

Summary

Sweden in the Arctic Council – effective
return from membership (RiR 2013:9)



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Summary

The Swedish National Audit Office has examined whether Sweden receives an effective return from its membership of the Arctic Council.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Arctic Council is an important forum for issues concerning the Arctic and for initiating central research projects on environmental and climate change in the Arctic. However, the Swedish National Audit Office considers that after almost 20 years of Swedish membership of the Arctic Council it is reasonable to also expect an effective process in Sweden for assessing and, where relevant, implementing Arctic Council recommendations. This is particularly applicable as decisions in the Arctic Council are made in consensus and are, if not legally, then politically binding. It is also reasonable that Sweden's work in the Council proceeds from transparent priorities for the Arctic.

The Swedish National Audit Office's overall conclusion is that Sweden does not receive an effective return in all respects from its membership of the Arctic Council. In the opinion of the Swedish National Audit Office there is insufficient transparency in the Government's priorities for the work of the Arctic Council. It is therefore difficult to assess whether Sweden's work in the Arctic Council proceeds from stated priorities. The Government has not ensured that recommendations from the Arctic Council are assessed, ranked in priority and, where relevant, implemented in Sweden. Nor has the Government assigned responsibility for such a process. It is not clear whether the Arctic Council's recommendations have been implemented in Sweden.

The audit background

REASONS

Sweden has been a member of the Arctic Council since it was formed in 1996. Sweden has chaired the Council during the period 2011–2013. The Government has stated that the Arctic Council is the foremost multilateral forum for issues concerning the Arctic. The Government has also stated that it will work to strengthen the Arctic Council. *The climate and the environment* is one of three main priorities in Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region, as well as in the programme for Sweden's Chairmanship. According to the Government's Arctic strategy, Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate forcers. This is in line with the national objective of *Limited climate impact*.

PURPOSE

The purpose was to examine whether *Sweden receives an effective return from its membership of the Arctic Council*. The audit is included in the Swedish National Audit Office's audit strategy *Sustainable development – climate*. The audit will also constitute a contribution to a

multilateral audit of the Arctic Council coordinated by the supreme audit institutions of Norway and Russia.

IMPLEMENTATION

The audit primarily concerns the Government, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The most important material for the audit was the Government's strategy documents for the Arctic region, the Government's programme for the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, ministerial declarations and other documents from the Arctic Council, as well as interviews with representatives of ministries and government agencies.

Results of the audit

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that Sweden does not receive an effective return in all respects from its membership of the Arctic Council. Nor has the Government provided regular information to the Riksdag, the Swedish Parliament, concerning the Government's work and Chairmanship of the Council as requested by the Riksdag.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR WORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

The assessment of the Swedish National Audit Office is that the Government's priorities in the strategy documents and Chairmanship programme do not give a clear picture of the direction of the Government's work on climate change in the Arctic Council. Reduced emissions of long-lived greenhouse gases have priority in the Government's documents and the Arctic Council is presented as the foremost body for issues concerning the Arctic. However, the Government has not put the issue of long-lived greenhouse gases on the Arctic Council agenda. The Government works for reduced emissions of greenhouse gases by obtaining and spreading knowledge about the effects of climate change, but has above all decided to focus work on climate change on short-lived climate forcers.

The Swedish National Audit Office makes no assessment of the contents of the Government's priorities, but considers that the priorities should be made clearly apparent by relevant documents. In the opinion of the Swedish National Audit Office there is insufficient transparency in the Government's priorities for the work of the Arctic Council. It is therefore difficult to assess whether Sweden's work in the Council proceeds from stated priorities.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT CREATED THE CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ARCTIC COUNCIL.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Government has strengthened the processes in the *Arctic Council* during Sweden's Chairmanship. Corresponding efforts have not, however, been put into ensuring an effective process for implementation in *Sweden*.

The Government has not ensured that recommendations from the Arctic Council are assessed, ranked in priority and, where relevant, implemented in Sweden. Nor has the Government assigned responsibility for such a process.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that it is not clear which measures have been taken in response to the Arctic Council recommendations. There is currently no monitoring of the Council's recommendations at national level. Consequently there is no process to ensure that the knowledge produced in the Arctic Council is utilised.

The Arctic Council recommendations are generally framed and universal in nature. Consequently it is even more important to clearly assign responsibility for interpreting the recommendations and putting them into practice, where deemed relevant.

THE RIKSDAG HAS NOT RECEIVED REGULAR INFORMATION DURING THE CHAIRMANSHIP

The Riksdag has requested regular information from the Government on the developments in the Arctic area and the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The audit shows, however, that the Riksdag has been formally informed of developments on only one occasion, at the end of April 2013, i.e. only weeks before the end of the Chairmanship.

AGREEMENTS FROM THE ARCTIC COUNCIL ARE DESCRIBED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS LEGALLY BINDING, BUT DO NOT OBLIGE THE MEMBER STATES TO PROVIDE HELP

The agreements drawn up within the framework of the Arctic Council on sea and air rescue are presented by the Government as legally binding. However, the Swedish National Audit Office notes that member states are not *obliged* to provide resources if an accident should occur. Consequently, the agreement does not make the demands on resources that the Government has indicated. Nor does the agreement entail any major legal change compared with previously existing search and rescue agreements. The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Government has not been transparent in its presentation of the type and implication of the agreement.

Recommendations

The Swedish National Audit Office's recommendations are aimed to give Sweden a more effective return on its membership of the Arctic Council.

The Swedish National Audit Office makes the following recommendations to the Government:

- The Government should ensure that the priorities for the work of the Arctic Council are transparent.

- The Government should ensure that recommendations from the Arctic Council are assessed, ranked in priority and, where relevant, implemented in Sweden. The Government should clarify for government agencies where the responsibility for such a process lies.
- The Government should give the Riksdag regular information on activities in the Arctic Council, as requested by the Riksdag.

1 Background and focus

1.1 Reasons for the audit

Sweden is one of eight member states of the Arctic Council. When Sweden took over as chair for the first time in May 2011, the level of ambition was high. Sweden's role as chair was described as "a key role in the development of this area, which is gaining importance in international terms."¹

The Government has stated that the Arctic Council is the foremost multi-lateral forum for issues concerning the Arctic.² One of the Government's priority areas during the Chairmanship is to strengthen the Arctic Council, for example by setting up a permanent secretariat. The Government would like the Council to be more active in developing common policies and practical projects for the benefit of the region. According to the Government the Arctic Council and its working groups should link their scientifically based reports to practical decision-making. During its Chairmanship Sweden is also to work to ensure that previously adopted recommendations by the Council are followed up.³

Climate and the environment is one of three main priorities in Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region, as well as in the programme for Sweden's Chairmanship.⁴ According to the Government, Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate forcers.⁵ This is in line with the national objective of Limited climate impact.⁶ The Government emphasises that emissions of greenhouse gases is a global challenge that requires global responsibility: "Sweden is to show leadership, in what we do at home, in the work of the EU and internationally."⁷

In light of the important role assigned by the Government to the Arctic Council and the fact that the Council has now existed for almost 20 years⁸, the Swedish National Audit Office has decided to examine what Sweden has gained from its membership.

¹ Reply to written question in the Riksdag 2010/11:264.

² *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*.

³ *Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011)*.

⁴ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011) and the programme for Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2011–2013*.

⁵ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*.

⁶ The environmental quality objective approved by the Riksdag *Limited climate impact* is intended among other things to achieve the two degree target. The two-degree target means limiting the increase in average global temperature to a maximum of two degrees.

⁷ Govt. Bill 2008/09:162, *En sammanhållen klimat- och energipolitik – Klimat (Cohesive Climate and Energy Policy – Climate)*, p. 17.

⁸ The Arctic Council originated in the "Rovaniemi process" of 1989. The Arctic Council was formally established by the Ottawa Declaration of 1996. See also Chapter 2.

1.2 Purpose and audit questions

The purpose is to examine whether *Sweden receives an effective return from its membership of the Arctic Council.*

The audit is included in the Swedish National Audit Office's audit strategy *Sustainable development – climate*. The audit will also constitute a contribution to a multilateral audit of the Arctic Council coordinated by the supreme audit institutions of Norway and Russia.⁹

1.2.1 Audit questions

An effective return from Sweden's membership of the Arctic Council assumes that Sweden's work in the Council is based on transparent priorities for the Arctic.

An effective return also assumes that relevant recommendations from the Arctic Council are utilised and translated into concrete measures in Sweden; in other words that Sweden *implements* relevant recommendations from the Arctic Council. What is regarded as relevant must be assessed from case to case. The relationship is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

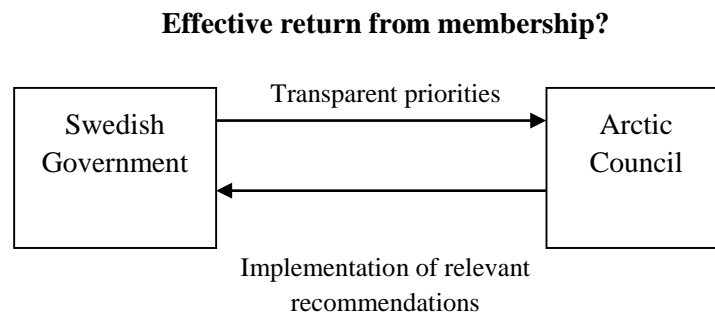


Figure 1: Preconditions for effective return from membership

The Swedish National Audit Office has taken the following audit questions as its starting point for the audit.

- Is Sweden's work in the Arctic Council based on transparent priorities for the Arctic?
- Has the Government created the conditions for implementing relevant recommendations from the Arctic Council?

1.3 Grounds for assessment

The Arctic Council is not based on any legally binding agreements. There are two central documents in which the Government develops its focus for Arctic policy: Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region and the programme for Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2011–2013. Both documents were prepared ahead of the Chairmanship in 2011.

⁹ The design of the multilateral audit is presented in a *strategic plan*, that all participating countries' supreme audit institutions have signed, including the Swedish National Audit Office. A total of five of the eight member countries of the Arctic Council are participating: apart from Norway, Russia and Sweden also Denmark and the USA. The national contributions will be compiled by the Norwegian and Russian supreme audit institutions into a joint report, expected to be published in June 2014.

The strategy is Sweden's first for the region and differs from the Chairmanship programme in that it is more comprehensive and applies for a longer period of time.¹⁰

The Swedish National Audit Office's grounds for assessment are normally based on the positions of the Riksdag, the Swedish Parliament. The Government's strategy for the Arctic has never been formally presented to the Riksdag, however.¹¹ Operationalised grounds for assessment are presented below, based on what the Swedish National Audit Office assesses to be necessary conditions for Sweden to have an effective return from membership. At a more general level the environmental quality objective *Limited climate impact*¹² approved by the Riksdag is a starting point for the audit.

1.3.1 Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region

Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region was drawn up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, with support and contributions from other ministries and government agencies. The purpose of the strategy is to present Sweden's relationship to the Arctic, Swedish priorities and how Sweden's Arctic policy should be developed. The strategy describes the Arctic Council as the foremost multilateral arena for the specific issues of the region.¹³

Three areas are highlighted as being of particular priority: *climate and the environment, economic development and the human dimension*. A large number of measures and objectives that Sweden is to promote are specified under each of the priority areas. These include promoting economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development throughout the Arctic. Sweden is also to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate forcers. Under the human dimension it is stated that Sweden is to draw attention to how local Arctic communities, in particular indigenous communities, can meet the effects that the changed Arctic climate entails.

Apart from the three priority themes, the Government stresses that Sweden is to work to ensure that the Arctic remains a region where security policy tensions are low. The Government also points out that the role of the Arctic Council as the central multilateral forum for Arctic issues should be strengthened. According to the strategy, the Council should be more active in developing common policies and practical projects for the benefit of the region. The Government also states that "it is in Sweden's interest that new emerging activities are governed by common and robust regulatory frameworks and above all that they focus on environmental sustainability."¹⁴

¹⁰ Email from representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

¹¹ Email from representatives of the Committee on Foreign Affairs office, 7 September 2012.

¹² In the latest government bill on the climate the Government states that the EU two-degree target is to govern the measures that need to be taken in Swedish climate policy. The Government assesses that the industrialised part of the world needs to reduce its emissions by 80 to 95 per cent by 2050, compared with 1990. The vision is that in 2050 Sweden will not have any net emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Govt. Bill 2008/09:162, En sammanhållen klimat- och energipolitik – Klimat (Cohesive Climate and Energy Policy – Climate).

¹³ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 4.

THE STRATEGY DOES NOT HAVE PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL

The Government has decided not to put Sweden's position on Arctic issues to the Riksdag.¹⁵ For that reason, the Swedish National Audit Office considers that it is particularly important that the Government's Arctic policy is transparent, and that the Government regularly informs the Riksdag of important issues.

In the past Arctic policy has not been a separate policy area and consequently does not have traditional links with the Riksdag. The Committee on Foreign Affairs has, however, referred to and commented on the Government's Arctic strategy in several Committee Reports,¹⁶ and Arctic issues have been addressed in the Riksdag through interpellations.

Members of the Swedish Riksdag are active in the Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians,¹⁷ that has observer status in the Arctic Council. On their initiative the Government was invited to the Riksdag in early May 2011 to present the Arctic strategy at a seminar arranged by the Nordic Council. The strategy was first presented formally at the Arctic Council's meeting of foreign ministers in Nuuk a week later, when Sweden took over the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

1.3.2 Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council

The Government has drawn up a Chairmanship programme for Sweden's period as chair of the Arctic Council 2011–2013.¹⁸ The Chairmanship programme governs Sweden's actions as chair during the period 2011–2013. The programme presents priority areas during the Chairmanship, as well as some of the projects being run by Sweden. *Climate and the environment* is presented here too as a priority area.

As in the strategy, the Government emphasises the importance of a stronger Arctic Council. One of the major projects run by Sweden during its Chairmanship is transforming the provisional secretariat of the Arctic Council in Tromsø to a permanent secretariat. During its Chairmanship Sweden is also to work to ensure that previously adopted recommendations by the Council are followed up.¹⁹

Apart from Sweden's own Chairmanship programme there is also a joint Chairmanship programme for Norway, Denmark and Sweden. This was prepared ahead of the Norwegian Chairmanship in 2006, with the aim of promoting a more long-term focus for the Arctic Council. Norway, Denmark and Sweden chaired the Council for two years each during the period 2006–2013.²⁰

¹⁵ See for example *Arktisk strategi med parlamentarisk förankring (Arctic strategy with parliamentary support)*, motion to the Riksdag 2011/12:U227.

¹⁶ See for example Committee Report 2011/12: UUI, Committee Report 2011/12:UU3, Report 2011/12:UU9.

¹⁷ The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR) consists of members of the parliaments of the eight Arctic states and representatives of the EU Parliament. The Committee was set up in 1994 with the main aim of supporting the establishment of the Arctic Council.

¹⁸ *Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011)*.

¹⁹ *Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011)*, p. 2.

²⁰ *Common objectives*, Arctic Council 2013.

1.3.3 Climate and Arctic policy

THE RIKSDAG HAS REQUESTED INFORMATION ON REDUCED EMISSIONS AND ON THE GOVERNMENT'S ARCTIC POLICY

The Riksdag has requested better follow-up and reporting on the climate from the Government. In the report on the budget for 2011 the Committee on Environment and Agriculture stated the following: *It would be an advantage if the Government's account also included the trend that can be observed up to 2050 – that is if the emissions are expected to decrease to the desired extent.*²¹ The Riksdag later approved the Committee statement.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs notes that the Arctic is a challenge of growing importance, and “assumes that the Government regularly informs the Riksdag of developments in the Arctic area, in particular as regards the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.” The Committee welcomes the fact that the Government intends to give priority to issues contributing to environmentally sustainable development in the Arctic.²²

THE GOVERNMENT HAS HIGH AMBITIONS FOR CLIMATE AND ARCTIC ISSUES

The Government states that climate policy ambitions have been raised and positions have moved forward: “Sweden is to show leadership, in what we do at home, in the work of the EU and internationally.” The vision that Sweden has no net emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in 2050 is to be achieved through “a vigorous policy leading to reduced emissions inside and outside Sweden.”²³

Characteristic of environmental issues in recent decades is the shift from a national focus to a cross-border regional and global perspective. Climate changes must be met at global level. An effective global climate policy assumes that responsibility is not limited to the national territory.²⁴

The Government states that the Arctic issues are high on the political agenda. “Faster and more vigorous measures” are necessary to protect the Arctic environment was the reaction of the Minister of the Environment at the time to a report from one of the Arctic Council's working groups in 2011.²⁵ Sweden's role as chair of the Arctic Council was described as “a key role in the development of this area, which is gaining importance in international terms.”²⁶ “Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which started in May 2011, underlines Sweden's need to have a clear direction on Arctic issues”.²⁷

²¹ Committee Report 2010/11: MJU1, Parliamentary communication 2010/11:119.

²² Committee Report 2011/12: UU3, *Norden (the Nordic region)*, p. 20.

²³ Govt. Bill 2008/09:162, En sammanhållen klimat- och energipolitik – Klimat (Cohesive Climate and Energy Policy – Climate), pp. 9, 17. The Committee “regards this positively”. Committee Report 2008/09: MJU28, *Riktlinjer för klimatpolitiken m.m. (Guidelines for climate policy etc.)*, p. 101.

²⁴ Committee Report 2008/09: MJU28, *Riktlinjer för klimatpolitiken m.m. (Guidelines for climate policy etc.)*, p. 22.

²⁵ Press release, Ministry of the Environment 6 May 2011.

²⁶ Reply to written question in the Riksdag 2010/11:264.

²⁷ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*.

1.3.4 Operationalisation of grounds for assessment

The Government expresses high ambitions both for limited climate impact in general and for its political focus in continued work concerning the Arctic. The Riksdag has requested better follow-up and reporting on the climate from the Government.

Sweden has no legal obligation to follow the Arctic Council's recommendations. However, the decisions of the Arctic Council are consensus based and it is reasonable to expect the Government to implement the Council's recommendations to some extent. Ahead of its Chairmanship the Government stated that it will work to ensure that approved recommendations of the Arctic Council are followed up.

It is also reasonable that Sweden's work in the Council proceeds from transparent priorities for the Arctic.

In light of this argument the Swedish National Audit Office has decided to use the following grounds for assessment in its audit.

SWEDEN'S PRIORITIES IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

An effective return on membership of the Arctic Council assumes that the Government's priorities for the Arctic Council are characterised by transparency. What the Government describes in its strategy and Chairmanship programme is to give a clear picture of the focus of the Government's work in the Arctic Council. An effective return also assumes that Sweden's work in the Council is based on the priorities for the Arctic that the Government has presented.

As an example of the Government's priorities, the climate issue has been selected from several other issues that Sweden can pursue in the Arctic Council. Reduced emissions is a high priority issue and by focusing on this the audit can support the Swedish National Audit Office's audit strategy *Sustainable development – climate*.²⁸

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

To answer the question of whether the Government has created conditions for implementing relevant recommendations of the Arctic Council the following grounds for assessment are used:

- There should be an effective process for interpreting, testing and setting priorities between the Arctic Council's recommendations at national level. There should also be a functioning process for decisions on further measures for the recommendations deemed relevant.
- It should be clear who is responsible for the process.
- Where a decision has been made to proceed, measures should have been taken – instructions to government agencies, etc.
- Where measures have been taken they should have been followed up by the Government – what has actually been done and what is the result?

²⁸ According to the Government's strategy for the Arctic region, Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate forcers.

1.4 Implementation of the audit

The audit primarily concerns the Government, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The most important material for the audit was the Government's strategy documents for the Arctic region, the Government's programme for the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, ministerial declarations and other documents from the Arctic Council, as well as interviews with representatives of ministries and government agencies.

All in all, the interviews covered officials with central roles in Arctic cooperation. At the Ministry for Foreign Affairs interviews were held with all five people who work at the Arctic secretariat set up ahead of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. At the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications interviews were carried out with the officials involved in the work of the Arctic Council, either through participation in the Arctic Council working groups, or through other involvement. At the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency ten people were interviewed, all directly involved in the work of the Arctic Council. Interviews were also conducted with the officials at the Swedish Coast Guard, the Swedish Maritime Administration, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and the Swedish Transport Agency, which are involved in or affected by Sweden's work in the Arctic Council.

1.4.1 *Method for auditing Sweden's priorities in the Arctic Council*

The first part-question in the audit concerns whether Sweden's work in the Arctic Council is based on transparent priorities for the Arctic. Here the Swedish strategy for the Arctic region and Sweden's Chairmanship programme have been important starting points, as well as the reports mentioned above.

Interviews with officials, above all at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Environment and Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, have been used as a method for finding out which matters have been raised on the agenda of the Arctic Council. The project group also conducted interviews with researchers at Stockholm University and the Stockholm Environment Institute, and with representatives of the WWF and Greenpeace. The selected researchers are experts on the international law of the sea and on the social effects of climate change in the Arctic. The WWF has observer status in the Arctic Council and Greenpeace has submitted an application for observer status. Both organisations have employed experts who monitor the Government's Arctic policy.

1.4.2 *Method for auditing implementation of the Arctic Council's recommendations*

The second part-question in the audit concerns whether the Government has created conditions for implementation of Arctic Council recommendations in relevant cases. To examine this, as well as governance and coordination, interviews have also been conducted with other ministries and agencies than those mentioned above. This refers to interviews with officials

at the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, the Ministry of Defence, the Swedish Coast Guard, the Swedish Maritime Administration, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and the Swedish Transport Agency.

1.5 Delimitations

The audit refers to *Sweden's* work in the Arctic Council and is not an audit of the Council as such. The multilateral audit that the Swedish National Audit Office is participating in will, however, address the function and structure of the Arctic Council. Publication of the multilateral report is expected to be in June 2014.

The audit concerns what is gained from Swedish membership of the Arctic Council – if Sweden's work in the Council is based on transparent priorities, and whether there is an effective process in Sweden for interpreting and possibly translating the Council's recommendations into concrete measures. As stated above, the climate issue has been chosen as an example of Sweden's priorities for the Arctic. The audit covers the period until the end of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, in May 2013.

The Swedish National Audit Office's starting point is that it is part of Sweden's political commitment to have an effective process for dealing with the recommendations of the Arctic Council – ordering priorities between them and that measures are taken in relevant cases. Crucial to the assessment made by the Swedish National Audit Office is that there *is* a process, not its exact details.

The Swedish National Audit Office has no opinion as to which issues should be given priority in the context of Arctic cooperation, either as regards Swedish initiatives in relation to the Council, or the Council's recommendations to Sweden. The Government's priorities should, however, be clear from relevant documents. Nor does the Swedish National Audit Office have any opinion on the design of agreements within the framework of the Arctic Council. In the latter case the assessment only refers to how the Government has communicated the implications of agreement described by the Government as legally binding.

Another important function of the Council is as a forum for talks between member states. This is a function that in the short term does not result in any clear, decipherable results and it is not covered by the audit.

1.6 Specification of central concepts

THE ARCTIC

There is no clear-cut definition of what is called *the Arctic*. The area is distinguished by consisting of an ocean (the Arctic Ocean) that is surrounded by sovereign states. When the Arctic Council was set up in 1996 its members adopted a common political definition of the Arctic: "all areas north of the Arctic Circle and the associated eight Arctic states, i.e. Canada,

Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, the United States and Sweden” constitute the Arctic.²⁹

LONG-LIVED CLIMATE FORCERS – GREENHOUSE GASES

The gases that primarily affect the climate and global warming are called long-lived climate gases, primarily carbon dioxide.

Global carbon dioxide emissions are mainly caused by burning fossil fuels, but changed use of land, such as deforestation, also contributes to an increased carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is long-lived in the atmosphere and affects the climate for a very long time. In Sweden carbon dioxide constitutes about 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions.³⁰

SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE FORCERS

Research on the Arctic indicates a correlation between emissions of short-lived climate forcers and negative climate impact. One of these climate forcers is *black carbon*, (soot), which above all through wood burning collects on snow and ice in the Arctic and attracts the heat of the sun. Diesel burning also contributes to soot emissions. The short-lived climate forcers also include tropospheric ozone and methane. When soot collects in the ice it accelerates its melting rate. Unlike carbon dioxide emissions, however, soot is only stored for a short period in the atmosphere, and methods exist today to reduce the soot content of the air.

The report uses the terms short-lived climate forcers/climate gases synonymously with short-lived climate pollutants. The term *soot* is used throughout to denote *black carbon*.

²⁹ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*.

³⁰ Miljöportalen (website) (2013).

2 Arctic Council

2.1 The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum

The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum and the only political organisation for Arctic issues in which all countries in the area north of the Arctic circle participate. *The members* are the eight Arctic states of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Canada, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA. The Arctic Council is one of few international bodies that have representatives of indigenous peoples as *permanent participants*.³¹ The indigenous peoples do not, however, have the same rights as the Arctic States as regards decision-making in the Council.³²

Apart from the member states and permanent participants there are also 32 *observers* in the Arctic Council. These are made up of 12 European countries, and non-profit organisations.³³ The observers are entitled to participate in formal meetings of the Council and may, with the consent of the chair, make presentations or contributions on relevant matters.

2.1.1 *The main objects of the Arctic Council are to protect the Arctic environment and promote sustainable development*

The main objects of the Arctic Council are to protect the Arctic environment and promote sustainable development of the region to improve the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the Arctic.³⁴

The Arctic Council is not based on any legally binding agreements. The Council originates from cooperation between the Arctic states' environmental ministers in 1989, called the Rovaniemi Process. This led to a declaration to protect the Arctic environment, the *Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy*.³⁵ The Arctic Council was formally established by the Ottawa Declaration of 1996, but through previous agreements cooperation has focused on environmental issues for more than 20 years. In recent years other issues have also been put on the agenda of the Arctic Council, mainly issues concerning trade and industry. Under the Ottawa Declaration the Arctic Council has a mandate to deal with all issues apart from military security.³⁶

2.1.2 *The Arctic Council makes consensus decisions*

The Arctic Council is led by foreign ministers from the respective member countries, who take part in Ministerial Meetings every other

³¹ Six indigenous peoples are represented as permanent participants of the Arctic Council. One of them is the Sami Council, which represents the Sami in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia.

³² Only the Arctic states have the right to make decisions and the permanent participants are "involved" in that process. *Observers*, Arctic Council (2013).

³³ 6 of the 12 states were given observer states at the Arctic Council meeting in Kiruna May 15th 2013: China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Singapore.

³⁴ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 48.

³⁵ *Frequently asked questions*, Arctic Council (2013).

³⁶ Email from representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

year. The Chairmanship rotates between the member countries at the time of these meetings.³⁷ Between Ministerial Meetings the work is led by a committee of officials that meets at least twice a year. The country holding the Chairmanship leads both the Ministerial Meeting and meetings of the committee of officials.³⁸ The formal decisions of the Arctic Council are made at the Ministerial Meetings, by means of consensus decisions.

2.1.3 *The work of the Arctic Council's working groups – shaping of the scientific reports*

The activities of the Arctic Council are mainly conducted by six working groups, composed of representatives at expert level from sectoral ministries, government agencies and research institutions. The working groups set up projects, programmes and expert groups after approval by the committee of officials. Currently the Arctic Council's working groups have about 80 different ongoing projects.³⁹ The groups have their own secretariat and the working methods differ somewhat. A central part of the work is to initiate and produce scientific reports. These entail projects of varying size, involving up to 300 researchers and experts.

The working groups have different focuses, but the issues addressed mainly concern the impact of climate change on the Arctic region, as well as environmental protection issues.⁴⁰ The *Arctic Monitoring & Assessment Programme* (AMAP) working group, for example, works specifically with short-lived climate forcers and their impact on the Arctic region.⁴¹ The work in the ACAP group – *Arctic Contaminants Action Programme* – mainly concerns strategies to manage hazardous waste. The central issue for the CAFF group – *Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna* – is biological diversity.

Figure 2 below illustrates how the working groups relate to other parts of the institutional structure of the Arctic Council.⁴²

³⁷ After Sweden, Canada will take over the Chairmanship for the period 2013-2015 and thereafter the USA for the period 2015–2017.

³⁸ The country that is Chair also leads meetings of the Sustainable Development Working Group, SDWG.

³⁹ Preliminary results of the multilateral audit.

⁴⁰ *The Sustainable Development Working Group* (SDWG) is the exception. The main issues for the Group concern the human dimension and adaptation of living conditions in the Arctic. The SDWG also differs in that the delegates in the group are not experts, but employees of the foreign affairs ministries. Moreover, the SDWG is the only working group whose Chairmanship follows the rotating Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2012.

⁴¹ There is also a temporary *task force*, under the committee of officials working in this area. See section 2.3.3 below.

⁴² For more information about the working groups, please see appendix 1.

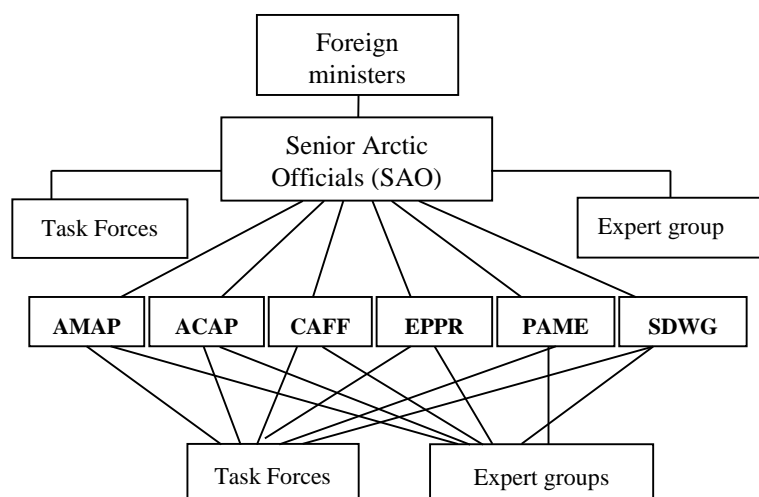


Figure 2: Institutional structure of the Arctic Council

As Figure 2 shows, work is also conducted in temporary project groups called *task forces* and in expert groups. These groups can be initiated and managed by the committee of officials or be placed under one of the working groups.

Several of the scientific reports from the Arctic Council have attracted great attention. Among them can be mentioned *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment* and *Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA): Climate Change and the Cryosphere*. Both deal with the effects of climate change on the Arctic and were produced as part of the work of the AMAP. The report on shipping in the Arctic, *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment*, prepared by the PAME working group – *Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment* – has been highlighted by representatives of ministries and government agencies as a successful report.⁴³

2.2 The Arctic Council's recommendations

2.2.1 Ministerial Meetings result in recommendations to member countries

The work of the Arctic Council's working groups usually results in scientific reports. Based on these, the Arctic Council makes recommendations to its member states. The recommendations emerge in several steps: The scientific report presents *key findings*. On the basis of these findings the *working groups* make recommendations to the *committee of officials*, which in turn discusses and adjusts them before they are submitted to the meeting of foreign ministers, which takes place every other year. After each ministerial meeting of ministers the Arctic Council publishes a *ministerial declaration* in which the formally approved recommendations of the Council are presented.

⁴³ Interviews with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012, and representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 24 January 2013.

MINISTERIAL DECLARATIONS ARE NOT LEGALLY BINDING BUT ENTAIL POLITICAL OBLIGATIONS

The recommendations in the ministerial declarations are directed at member countries of the Arctic Council and are intended for national implementation by the relevant government. The decisions of the Arctic Council are made in consensus. Even if the recommendations are not legally binding, they entail a political obligation.

2.2.2 *Agreement on sea rescue and oil damage control in the framework of the Arctic Council*

At the ministerial meeting in Nuuk in 2011 the foreign ministers signed an *Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic*. The agreement is described by the Government as “legally binding on the member countries of the organisation”.⁴⁴

According to representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs the agreement on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue was a concrete result of the scientific report *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment*, which pointed out deficiencies in search and rescue capacity in the Arctic as a problem.⁴⁵

The marine shipping report also criticised lack of search and rescue coordination in the event of an oil spill. The negotiations for an agreement on preparedness for an oil disaster were started during the Swedish Chairmanship.⁴⁶ The foreign ministers are expected to sign the agreement at the ministerial meeting in Kiruna in May 2013.⁴⁷

2.3 Sweden’s commitment to the Arctic Council

Sweden chairs the Arctic Council for the first time during the period May 2011 to May 2013. The meeting of foreign ministers in Kiruna in May 2013 marks the end of Sweden’s Chairmanship.

The Government has the ultimate responsibility for Sweden’s membership of the Arctic Council. A number of ministries and government agencies are involved in Arctic Council activities. The main responsibility for Sweden’s involvement in the Arctic Council and its Chairmanship lies with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

2.3.1 *The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the main responsibility for Arctic Council activities and for Sweden’s Chairmanship*

Ahead of Sweden’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council the Government decided to set up a provisional secretariat for the Chairmanship period 2011–2013 at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. A total of five people work

⁴⁴ *Agreement on sea rescue at Arctic meeting* Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011. The Arctic Council also describes the agreement as the first binding agreement produced in the framework of the Arctic Council. *Task force on Search and Rescue*, Arctic Council, 2011.

⁴⁵ E-mail from representatives of Sweden’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013. The report was produced by the working group on *Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*, PAME.

⁴⁶ Hellberg (2011).

⁴⁷ This is done after completion of audit work.

at the secretariat, one of whom is the chair of the Arctic Council committee of officials.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs holds the formal seats on the Arctic Council, leads Sweden's Chairmanship and manages negotiations and decision-making under the leadership of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The factual issues are prepared at national level, together with the relevant sectoral ministries and agencies.

The Ministry of the Environment plays an important role in the work of the Arctic Council in that the majority of issues dealt with by the Council lie in the area of the environmental and climate environmental.⁴⁸ In several other international environmental cooperation projects the Ministry of the Environment holds the formal posts and the responsibility for negotiations, management and coordination.⁴⁹ However, this is not the case in the Arctic Council, where the environmental ministers are not on an equal footing with the foreign ministers. This is shown for example by the meeting of environmental ministers arranged by Sweden in February 2013.⁵⁰ Because the member countries cannot agree on the role of the environmental ministers in the Arctic Council the meeting could not be classified as a formal Council meeting.⁵¹ This is despite the fact that Council issues were under discussion and Sweden had issued the invitation in its capacity as chair.

The role of the Ministry of the Environment is to provide support to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on climate and environmental issues in the Arctic Council. The ministry is also represented in the Arctic Council's working groups, directly or through one of the underlying agencies.⁵² The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications and the Ministry for Rural Affairs also work with Arctic Council issues through support to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, or through participation in the Arctic Council's working groups.

Below, all ministries and agencies involved in Arctic Council work are listed.

⁴⁸ According to information from an interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency on 24 January 2013 this applies to about 80 per cent of the questions.

⁴⁹ For example the Helsinki Commission on the Baltic Sea Environment (HELCOM).

⁵⁰ In February 2013 environmental ministers from all Arctic Council member countries met on the initiative of Sweden to discuss climate change in the Arctic.

⁵¹ Email from representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

⁵² Three ambassadors are linked to the Ministry of the Environment: one for climate, one for environment and one for sea. The environmental ambassador has been appointed to lead a so called "high risk group" to continue work on the compromise on soot, made at the meeting of environmental minister in Jukkasjärvi in February 2013.

- Ministry for Foreign Affairs
 - Secretariat of the Arctic Council chair
- Ministry of the Environment
 - Swedish Agency for Marine and Water management
- Ministry of Education and Research
 - Swedish Polar Research Secretariat
- Ministry of Defence
 - Swedish Coast Guard
 - Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
 - Defence Research Agency
- Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications
 - Swedish Maritime Administration
 - Swedish Transport Agency
- Ministry for Rural Affairs
 - Sami Parliament.

2.3.2 *Government assignments with links to the Arctic Council*

In their appropriation directions for 2012 two agencies were instructed to assist Sweden during the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council:

The Sami Parliament (under the Ministry for Rural Affairs) and the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat (under the Ministry of Education and Research).

The latter is obliged to report back on these support measures in 2013 as well.

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency in its appropriation directions for 2013 was instructed to present the Agency's supporting material and efforts in the work related to short-lived climate forcers. This is partly a matter of national work, partly of international, including within the Arctic Council.⁵³

2.3.3 *Swedish participation in the Arctic Council working groups*

Sweden is active in all six working groups, either in leading positions such as chair, as part of the steering committee, or in temporary task forces. Above all the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence play active parts in the Council's working groups. Agencies such as the Swedish Maritime Administration, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and the Swedish Coast Guard are also involved in various ways. The financial scope is, however, small: Sweden has reserved SEK 15 million for the Chairmanship.⁵⁴ In other respects there are various appropriation items that cover international cooperation and environmental work. Because each project seeks support from various funds and appropriation items separately from each other, it is not apparent

⁵³ *Appropriation directions for the 2013 budget year for the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.* Other agencies have also received assignments linked to the Arctic, but without the Arctic Council being mentioned. For example, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) is to "contribute to developing a knowledge base for long-term administration and adaptation of Arctic societies and environments to a changed climate and to increased pressure from shipping, tourism and other commercial industries". *Appropriation directions for the 2013 budget year for the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute.*

⁵⁴ This total is to cover staff costs, meeting costs and seminars within the framework of what is traditionally expected when chairing the Arctic Council. Email from representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

how much of the appropriations are used for Arctic Council work.⁵⁵ Besides this, financial support is also given to research conducted in the context of the Arctic Council.

As far as Sweden is concerned, there is no information as to the total cost of Arctic Council activities and their associated research projects. The number of participants in the various projects and the amount of time spent by Swedish public officials on the work of the Arctic Council is also unclear. The Government has worked to ensure a better overview of this during the Swedish Chairmanship.⁵⁶

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL HAS A TASK FORCE FOR SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE FORCERS
In 2009 an *ad hoc task force* was set up within the Arctic Council, specifically tasked with mapping emissions of short-lived climate forcers in the Arctic member countries. The group, called *Short lived climate forcers, SLCF*, submitted a report to the Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk in 2011. The remit concerned mapping the extent of the emissions and reporting on major emission sources. The group also presented possible measures for reducing emissions, and which measures are most effective. A further report will be presented at the 2013 Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna.

For Sweden's part, one case officer from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency participates in SLCF, as well as one case officer from the Ministry of the Environment.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL CONDUCTS PROJECTS ON RESILIENCE AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

During the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council the Government has conducted projects on *resilience* and *biological diversity* (in the CAFF working group).

Resilience concerns the ability of nature and society to manage and overcome major changes and disruptions, for example effects of climate changes on the Arctic. The project is led by the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Stockholm Resilience Centre.⁵⁷

The work of the Arctic Council on biological diversity in the period 2010–2013 is through an extensive scientific project on the development of biodiversity in the Arctic. Sweden has chaired the steering group and the project will submit its report, *Arctic Biodiversity Assessment*, to the 2013 Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna.⁵⁸

2.4 Sweden wants to strengthen the Arctic Council

The Arctic Council has not previously had a permanent secretariat, a fixed budget or resources for supporting the various research projects. The working groups still have their own secretariats that are spread over

⁵⁵ Email from representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

⁵⁶ Interview with representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013.

⁵⁷ "Centre and SEI to lead Arctic resilience project", *Stockholm Resilience Centre (2011)*.

⁵⁸ *About the ABA*, Arctic Council, and email from representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 18 March 2013.

several different countries. According to representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Arctic Council has had a weak internal structure in comparison with many other international organisations.⁵⁹ In light of this, the Government has had high ambitions for making the work of the Arctic Council more effective under Sweden's Chairmanship and for strengthening the Council institutionally.⁶⁰ In its strategy for the Arctic region and the joint Chairmanship programme for Norway, Denmark and Sweden, the Government has emphasised the importance of the Arctic Council working for robust rules, more concrete projects and clear political initiatives.⁶¹ Sweden is also to work to ensure that previously approved recommendations are followed up⁶² and in particular to promote the implementation of policy recommendations in the climate report *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA)*.⁶³

The audit shows that the Government has taken measures to strengthen the Arctic Council institutionally. The Swedish Chairmanship has worked to clarify internal and external communication and to improve coordination in the Council.

2.4.1 A permanent secretariat to be set up in Tromsø

During Norway's Chairmanship in 2006 a provisional secretariat was set up for the Arctic Council in Tromsø. Before that there was no common secretariat. During Sweden's Chairmanship the secretariat in Tromsø was converted into a permanent secretariat, with regular staffing. For the first time a separate budget for the Arctic Council has been created, totalling USD 1 million.⁶⁴ Financing is shared equally between the eight member states.⁶⁵

2.4.2 More effective communication and procedures for coordination

Sweden has worked to improve the effectiveness of both internal and external communication in the Arctic Council. During the Swedish Chairmanship the Arctic Council's website has been overhauled, a communication officer has been employed at the secretariat in Tromsø and a strategy for external communication has been drawn up. Sweden has also created procedures for internal communication and coordination, for example by clarifying the texts of decisions. An official publication has been created in which all decisions are published. Sweden has also introduced a "two-day, two-page rule". This means that all meetings are to be summarised on two pages

⁵⁹ Email from representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

⁶⁰ *Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011)*

⁶¹ Ahead of the Norwegian Chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2006 Norway, Denmark and Sweden decided to write a joint Chairmanship programme, apart from what each country chair produced. The purpose was to be able to hold the same line for more than two years (the period 2006–2013).

⁶² *Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011)*

⁶³ These policy recommendations were adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in Reykjavik in 2004. *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*.

⁶⁴ This amount only finances the secretariat function and does not cover the financing of projects. The Arctic Council currently has no common budget to support various research projects, but the member countries contribute voluntarily on a project basis. Email from representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

⁶⁵ Norway contributes a further USD 1 125 000 USD for translation of official documents to Russian. Email from representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

within two days, and communicated internally. Sweden has also taken measures to create a better overview of documents produced by the Arctic Council. According to officials at Swedish government agencies concerned, all in all this has had an impact and made the spreading of information considerably more effective.

At the Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna in May 2013 a joint vision will be adopted, summarising common and guiding goals, as well as values and principles for the Arctic Council for the coming 10–20 years. Through the vision, the Government hopes to be able to promote a long-term approach in the Arctic Council. *The Kiruna Vision* is described as the first of its kind.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012, and email from representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013. The meeting in Kiruna takes place after the audit work is completed.

3 Sweden's priorities for the Arctic: Climate and environment

The Government's strategy for the Arctic region highlights the climate and environment as a priority area. According to the Government, Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate forcers. *The climate and environment* is also one of three main priorities during Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Ever since cooperation was established the main focus of Arctic Council activities has been on environmental and climate issues. The Government promotes the Council as the main body for managing issues concerning the Arctic.

The audit shows that the Government has chosen to focus climate efforts in the Arctic Council on short-lived climate forcers. The Government has not included long-lived greenhouse gases on the Council agenda. However, the Government is working for reduced emissions of greenhouse gases by spreading knowledge of the effects of climate change on the Arctic.

3.1 Greenhouse gas emissions

3.1.1 Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases

The Arctic is one of the world's most vulnerable regions in terms of climate change. The Government notes that "The most important measure for limiting Arctic warming is to reduce emissions of long-lived greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide."⁶⁷

THE GOVERNMENT WORKS FOR REDUCED EMISSIONS OF GREENHOUSE GASES BY SPREADING KNOWLEDGE IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs believe that it is not possible to *directly* influence emissions of long-lived greenhouse gases through the work of the Arctic Council.⁶⁸ However, the Government works to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases through the Arctic Council's spreading of knowledge of climate change effects and through the indirect advocacy of the Arctic Council. The scientific reports produced in the context of the Arctic Council are of central importance in this work.⁶⁹ Through the participation of officials in the work of the Council and through the contribution of Swedish researchers, Sweden has shared in the work on these reports. As part of Sweden's Chairmanship the Arctic Council has also arranged side events at global climate negotiation meetings, aimed at drawing attention to the effects of climate changes on the Arctic.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 26. Sweden's Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011-2013 (2011).

⁶⁸ Interview with representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012 and interview with representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, 10 January 2013.

⁶⁹ Interview with representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, 10 January 2013, and email from representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, 19 March 2013.

⁷⁰ Email from representatives of the Ministry of the Environment 19 March 2013.

LONG-LIVED GREENHOUSE GASES ARE NOT ON THE ARCTIC COUNCIL AGENDA

The negotiations involved in international decision-making are often complex. They take place in parallel in many arenas, with a number of different actors.⁷¹ Representatives of the Ministry of the Environment point out that the Arctic Council offers contacts with actors that are important in global climate negotiations.⁷² The question of reduced carbon dioxide emissions is not, however, on the Arctic Council agenda and Sweden is not pushing to change this.⁷³

Greenhouse gases fall within the framework of the UN Climate Change Convention. Representatives of the ministries point out that Sweden above all pursues the issue through its membership of the EU, which in turn negotiates in the UN, not through its membership or Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.⁷⁴

The Government's choice not to raise the issue of reduced emissions of long-lived greenhouse gases on the Arctic Council agenda is not apparent either in the Government's strategy for the Arctic, or in the Government's Chairmanship programme. The Swedish National Audit Office makes no assessment of the Government's choice or priorities, but considers that these should be clearly presented in relevant documents.

Representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency describe the conditions for climate efforts as follows:

That Sweden is to work for reduced emissions of greenhouse gases, as stated in Sweden's strategy for the Arctic, is to be seen as a fundamental premise. It is not in the Arctic Council that efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions are taking place or should take place. The statement in the strategy is not something that specifically concerns the Arctic Council.⁷⁵

UNCLEAR WHICH ISSUES THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO DEAL WITH IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Under each of the three priority areas of the Government's strategy for the Arctic there are bullet lists summarising what Sweden is to *work for* in the specific priority area (climate and the environment, economic development and the human dimension). The Arctic Council is described as "the foremost multilateral arena for the specific issues of the region".⁷⁶ However, it is not stated in the strategy what is expected to be achieved through Sweden's participation in Arctic Council and what should instead be managed through Sweden's role in other fora.

⁷¹ Vifell (2006):

⁷² Email from representatives of the Ministry of the Environment 19 March 2013.

⁷³ Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012.

⁷⁴ Interviews with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012, and representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, 10 January 2013.

⁷⁵ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 23 October 2012, 24 January 2013.

⁷⁶ Sweden also works to promote Arctic issues in the EU, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Barents cooperation and the UN. *Sweden's strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 19.

3.2 Emissions of short-lived climate forcers – soot

The government highlights reduced carbon dioxide emissions as the most important measure for limiting Arctic warming. At the same time it is noted that measures that reduce the occurrence of short-lived climate forcers, such as soot, tropospheric ozone and methane, may be significant in limiting climate change. This applies in particular at regional level and in the short-term.

3.2.1 *Sweden is to work for substantially reduced emissions of short-lived climate forcers – soot*

Sweden is to work for substantially reduced emissions of short-lived climate forcers.⁷⁷ The Government notes that a reduction of soot in particular could limit the rapid warming of the Arctic and help slow down the pace at which sea-ice is melting.⁷⁸ According to the Government Sweden intends “to make work on this issue a priority” during the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.⁷⁹

Representatives of Sweden’s Chairmanship state that the Government is working to achieve a legally binding agreement on soot for the Arctic member countries.⁸⁰ A decision on a first step towards such an agreement is expected in May 2013 at the Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna.

THE GOVERNMENT GIVES PRIORITY TO SOOT AND OTHER SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE FORCERS IN THE CLIMATE EFFORTS OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

The audit shows that the Government is actively driving the issue of short-lived climate forcers in the work and the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The Government considers that, unlike the long-lived greenhouse gases, it is possible to directly affect emissions of the short-lived gases through the work of the Council. The focus is above all on emissions of soot. The Ministry of the Environment points out that the focus on these emissions is because soot is to a great extent a regional problem that is suited to regional regulation.⁸¹

As described above, a *task force* in the Arctic Council is mapping and preparing proposals for measures to reduce emissions of short-lived greenhouse gases in the Arctic region. Sweden is participating in the work through the contribution of one case officer from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and one case officer from the Ministry of the Environment.

The Ministerial Meeting in Jukkasjärvi in February 2013⁸² also showed that it is the short-lived greenhouse gases that Sweden is putting on the agenda. In the *Chair’s conclusions* from the meeting the importance of reducing emissions of short-lived climate forcers took up an important share.

⁷⁷ *Sweden’s strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 24. Sweden’s Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011).

⁷⁸ *Sweden’s strategy for the Arctic region (2011)*, p. 26. Sweden’s Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011).

⁷⁹ *Sweden’s Chairmanship Programme for the Arctic Council 2011–2013 (2011)*

⁸⁰ Interview with representatives of Sweden’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012, and 25 October 2012.

⁸¹ Email from representatives of the Ministry of the Environment 19 March 2013.

⁸² In February 2013 environmental ministers from all Arctic Council member countries met on the initiative of Sweden to discuss climate change in the Arctic.

UNCLEAR HOW GREAT SWEDEN'S SOOT EMISSIONS ARE

There is currently no internationally agreed reporting method for soot. However, particle emissions are reported, which include soot. The greenhouse gases included in the UN Climate Change Convention are continually monitored by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and reported to the UNFCCC⁸³. This means that of short-lived climate forcers methane is monitored under the UNFCCC. Among other short-lived climate forcers, emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particles are monitored annually and reported to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP⁸⁴). However, the percentage of soot in particle emissions is not monitored.⁸⁵

According to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency soot is difficult to measure and there are no exact data on the size of Sweden's emissions of soot.⁸⁶ At the request of the Council, the member countries of the Arctic Council have reported estimates of each country's emissions of soot, but no more detailed inventories have been made.⁸⁷

In early 2013 the Ministry of the Environment received funds from the Nordic Council of Ministers to develop methods for measuring emissions of short-lived climate forcers in the Nordic countries. This is a development project that starts in 2013 for a period of three years. Representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency consider that the project will be significant for enabling measurement of the extent of soot emissions. The Agency expects to be able to include data on short-lived climate forcers in its normal international reporting of climate-changing emissions in 2016–2017.⁸⁸

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CLIMATE IMPACT OF SOOT IS UNCERTAIN

Representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency note that knowledge about the climate impact of soot is uncertain. However, it is clear that soot affects melting in the Arctic and that soot has an impact on health. "However, in terms of the climate issue, reducing soot emissions is not the most important thing".⁸⁹

Measures against soot solely as a climate issue could be regarded with some scepticism. It must be seen as a health issue in towns and urban areas, but the Arctic Council, with Sweden as chair, has decided to make it a climate issue too. (...) They are dealing with soot because something can be done in that area.⁹⁰

⁸³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

⁸⁴ Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

⁸⁵ At the end of 2013 the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency expects a method for measuring soot to have been developed within the framework of the CLRTAP. Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

⁸⁶ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

⁸⁷ The survey carried out for Sweden shows that Sweden's soot emissions 2020-2030 will be dominated by private wood burning. Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

⁸⁸ Email from representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 11 February 2013, and telephone conversation with a representative of the Agency 12 February 2013.

⁸⁹ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

⁹⁰ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THE POSSIBILITIES OF A LEGALLY BINDING AGREEMENT ON SOOT

Representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment call attention to the preparations for a legally binding agreement on soot as a success during Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The ministries point out that Sweden is pursuing the matter with highest priority.⁹¹

Representatives of the Government's expert agency, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, have lower expectations of a possible agreement on soot. According to interviews with officials at the Agency there are no expectations that the agreement will involve a binding *agreement* on short-lived climate forcers. In the best case it means a *survey* of possible measures to reduce emissions of short-lived climate forcers, above all soot. The agreement may also include recommendations on how each individual country can act, both in other fora and in the Arctic Council.⁹²

The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are perhaps hoping for a binding agreement ... But there is only one previous agreement. It would be a major step if the countries could agree on something like that.⁹³

Representatives of the Swedish Chairmanship describe the meeting of environmental ministers in Jukkasjärvi in 2013 as a breakthrough for a future agreement on short-lived climate forcers. The Chair's conclusions that resulted from the meeting are described as "a compromise on soot" and "a first step towards a first step towards a binding agreement". The Government wanted to make the Chair's conclusions gain as much acceptance as possible and so decided to negotiate them with other member countries. However, this does not mean that the conclusions are binding. The formal status of the document is further complicated by being prepared during a meeting of *environmental ministers*, a meeting format that was a Swedish initiative, and which is not part of the ordinary activities of the Arctic Council.⁹⁴

3.3 Summary of findings

According to the Government Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases. In its strategy for the Arctic region the Government describes reduced carbon dioxide emissions as the most important measure for limiting Arctic warming. This is also highlighted in the Government's Chairmanship programme. The Arctic Council is presented at the same time as the foremost body for dealing with issues concerning the Arctic.

The audit shows that the Government has chosen to focus climate efforts in the Arctic Council on short-lived climate forcers.

⁹¹ Interviews with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013, and representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, 10 January 2013.

⁹² Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

⁹³ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

⁹⁴ Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013, and email from representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

- The focus of the Government's climate efforts in the Arctic Council lies on short-lived climate forcers and reaching a legally binding agreement on soot. The Government has not raised the issue of reduced emissions of greenhouse gases on the agenda of the Arctic Council. However, the Government works to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases through the Arctic Council's spreading of knowledge of climate change effects and through indirect advocacy.
- There are no exact data on the size of Sweden's soot emissions. This is partly why knowledge about the climate impact of soot is uncertain. However, in 2013 the Ministry of the Environment received funds to develop methods for measuring emissions of short-lived climate forcers in the Nordic countries.
- It is uncertain which issues the Government intends to deal with within the framework of the Arctic Council and which issues are to be dealt with in other fora instead.

4 Sweden's management and implementation of the Arctic Council's recommendations

The Chairmanship of the Arctic Council concluded with a Ministerial meeting. As shown in Chapter 2, all Ministerial Meetings result in several recommendations to the member countries, which are summarised in a Ministerial Declaration. The recommendations are not legally binding, but entail political obligations. Ahead of its Chairmanship the Government stated that it is to work to ensure that approved recommendations of the Arctic Council are followed up.

The audit shows that the Government has not ensured that recommendations from the Arctic Council are assessed, ranked in priority and, where relevant, implemented in Sweden. It is not clear which measures have been taken at national level in response to the Council's recommendations.

4.1 Sweden's handling of the Arctic Council recommendations

The recommendations presented in the Ministerial Declarations concern a number of different areas, such as climate, biological diversity, environmental protection, sustainable development, as well as health and living conditions for indigenous peoples in the Arctic area. The formulations are generally framed. The countries are exhorted for example to *welcome, note, encourage, or consider* various measures.⁹⁵ When countries are exhorted to implement recommendations from one of the Arctic Council reports it is for example "where relevant and "to the extent appropriate".⁹⁶

The Arctic Council has long been in want of an organisational level or process for converting recommendations to more concrete proposals for measures.⁹⁷ Similarly, there is no process for prioritising between recommendations. This is something that Sweden has endeavoured to improve during the Swedish Chairmanship.

An important condition for Sweden to obtain an effective return from its membership of the Arctic Council is an efficient process for interpreting and ranking the Council's recommendations in Sweden. The fact that the Arctic Council recommendations are vague and numerous make the need for national interpretation and priorities particularly great.

⁹⁵ See for example the Ministerial Declarations from Reykjavik (2004), Tromsø (2009) and Nuuk (2011).

⁹⁶ See for example the Ministerial Declarations from Salekhard (2006) and Tromsø (2009).

⁹⁷ This is confirmed by representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012, and in an interview with representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, 10 January 2013.

4.1.1 Work relating to Arctic Council recommendations in Swedish ministries and agencies

THERE IS NO PROCESS FOR INTERPRETING AND SETTING PRIORITIES BETWEEN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL.

In interviews with agencies and ministries concerned a clear picture emerges that there is no systematic and transparent process in Sweden to deal with Arctic Council recommendations. There is no procedure for interpreting, testing and ranking Arctic Council recommendations at national level. Nor is there a process for decisions on further measures for the recommendations deemed relevant, and it is not clear who is responsible in practice for such a process.⁹⁸

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs to a great extent coordinates the actors concerned by means of established procedures for joint preparation. This is in the form of preparations *ahead of* the work in the Arctic Council. In preparation for major meetings, such as those of the senior Arctic officials (SAO),⁹⁹ the Ministry for Foreign Affairs convenes national meetings of representatives of all ministries and agencies concerned. The agenda for the SAO meeting, negotiation positions and formal negotiation instructions are then presented.¹⁰⁰ There is no corresponding coordination *after* the Ministerial meetings. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs does not convene the parties concerned for joint consultation on the Council recommendations, to prioritise the recommendations, or to possibly propose decisions on measures.¹⁰¹

Arctic Council recommendations normally arise from the reports of the working groups. In that way, Swedish officials taking part in the working groups can be well informed, even if the information has not reached them through formal channels, via the Swedish Government Office's direction.¹⁰² What the officials then do with the information – if they initiate measures in their respective agencies or not – will be up to each individual official to determine.

UNCLEAR TO THE AGENCIES CONCERNED WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Interviews with representatives of agencies concerned show that it is not clear to them which ministry is actually responsible for *implementation* of the Arctic Council's recommendations at national level. Nor is it clear what role the agencies themselves are expected to play in implementation.¹⁰³ The audit shows that the ministries concerned have not established between

⁹⁸ Interviews with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 24 January 2013, the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, 30 January 2013, the Swedish Transport Agency 5 February 2013, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013, the Swedish Coast Guard, 4 March 2013, and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, 5 March 2013.

⁹⁹ SAO convene for meetings twice a year.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013, and interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 24 January 2013.

¹⁰¹ Interview with representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013.

¹⁰² Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 23 October 2012, 24 January 2013.

¹⁰³ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 23 October 2012, the Swedish Transport Agency, 5 February 2013, the Swedish Coast Guard, 4 March 2013 and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, 5 March 2013.

them who is responsible for implementation. Neither the Ministry for Foreign Affairs nor the Ministry of the Environment has a clearly defined overall or coordinating responsibility.¹⁰⁴

DEFICIENT MONITORING AT NATIONAL LEVEL AND UNCLEAR WHETHER RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED

The audit shows that there are deficiencies concerning the overall view and monitoring of the Arctic Council's recommendations at national level. It is not clear if decisions have been made to go further with relevant recommendations. Nor is it clear which measures have been taken at national level in response to the Council's recommendations. It is also unclear whether, and in that case how, the Government ensures in practice that previously approved recommendations are monitored, in accordance with the stated ambition in the Chairmanship programme.

As shown in Chapter 2, there has been only one government assignment in response to Arctic Council recommendations.¹⁰⁵ According to the officials at the agencies concerned it is difficult to determine if the work at the agencies in the areas corresponding to the Arctic Council recommendations have any link to the recommendations, or if the work is being done thanks to other cooperation and other ongoing activities.¹⁰⁶ Consequently it is difficult to determine to what extent the Government has taken a position on and implemented Arctic Council recommendations. Representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council confirm that this is a deficiency.¹⁰⁷

This can be compared with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, since the establishment of the Danish Government's Arctic strategy in 2010, deals with issues concerning the Arctic Council in governance reviews to the agencies. The reviews are updated every six months.¹⁰⁸

Representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship state in connection with the factual examination of the Swedish National Audit Office's report that a follow-up is planned after the Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna in May, including a more long-term follow-up system.¹⁰⁹

SWEDEN HAS ENDEAVOURED TO STRENGTHEN THE PROCESSES IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL BUT HAS NOT ENSURED AN EFFECTIVE PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN SWEDEN

As shown in Chapter 2, during its Chairmanship the Government has prioritised strengthening the Arctic Council and improving the effectiveness of processes within the Council. The Government has formally expressed the wish that the Council's working groups, in addition to research recommendations, also describe measures for implementation and follow-up.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2012.

¹⁰⁵ The assignment was given to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency in its appropriation directions for the 2013 budget year.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Email from researchers at the Danish National Audit Office participating in the Danish parallel audit of the Arctic Council, 30 March 2013

¹⁰⁹ Email from representatives of Sweden's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 March 2013.

¹¹⁰ Interview with representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 2012.

The procedure in the working group *Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*, PAME, is highlighted as a successful example of how this can be done. PAME had the main responsibility for the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment, called the AMSA report¹¹¹. After the report was published the working group took responsibility for disseminating the *key findings* of the report to other working groups. Each member country was also asked about follow-up at national level. The scientific observations in the report, concerning sea rescue and oil damage control, resulted eventually in recommendations in Ministerial Declarations.¹¹² The recommendations have in turn led to agreements that the Government and the Arctic Council describe as legally binding.¹¹³

Representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs describe the implementation of the recommendations as a “theme” for Sweden’s Chairmanship.¹¹⁴ The audit shows, however, that the Government’s efforts concern processes within the *Arctic Council*. The Government has not made corresponding efforts to ensure an effective process for implementation in *Sweden*.

4.1.2 Information to the Riksdag

THE RIKSDAG HAS NOT RECEIVED REGULAR INFORMATION DURING THE CHAIRMANSHIP

The Riksdag has requested regular information from the Government on the developments in the Arctic area and the Swedish Chairmanship.¹¹⁵ The audit shows that the Riksdag has been formally informed of developments on only one occasion, in connection with the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the end of April 2013.¹¹⁶

This can be compared with the Danish Government, which follows up the Danish Arctic strategy in a written communication to the Folketing, the Danish Parliament. The report on Danish Arctic policy and activities in the Arctic Council, both in 2011 and 2012, covered both the work of the working groups and other important events in the Arctic Council.¹¹⁷

4.2 Agreements within the framework of the Arctic Council

The Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic was signed by the foreign ministers in the Arctic Council at the Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk in 2011. The Government describes it as the first of its kind: “For the first time the Arctic Council (...)

¹¹¹ AMSA stands for *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment*.

¹¹² Interview with representatives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency 24 January 2013, and Hellberg (2011).

¹¹³ This concerns the agreements on sea rescue and preparedness for an oil disaster (see section 4.2 below). *Agreement on sea rescue at Arctic meeting Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011*. The Arctic Council also describes the agreement as the first binding agreement produced in the framework of the Arctic Council. *Task force on Search and Rescue, Arctic Council*.

¹¹⁴ Interview with representatives of Sweden’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013.

¹¹⁵ Committee Report 2011/12:UU3, Norden (the Nordic region), p. 20.

¹¹⁶ Interview with representatives of Sweden’s Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 18 February 2013.

¹¹⁷ Public report from the Danish Government to the Folketing: Report no. R 4 (10/11 2011) and Report no. R 4 (4/10 2012).

has signed an agreement that is legally binding for the organisation's member states.¹¹⁸

Several actors are involved in the application of the Search and Rescue Agreement at national level: *The Swedish Maritime Administration* is the agency in charge of search and rescue, as well as winter navigation. The Swedish Maritime Administration's Joint Rescue Coordination Centre in Gothenburg¹¹⁹ is Sweden's rescue and coordination centre under the Arctic Council agreement. The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications is involved through its responsibility for the Swedish Maritime Administration and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs through its responsibility for issues concerning the Arctic Council.

4.2.1 *The Search and Rescue Agreement*

The Search and Rescue Agreement concerns cooperation in search and rescue operations if a major accident were to take place in the Arctic. The Government communicated the implication of the agreement in the following statement:

If a ship runs into difficulties, it is everyone's responsibility to help in the rescue efforts. This increases security throughout the region and is a positive step for the Arctic Council as an actor (...). The agreement requires the countries to be able to provide ships, planes and crew that can operate at temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius, which is not uncommon during the winter months in the Arctic.¹²⁰

Representatives of the Government describe the signing of the agreement as a step towards "an even stronger Arctic Council."¹²¹ The Ministerial Declaration of 2011 highlights the obligations of member states under the agreement. The foreign ministers confirm the significance of the agreement for safer transport and strengthened cooperation on search and rescue in the Arctic.¹²² According to the Arctic Council's website, the agreement commits parties to provide appropriate assistance in the event of an incident and to "take other steps" to increase security in the region. The foreign ministers of all the member states are to "undertake the necessary internal procedures for the agreement's entry into force".¹²³

THE AGREEMENT IS DESCRIBED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS LEGALLY BINDING BUT DOES NOT OBLIGE THE MEMBER STATES TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

The audit shows that the Search and Rescue Agreement is described by the Government as legally binding, but in practice does not oblige the member states to provide assistance in the event of an accident in the Arctic region.

The agreement means that Sweden *can* assist in an accident, but it does not imply any *obligation* to assist. The agreement concerns clarifying and creating procedures for requesting assistance, and is a declaration of intent on increased

¹¹⁸ *Agreement on sea rescue at Arctic meeting, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011.* Representatives of Sweden's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council also describe the agreement in interviews as "legally binding", interview 18 October 2012 and 25 October 2012.

¹¹⁹ Joint Rescue Coordination Center Gothenburg (JRCC Gothenburg).

¹²⁰ *Agreement on sea rescue at Arctic meeting, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011.*

¹²¹ *Agreement on sea rescue at Arctic meeting, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011.*

¹²² *Nuuk Declaration, 2011.*

¹²³ *Search and rescue in the Arctic, Arctic Council, 2011.*

cooperation. Sweden has undertaken to participate in a regular exchange of experience with the other countries. In other respects current activities and resources are not affected by the signing of the agreement. Consequently, the agreement does not make the demands on resources that the Government has indicated. Nor has the Swedish Maritime Administration received any special resources as a result of the agreement.¹²⁴ Nor does the agreement entail any major legal change compared with previously existing search and rescue agreements.¹²⁵

In May 2013 the foreign ministers are expected to approve an agreement on *Co-operation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response*.¹²⁶ The Government's communication of the agreement has been criticised for a lack of transparency.¹²⁷

4.3 Summary of findings

The Government has emphasised the importance of a stronger Arctic Council and during its Chairmanship has endeavoured to strengthen the Council's institutions. According to the Government, Sweden will also work to ensure that previously adopted Council recommendations are followed up. The fact that the Arctic Council recommendations are vague and numerous further reinforces the need for national interpretation and priorities.

The audit shows that the Government has achieved a lot in improving the processes within the *Arctic Council*. However, the Government has not made the same efforts to ensure an effective process for implementation in Sweden.

- There is no process for interpreting, testing and prioritising between the Arctic Council recommendations at national level. Nor is there a process for decisions on further measures for the recommendations deemed relevant,
- It is not clear to the agencies concerned which ministry is in practice responsible for implementation of the Arctic Council's recommendations at national level, nor is it clear what role the agencies themselves are expected to play in implementation.
- There is currently no follow-up of the Arctic Council recommendations at national level, nor is there any stated follow-up responsibility.
- The Riksdag has requested regular information from the Government on the developments in the Arctic area and the Swedish chairmanship of the Arctic Council. However, the Government has only reported to the Riksdag on one occasion, just before the conclusion of the Swedish Chairmanship, at the end of April 2013.

¹²⁴ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Maritime Administration, 21 January 2013 and the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications 30 January 2013.

¹²⁵ Interview with representatives of the Swedish Transport Agency 5 February 2013.

¹²⁶ This is done after completion of audit work.

¹²⁷ Digréus (2013).

- The Search and Rescue Agreement, signed under the auspices of the Arctic Council, is described by the Government as legally binding. However, the agreement does not oblige the member states to provide assistance in the event of an accident in the Arctic region. Nor does the agreement entail any major legal change compared with previously existing search and rescue agreements in the region.
- The criticism directed at the Agreement on Co-operation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response concerns limitations of the same nature as applies to the Search and Rescue Agreement; that is a lack of transparency in presentation of the implication of the agreement.

5 Conclusions and recommendations of the Swedish National Audit Office

The Arctic Council is an important forum for issues concerning the Arctic and for initiating central research reports on climate change in the Arctic. Sweden has been a member of the Arctic Council since it was formed in 1996. During the period 2011–2013 Sweden chaired the Council and then took the initiative for a number of effectiveness improvements to the internal work of the Council. However, the Swedish National Audit Office considers that after almost 20 years of Swedish membership of the Arctic Council it is reasonable to also expect an effective process in Sweden for assessing and, where relevant, implementing Arctic Council recommendations. It is also reasonable that Sweden's work in the Council proceeds from transparent priorities for the Arctic.

5.1 The overall conclusions of the Swedish National Audit Office

SWEDEN DOES NOT RECEIVE AN EFFECTIVE RETURN IN ALL RESPECTS FROM ITS MEMBERSHIP OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

The Government has stated that Sweden's Arctic policy is to be characterised by a clear direction. According to the Government, Arctic issues are high on the political agenda and Sweden's role as Chair is described as a key role. The fact that the Government has decided not to put Sweden's position on Arctic issues to the Riksdag means that the Swedish National Audit Office regards it as particularly important that the Government's Arctic policy is transparent, and that the Government regularly informs the Riksdag on important issues.

The Swedish National Audit Office has come to the conclusion that Sweden does not receive an effective return in all respects from its membership of the Arctic Council.

An effective return assumes that Sweden's work in the Arctic Council is based on *transparent* priorities for the Arctic. The assessment of the Swedish National Audit Office is, however, that the Government's priorities in the strategy documents and chairmanship programme do not give a clear picture of the direction of the Government's work on climate change in the Arctic Council. It is also uncertain which issues the Government intends to deal with within the framework of the Arctic Council and which issues are to be dealt with in other fora instead. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the work in the Council proceeds from stated priorities.

An effective return also assumes that relevant recommendations from the Arctic Council are utilised and translated into concrete measures in Sweden; in other words that in relevant cases Sweden *implements* recommendations from the Arctic Council. The audit shows that the Government has not ensured that recommendations from the Arctic Council are assessed, ranked in priority and, where relevant, implemented in Sweden. Nor has the Government assigned responsibility for such a process. Moreover, it is not clear which

measures have been taken in Sweden in response to the Council's recommendations.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Government has not given the Riksdag *regular information* on the Government's work and Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, as requested by the Riksdag. The lack of transparency, in combination with deficient information from the Government to the Riksdag, means that there is a risk that the Riksdag and interested members of the general public obtain a misleading picture of the issues that Sweden is pursuing.

5.2 Results of the audit

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR WORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

According to the Government Sweden is to work for substantially reduced global emissions of greenhouse gases. In its strategy for the Arctic region the Government describes reduced carbon dioxide emissions as the most important measure for limiting Arctic warming. This is also highlighted in the Government's chairmanship programme. The Arctic Council is presented at the same time as the foremost body for dealing with issues concerning the Arctic. In the opinion of the Swedish National Audit Office the Government has given a picture of the Arctic Council as playing a prominent role in efforts to combat climate change.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Government's priorities for the Arctic are expressed in the strategy document and the Chairmanship programme. The stated priorities do not, however, give a clear picture of the direction of the Government's climate efforts in the Arctic Council. Reduced emissions of greenhouse gases have priority in the Government's document, but the audit shows that the Government has elected above all to focus climate efforts in the Arctic Council on short-lived climate forcers and to achieve a binding agreement on soot. In the opinion of the Swedish National Audit Office there is insufficient transparency in the Government's priorities for the work of the Arctic Council. It is therefore difficult for the Swedish National Audit Office to assess whether Sweden's work in the Council proceeds from stated priorities.

The Swedish National Audit Office has no opinion on the contents of the Government's priorities for the Arctic, but would like to see transparency as regards stated priorities and what the Government intends to promote directly through the work of the Arctic Council.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT CREATED THE CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ARCTIC COUNCIL.

The Arctic Council is not based on any legally binding agreements. However, the decisions in the Arctic Council are made with consensus and the recommendations of the Council entail political obligations. Ahead of its chairmanship the Government stated that it is to work to ensure that approved recommendations of the Arctic Council are followed up.

The audit shows that the Government has not directed how recommendations from the Arctic Council are to be dealt with and, in relevant cases,

implemented in Sweden. There is no process for interpreting, assessing and setting priorities between the Arctic Council's recommendations at national level. The agencies concerned are not clear as to who is responsible for prioritising between and for implementing relevant recommendations from the Arctic Council. Nor is it clear how the recommendations are to reach out to the agencies concerned.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Government has strengthened the processes in the *Arctic Council* during Sweden's chairmanship. Equivalent work has not, however, been put into ensuring an effective process for how Arctic Council recommendations are dealt with and prioritised in *Sweden*.

The Arctic Council recommendations are generally framed and do not go into the details of measures to be taken. Consequently it is even more important to clearly assign responsibility for interpreting and prioritising between the recommendations and for putting them into practice, where deemed relevant. Without clear preparatory processes, direction and coordination from the Government and the ministry responsible, this interpretation and prioritising will to a great extent be up to individual officials, and in some cases will not be done at all. In other cases it will be done by the Arctic Council working groups. In this way Sweden's commitment will be dependent on assessments made by individual officials rather than the result of broadly supported political decisions. In the opinion of the Swedish National Audit Office this means that the work is not effective, democratic or transparent.

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that it is not clear which measures have been taken in Sweden in response to the Arctic Council recommendations. Consequently there is no process to ensure that the knowledge produced in the Arctic Council is utilised. Nor is there currently any monitoring of the Council's recommendations at national level.

THE RIKSDAG HAS NOT RECEIVED REGULAR INFORMATION DURING THE CHAIRMANSHIP

The Riksdag has requested regular information from the Government on the developments in the Arctic area and the Swedish chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The audit shows, however, that the Riksdag has been formally informed of developments on only one occasion, at the end of April 2013, i.e. only a few weeks before the end of the Chairmanship.

AGREEMENTS FROM THE ARCTIC COUNCIL ARE DESCRIBED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS LEGALLY BINDING, BUT DO NOT OBLIGE THE MEMBER STATES TO PROVIDE HELP

The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Search and Rescue Agreement drawn up within the framework of the Arctic Council is described by the Government as legally binding. However, the Swedish National Audit Office notes that in practice the member states are not obliged to assist in an accident in the Arctic region.

The agreement means that Sweden can assist in an accident, but it does not imply any obligation to assist. Neither does the agreement entail the demands on resources presented by the Government, nor any major legal change compared with previously existing search and rescue

agreements. The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the Government has not been transparent in its presentation of the implication of the agreement.

In May 2013 the foreign ministers are expected to approve an agreement on preparedness for an oil disaster. The Swedish National Audit Office cannot make any assessment of the agreement, since it had not been signed when the audit was completed. However, the Swedish National Audit Office notes that the limitations in the draft agreement pointed out by other commentators are of the same nature as those found by the Swedish National Audit Office in its examination of the search and rescue agreement.

5.3 Recommendations

The Swedish National Audit Office's recommendations are aimed to give Sweden a more effective return on its membership of the Arctic Council.

The Swedish National Audit Office makes the following recommendations to the Government:

- The Government should ensure that the priorities for the work of the Arctic Council are transparent.
- The Government should ensure that recommendations from the Arctic Council are assessed, ranked in priority and, where relevant, implemented in Sweden. The Government should clarify for government agencies where the responsibility for such a process lies.
- The Government should give the Riksdag regular information on activities in the Arctic Council, as requested by the Riksdag.

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Appendix 1: Arctic Council working groups

The activities of the Arctic Council are mainly conducted by six working groups, composed of representatives at expert level from sectoral ministries, government agencies and research institutions. The working groups set up projects, programmes and expert groups after approval by the committee of officials.

The working groups cover many areas, from climate change to search and rescue issues. However, the issues addressed mainly concern the impact of climate change on the Arctic region, as well as environmental protection issues.

Each working group has a specific mandate under which it operates, and is led by a Chair. The groups also have a management board and a secretariat (apart from the Arctic Council's permanent secretariat in Tromsø). Observers in the Council may participate in the meetings of the working groups.

- **Arctic Contaminants Action Programme (ACAP)**
 - works to reduce emissions of pollutants, for example through strategies and implementation projects to handle and eliminate hazardous waste.
- **Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)**
 - works to provide information on the status of, and threats to, the Arctic environment. The work is carried out by measuring and documenting various pollutants. This includes short-lived climate forcers and their effects on the Arctic region.
- **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)**
 - produces knowledge about development of biological diversity in the Arctic.
- **Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)**
 - works on emergency preparedness for both accidents and natural disasters in the Arctic. The work is done through exchange of experience and risk assessment.
- **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)**
 - works to protect the Arctic marine environment, for example by drawing up work plans and guidelines.
- **Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)**
 - works with the human dimension and adaptation to new living conditions in the Arctic. The work is carried out through capacity development and developing practical knowledge for the indigenous populations in the Arctic.