

Summary of meeting in Forum of Arctic Research Operators

Forum of Arctic Research Operators (FARO) is a forum for information exchange, establishment of cooperation and development of new ideas among the national logistics operators in countries with arctic research activities. FARO aims to facilitate and optimise logistics and operational support for scientific research in the Arctic.

The annual meeting in FARO was held during Arctic Science Summit Week on 27 March in Bergen with twenty participants representing fourteen different countries and European Polar Board.

By the beginning of 2009, the FARO secretariat has moved from Danish Polar Center to National Environmental Research Institute at Aarhus University, Denmark, as a consequence of the closing of Danish Polar Center. The chairman, Simon Stephenson, Division Director in US National Science Foundation Arctic Research and Logistics Support Programme announced at the 2008 annual meeting that he would step back as chairman of the Forum by 2009. At the 2009 meeting, Marty Bergman, Director of Polar Continental Shelf Programme (Canada), was elected as new chairman of the forum.

During an information session, each of the represented countries/organisations informed about their current and planned research activities within the Arctic. 2008 had been a busy year for most of the national logistics providers due to The International Polar Year (IPY). Major news concerning establishment of new research infrastructure in the Arctic included construction of a Japanese icebreaker to be ready for operation in 2010, construction of a Korean icebreaker to be ready for operation also in 2010, a European Science Foundation/European Polar Board project (under European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures, i.e. ESRI) concerning project design for a European ice breaker, Aurora Borealis, and another ESRI project led by Norway concerning establishment of Svalbard Integrated Earth Observing System (SIOS).

Further, Danielle Labonté from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, informed about the Canadian plans for establishment of a 'world-class high-arctic research station' to be on the cutting edge of arctic issues, Marty Bergman from Polar Continental Shelf Programme Canada, gave a presentation about Polar Continental Shelf Programme as a provider of logistics support in the Arctic, Danielle Biebow from Alfred Wegener Institute gave a presentation about the European Research Icebreaker Consortium (ERICON) and their plans concerning construction of the icebreaker, drilling platform and multi-purpose research vessel, Aurora Borealis, and Morten Rasch from National Environmental Research Institute at Aarhus University, Denmark, gave a presentation about SCANNET, a circumarctic network of terrestrial field sites.

At the end the meeting, a possible transfer of FARO into a member organisation was discussed. Most of the meeting participants were positive about this. It was concluded by the retiring chairman, Simon Stephenson, that the secretariat should initiate a survey among the members concerning their expectations for FARO as a member organisation.

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