOISE (European) science plans, and is an adaptation of these plans to suitable sites in the Russian Arctic.
- LOIRA was a multidisciplinary project focussing on land-ocean interactions both physical processes and human/industrial impacts
- The LOIRA Science Plan is still available from the IASC Secretariat
- LOIRA progress reports have been annually reviewed by the IASC Executive Committee, and the scientific output has been considered very good.

2.5.2 NEW ISIRA PROJECTS

General comments

A brief discussion concluded that ISIRA should have a few projects.

Impacts of Industrial Development was discussed last year as a very relevant theme.

Dr Dallmann had prepared a brief proposal on “Petroleum Development and Indigenous Peoples” very much in line with earlier discussion, see enclosure.

The proposal generated many positive comments. As Prof Tishkov has lead several impact study projects, it was agreed that he and Dr Dallmann should take the proposal forward.

Carbon Cycle

Dr Saarnisto referred to the carbon cycle studies undertaken in parts of the Russian Arctic, and which could be a potential new theme.

2.6 BILATERAL PROJECTS

Members gave a summary of the main bilateral projects ongoing. These presentations are not reported below as the information is/or will be added to the ISIRA website.

However, some additional information is included below as well as action to be taken by some participants.

- **Sweden (Friberg)**

Major themes were “Survey of Living Conditions” (contribution to the circumarctic SLICA), Tundra-Taiga (transition zones), Sea pollution, and APEX (multinational)

Action: Friberg to send the Secretariat up-dated information on bilateral projects

- **Finland (Saarnisto)**

- West-Siberian peatland (geophysical data → carbon cycle) will continue into the Komi Republic
- Building/modernising a meteorological station in Tiksi
- Reported on the past geochemical baseline study in the Barents region (“Geochemical Atlas of the Eastern Barents Region”), a study to be continued into Komi
- APEX (multinational, ESF/IPY proposal) and finally
- NARP Highlights: A summary of the outcome of the Nordic Arctic Research Programme (publication distributed) with some projects related to the Russian Arctic.
Information available at <http://thule.oulu.fi>

Action: Saarnisto to send the Secretariat up-dated information on bilateral and multinational projects.

- **Germany (Piepenburg)**

A paper covering bilateral projects was available prior to the meeting, and the information has been entered on the ISIRA website.

Of the multilateral projects, QUEEN (finished) will have APEX as its successor.

It was noted that the Elgygytgyn project (originally bilateral) had developed into multilateral (via ISIRA).

RENMAN ended in 2004 (Kola region). However, this project has a potential for comparative studies in other parts of the Russian Arctic. Russian members were encouraged to investigate this opportunity.

- **Japan, Norway, UK and USA**

Up-dated information is or will shortly become available on the ISIRA website. Information to Group members was distributed prior to the meeting.

- **Canada**

No up-dated information as the new Canadian Polar Commission was not appointed in time for our meeting.

- **China and Korea**

Korea has no bilateral projects, whereas China is discussing an official bilateral agreement, which may lead to several bilateral projects of interest to ISIRA.

Priamikov was tasked to inform about ISIRA in the coming bilateral discussions.

2.7 THE ISIRA WEBSITE

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

There are two ways of overcoming this shortfall:

- keyword indexing, or
- sorting entries by themes/disciplines

The solution depends on the resources available at the (next) ISIRA Secretariat.

The ISIRA Group noted that the new IASC Executive Secretary – Dr Volker Rachold – had extensive knowledge of the Russian Arctic. However, he would have to consider the ISIRA need after taking up his appointment, and also in consultation with the host institution and the IASC Executive Committee.

When considering a “new” ISIRA website, it was also suggested to introduce a “Forum”, i.e. a place for users to ask questions and exchange information.

2.7.1 “RUSSIAN LICENSING OFFICE”

Dr Priamikov reported on an ongoing discussion with the European Polar Consortium, which could have an impact on the future solution of the ISIRA website and possibly to Item 2.2.

The European Polar Consortium (cooperation between the EU Commission and national research funding agencies) was considering ways of improving European cooperation in the polar regions. As the Russian Arctic requires some special effort, the idea of a Russian licensing office had been discussed. Dr Priamikov showed a website demonstrating the type of information which was intended to be covered. The information is available at: <http://www.europolar.ru>

This initiative is not yet finalised and funded, but is of interest to ISIRA. These two websites could benefit from some sort of cooperation and relationship.

2.8 CHAIRMAN OF THE ISIRA GROUP

Due to his increasing IPY engagement and other commitments, Academician Kotlyakov last year expressed his wish to step down as Chairman of ISIRA, as well as being a member. The Russian Academy of Science (RAS) had appointed Prof. Arkady Tishkov as the new member from RAS

Prof. Tishkov was unanimously elected the new Chairman of ISIRA.

His e-mail is: tishkov@biodat.ru

2.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2.9.1 ABOUT ISIRA

The need for ISIRA had been commented on earlier during the meeting.

The general view was for ISIRA to continue. However, some aspects were raised:

- **Meeting place**

One member (not present) had proposed meetings to be held outside Russia due to the efforts required to obtain a visa. This proposal was not supported by members as:

- it would be most appropriate to hold meetings in Russia, and
- visitors could use a tourist visa, which is quite easy and simple to obtain.

- **Internet/conference call meetings**

Although these options could save time and expenses, it was felt useful to have brainstorming over the table.

- **Back-to-back meetings**

Combining a one day ISIRA meeting with another meeting is an option worth exploring. Some members also combine our meeting with meetings with Russian partners.

2.9.2 NEXT MEETING

Place: St Petersburg

Time: 6 October 2006 (Tentatively)

Secretary and Chair to consider back-to-back possibilities

2.10 CLOSING – THANKS

Prof. Matti Saarnisto expressed thanks to Academician Kotlyakov for his long and dedicated chairmanship and to the Secretary for his long and dedicated service to the ISIRA Group. He also thanked Dr Priamikov for hosting the meeting.