

3 April 1989

International Arctic Science Committee - IASC

A personal note on the present situation

IASC is intended to address cooperation in two fields:

- a. regional scientific needs and
- b. general scientific needs or "world science".

Regional science

constitutes a major part of Arctic research in the Arctic countries and is linked to management needs.

Scientists active in this field are almost without exception coming from the Arctic countries. This is natural, as the problems to be solved are of less interest outside these countries.

World science

or general scientific questions are shared by scientists from all over the world - Arctic as well as non-Arctic.

As non-Arctic countries do not have domestic Arctic responsibilities, which have first call on their Arctic scientific resources, they can concentrate on Arctic science in terms of international programmes, and make a major contribution to fundamental Arctic science and world science.

This distinction as well as other issues of importance were identified at an early stage of the IASC-discussions, see:

*Roots, E. F. and O. Rogne
The Need for, Feasibility and Possible Role
of An International Arctic Science Committee,
Ottawa/Oslo 1987, 16 p.*

This paper was circulated prior to the Oslo meeting in February 1987.

How to organize?

Although the needs are somewhat different in Arctic and non-Arctic countries, we all share the needs in world science. Further, regional science will benefit from research being undertaken in world science, although non-Arctic scientists have no wish to join in the regional science questions.

For the Arctic countries, creating one organization covering both fields would be most useful. It should also be acceptable for the non-Arctic scientists, provided they are fully represented in "the world science part of the organization". The present proposal takes care of the world science needs in the Scientific Working Groups, the Arctic Science Conference (not to be compared to the Soviet conference run in Leningrad last year) and the Arctic Science Programmes Group (the implementation phase).

The demarche

The joint demarche from France, the Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany and United Kingdom was a surprise.

The demarche concerns only the world science part of IASC and clearly demonstrates a misunderstanding of the intention of the proposal to cover both fields mentioned above. Apart from a non-understandable reference to the Spitsbergen Treaty, Article 5 and participation in the Board (commented below), the views of the demarche is fully shared and implemented in the present proposal.

However, the demarche makes no reference to the regional science field and thus the representation in the Board, gets remarkable for them. There seems to be a need for providing them with more background material. In addition to the above-mentioned paper, they should be provided by:

*Roots, E. F., O. Rogne and J. Taagholt:
International Communication and
Co-ordination in Arctic Science
- A Proposal for Action.
Ottawa, Oslo, Copenhagen 1987.*

As I see it, the Arctic Science Programmes Group will be "the Board" for the world science part of IASC and in this body all qualified participants are invited.

The Board of the total organization would have other functions such as to be careful as to the total balance of the organization's activities and also alert to internal proposals, which could be too sensitive for IASC to be engaged in.

Obviously, there is a need for more communication with the non-Arctic part. We all have a wish to cooperate as openly and positively as possible with those scientists, as we already have done for decades in the past.

Odd Rogne