

AY 2019 Year in Review

Justin Barnes

2018

November

The third Senior Arctic Official's meeting of Finland's Arctic Council Chairmanship is held. Iceland presents elements of their upcoming Chairmanship program (2019-2021).

AY 2018 is launched at the final session of the 2018 Model Arctic Council in Rovaniemi, Finland, held on the sidelines of the Arctic Council SAO meeting.

December

The Arctic Council's Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic takes place in Reykjavik, Iceland. This was the fourth and final meeting of the taskforce.

2019

January

The Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law (NIEM) at the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland co-organizes a high-level advanced research workshop on Governance for Cyber Security and Resilience in the Arctic.

A pattern of high-altitude winds in the Arctic, better known as the polar vortex, weakens, sweeping frigid air over North America and Europe in the second half of the month causing record low temperatures.

February

The Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group releases its report *Project CREATEs: Circumpolar Resilience, Engagement, and Action Through Story*. The report highlights its initiative to support community and youth engagement in reducing suicide and to foster mental wellness.

March

The fourth and final plenary meeting of the Senior Arctic Officials during the Chairmanship of Finland takes place in Ruka, Finland from 13-14 March. This meeting would be the last SAO plenary meeting before the conclusion of the Chairmanship in May 2019.

Canada releases its federal budget, committing \$700 million over the next decade to programs specific to Canada's North. The budget includes a number of Inuit-specific investments and a commitment to establish the first Arctic Council-related permanent secretariat in Canada for the Sustainable Development Working Group.

Iceland and the United Kingdom sign a Memorandum of Understanding by UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Iceland's Minister of Foreign Affairs Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson. The agreement covers areas including search and rescue, counter-terrorism, cyber security, and risk and crisis management.

Trent University hosts the 2019 UArctic Rectors' Forum on its Symon's Campus, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada from 19-22 August.

April

Russian President Vladimir Putin orders the Russian government to encourage foreign investment through government tax relief plans to help build Northern Sea Route hubs in Murmansk and Kamchatka.

The United States Coast Guard releases its document *Arctic Strategic Outlook*, highlighting the United States' renewed strategic outlook of the region.

The Territory of Dialogue Arctic Forum, including the Northern Forum Meeting of Governors, takes place in St. Petersburg from 9-10 April.

May

The 11th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting takes place in Rovaniemi, Finland. For the first time ever, the Council fails to produce a formal Declaration due to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's lack of support for any mention of climate change. Instead, a one-page ministerial statement is signed by all ministers.

The Arctic Council's Task Force on Improved Connectivity in the Arctic presents its final report at the Rovaniemi Ministerial meeting on May 7, 2019.

The Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane releases their report *Summary of Progress and Recommendations 2019*.

The Arctic Circle China Forum is convened in Shanghai, China from 10 – 11 May. This is the first time the Arctic Circle Forum has been to China. The aim of the forum is to create a network of international dialogue and cooperation on the future of the Arctic.

Arctic Science Summit Week 2019 takes place in Arkhangelsk, Russia from 22 – 28 May, 2019.

Russia's newest Nuclear-powered icebreaker, *Ural*, is launched in St. Petersburg as part of a many-step plan step to ensure year-round navigability of the Northern Sea Route.

June

On 18-19 June, Arctic Council delegates gather in Reykjanesbær, Iceland, for the first Senior Arctic Officials' executive meeting during the Chairmanship of Iceland (2019-2021).

The United States' Department of Defense releases its updated *Arctic Strategy*. The document describes "US national security interests in the Arctic in an era of strategic competition". The strategy outlines three strategic objectives: building Arctic awareness, enhancing Arctic operations, and strengthening the rules-based order in the Arctic.

July

The One Arctic – One Health report is released by the Arctic Council and the Finnish Food Authority. The report covers all activities of the Arctic Council's One Health project (2017-2019) led by Finland, US, and Canada.

Russia's largest oil company, Rosneft, announces more offshore Arctic drilling off the Taymyr Peninsula is to begin in summer 2020.

Alaska records its warmest month ever.

August

Reports are released highlighting US President Donald Trump's interest in purchasing Greenland from Denmark. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen suggests the idea is "absurd", prompting the US President to cancel a state visit scheduled for September.

Germany releases its new Arctic policy guidelines. For a deeper analysis, see Davina Basse's article *Germany: A new (non-)Arctic power?*

The Canadian High Arctic Research Station in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut opens its doors.

A floating nuclear power plant, the Akademik Lomonsov, sets sail to the eastern Arctic town of Pevek in Chukotka, about 86 kilometres from Alaska. The vessel is the world's only floating nuclear power plant.

September

Canada releases its long-awaited Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. For a complete analysis, see Kikkert and Lackenbauer's briefing note *Canada's Arctic & Northern Policy Framework: A roadmap for the future?*

Scotland releases its Arctic Policy Framework. Jafry, Mikulewicz and Mattar describe the policy development process in their briefing note *Arctic connections - Mapping an Arctic policy for the Scottish government*

US Vice President Mike Pence visits Iceland in recognition of the growing strategic importance of the Arctic to the United States to discuss NATO efforts and trade and investment opportunities. This visit marks the first time a US Vice President has visited Iceland since George H. W. Bush in 1983.

The Northern Sustainable Development Forum, the permanent international expert platform, is held 24-28 September.

The Council of UArctic meeting takes place at Stockholm University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology from 18-20 September. Over 130 participants from UArctic's member institutions attended the meeting, from 14 countries both in the Circumpolar North and from outside the region.

A new IPCC report, *the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, is released and details sweeping changes to oceans, ice and the global impacts of Arctic melt

The VII International Meeting of Member States of the Arctic Council, Observer States of the AC and Foreign Scientific Community meet from 30 September – 2 October in St. Petersburg and the Valaam islands

October

The Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council hold their first joint meeting in Reykjavik on 9 October. The meeting brings together government representatives of the eight Arctic States, business representatives, as well as representatives of the indigenous Permanent Participants, and the Councils' respective Working Groups.

The 7th annual Arctic Circle Assembly takes place from 10-13 October in Reykjavik, Iceland. Former Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson presents former US Secretary of State John Kerry with the Arctic Circle Award.

Northern Mayors from 13 cities in the Arctic formally inaugurate the Arctic Mayors Forum at a special event in Akureryi, Iceland.