10th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting: 10-11 May 2017
by Prof David Johnson, Chair ACOPS

The United States marked the conclusion of it's 2-year Chairmanship of the Arctic Council with a week of Arctic activities in Fairbanks and Anchorage Alaska in May 2017. An 'Arctic Interchange', 'International Arctic Assembly' and 'North by North' event framed contributions on science, co-production, diplomacy, research, education and cultural exchange. A broad range of perspectives provided essential background to the Arctic Council Ministerial activities and aspirations. Prof David Johnson attended on behalf of ACOPS.

In the words of the Assembly meeting *'The Arctic is no longer an emerging region of interest; rather it is a dynamic landscape of change and dialogue. With the Arctic continuing to warm, and evidence of rapid social, political and economic change, the Arctic is now a region of global interest, challenge and opportunity"*.

Ministers representing the eight Arctic States, joined by representatives of the six Permanent Participant organizations, agreed the Fairbanks Declaration 2017 on 11 May 2017. https://www.state.gov/e/oes/rls/other/2017/270802.htm. The preambular text of this Declaration notes the preeminent intergovernmental role of the Arctic Council for the Arctic Region and reiterates a commitment to peace, stability and constructive cooperation including engagement with Arctic indigenous peoples. It also recalls climate change commitments and the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. The substantive part of the Declaration is then presented in four sections: Arctic Ocean safety, security and stewardship; Improving economic and living conditions; addressing the impacts of climate change; and strengthening the Arctic Council.

A number of Arctic Council products and initiatives of specific interest to ACOPS were recognized by Ministers as follows:

- A Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis – this EPPR 134 page Technical Report considers the potential of different oil spill response systems to operate in the Arctic based on the percentage of time metocean conditions may be favourable. Waves, sea ice coverage and visibility are key factors in the Arctic
- The Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program's State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report: including key findings for Arctic species and marine environments, summary snapshots for biota (divided into sub-regions), and advice for monitoring.
- The Arctic Protected Area Indicator Report and Protected Area Network Toolbox to support the implementation of the Framework for a Pan-Arctic Network of Marine Protected Areas: providing an overview of the status and trends of protected areas in the Arctic using IUCN MPA categories and related to CBD Aichi Targets.
- An updated assessment of Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic that suggests the Arctic's climate is shifting to a new state, change is rapid and will continue due to warming already locked into the climate system

but substantial cuts in greenhouse gases could still stabilize the system post mid-century.

Ministers also announced the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation, the third legally binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council, which will help increase effectiveness and efficiency in the development of scientific knowledge about the region as well as strengthen scientific cooperation in the Arctic region.

Finally, the Arctic Council welcomed seven new Observer organisations, namely the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea; Oceana; the National Geographic Society; the OSPAR Commission; Switzerland; the West Nordic Council; and the World Meteorological Organization. Finland will chair the Arctic Council for the period 2017-2019 and will host the eleventh Ministerial meeting in 2019.