

# ARCTIC SHIPPING BEST PRACTICE INFORMATION FORUM

2019-2021 Summary Report

REPORT

MAY 2021



ARCTIC COUNCIL

| PAME

Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment

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## ABOUT THE FORUM

PAME's establishment of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum was in response to the adoption of the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code) by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The Polar Code entered into force on 1 January 2017 and covers the full range of shipping-related matters relevant to navigation in waters surrounding the two poles –design, construction and equipment; operational and training concerns; search and rescue; and the protection of the environment of the polar regions.

The Forum's aim is to raise awareness of the Polar Code amongst all those involved in or potentially affected by Arctic marine operations and to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices among Forum participants on specific shipping topics, including but not limited to: hydrography, oceanography, search and rescue, equipment, systems and structure, and industry guidelines.

The Forum operates a publicly accessible Web portal with information specific to each chapter of the Polar Code at <http://www.arcticshippingforum.is>.

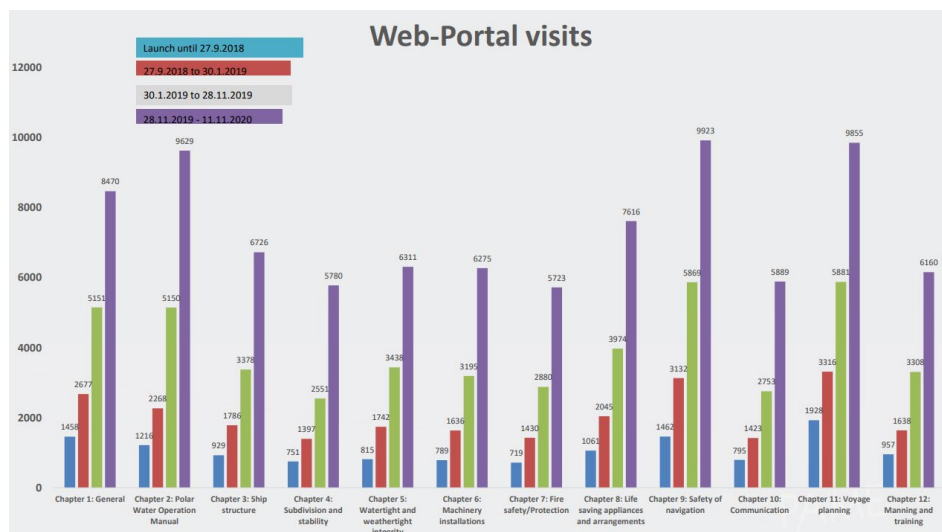
Forum participation is open to the eight Arctic States, the Arctic Council's Permanent Participants and Observers, as well as any widely-recognized professional organization dedicated to improving safe and environmentally sound marine operations in the Arctic as demonstrated by expertise and experience in Arctic shipping and/or related issues.

The Forum's 2019-2021 Coordinating Committee was composed of the following members:

- Sverrir Konráðsson, *Iceland, Forum Chair*
- Drummond Fraser, *Canada, Shipping Expert Group Co-Chair*
- Peter Oppenheimer, *USA, Shipping Expert Group Co-Chair*
- Michael Kingston, *Ireland, Special advisor*
- Soffia Guðmundsdóttir, *PAME Executive Secretary*
- Hjalti Hreinsson, *PAME Project Manager*

## FORUM WEB PORTAL

The Forum's Web portal is in continuous development by the Forum's Coordinating Committee. The Web portal is an extensive collection of information relevant to compliance with the Polar Code and safe navigation in Arctic waters. This collection includes hyperlinks to authoritative information provided by Forum Participants on everything from sea ice extent to nautical charts, and from Arctic weather forecasts to designated places of refuge. The Web portal also includes information on Polar Ship Certificates that have been



issued by or on behalf of the national maritime administrations of Arctic States and Arctic Council Observer States.

Visits to the Web portal increased by almost 50% between 2019 and 2020. This can be attributed to visual and technical improvements as well as inclusion of the [IMO Navigation webpage](#) and crosslinking to the websites of other Forum participants. Robust engagement with participants - notably the IMO - has also been critical in increasing the Forum's profile and visits to its Web portal.

## FORUM PARTICIPANTS

The Forum currently has 60 Participants. According to the Forum's Terms of Reference, the "Arctic States intend Forum participation to be open to Arctic States, Permanent Participants and Arctic Council Observers as well as any widely-recognized professional organizations dedicated to improving safe and environmentally sound marine operations in the Arctic as demonstrated by expertise and experience in Arctic shipping and/or related issues..."

Forum Participants include governments, regional intergovernmental bodies (Antarctic Treaty System), international organizations (IMO, WMO), research institutions, classification societies, trade associations, indigenous communities, industry groups, and others, including other Arctic Council Working Groups such as EPPR.

[A list of Forum Participants can be found here.](#)

## FORUM 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

The Forum convened on 3-4 June 2019 for its third annual meeting, and for the first time during Iceland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The meeting's overarching theme was *From Theory to Practice* with presentations oriented around practical experiences in implementing the Polar Code, focusing on successes, impediments, and remaining challenges.

The meeting commenced with an opening video address by the Secretary-General of the IMO. Over the course of the day-and-a-half meeting, presentations focused on the unique experiences gained by Arctic States, shipowners, classification societies and intergovernmental organizations in implementing, complying with and/or making information available to support implementation of or compliance with the Polar Code. Representatives of the Forum's Coordinating Committee jointly presented on the development of the Web portal, identifying changes in design and layout (based largely on user feedback), and noting the overall increase in web traffic since initially launching. The presenters also highlighted the significant increase in hyperlink submissions, as well as the time and effort required to maintain and update this information online. This prompted discussions on the long-term sustainability of the Forum and the need for further financial or in-kind support.

Before the meeting concluded, Participants discussed the scheduling, logistics, and funding of future annual Forum meetings. There was a general recognition that additional support, including voluntary financial contributions, are necessary to help ensure the continued viability and vitality of Forum meetings. The Forum Coordinating Committee indicated its receptiveness to such support and committed to determining how any offers of financial contributions could be accepted consistent with applicable Arctic Council Rules.



**Forum 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting Documents:**

- [Meeting Summary](#)
- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Meeting Focus Document](#)
- [List of Participants](#)
- [Meeting website with links to all presentations](#)
- [Information Paper co-sponsored by all Arctic States submitted to the 101st session of IMO's Maritime Safety Committee \(MSC 101\) on the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum](#)
- [Meeting Press Release](#)

## FORUM 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

The Forum's fourth annual meeting took place virtually on 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Originally scheduled for 11-12 May in London at the Headquarters of the IMO, the meeting was postponed and instead held virtually on account of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is the second Forum meeting under Iceland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

*The Polar Code: Trending Towards Success* was the theme of this year's meeting in recognition of the enormous progress made in the Polar Code's successful implementation. Presentations from a diverse group of experts (e.g. PAME Secretariat, Russian Federation, IMO, World Meteorological Organization, Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission, International Ice Charting Working Group, Bering Sea Elders Group, International Chamber of Shipping, World Wildlife Fund) addressed efforts to advance harmonized interpretations of the Polar Code, highlighted initiatives to enhance meteorological, oceanographic, and hydrographic products and services that support safe and environmentally sound Arctic shipping, and described training initiatives to strengthen the critical human element in polar navigation

The Polar Operational Limitations Assessment Risk Indexing System (POLARIS) also was a topic of considerable discussion.

The meeting was attended by Arctic States, shipowners, classification societies, and intergovernmental organizations with a stake in implementing, complying with and/or making information available to support implementation of or compliance with the Polar Code. Meeting attendance grew by over 80% to 147 delegates, representing nearly 80 different entities attended the meeting, building on last year's total of 80.

The Forum Coordinating Committee is deeply appreciative of the active engagement and dynamic support of Forum Participants. The Forum is making great strides in realizing its objective for safe shipping and the protection of the Arctic marine environment based on a collaborative approach.

**Forum 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Documents:**

- [Meeting Summary](#)
- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [List of Participants](#)
- [Meeting website with links to all presentations](#)
- [Bios of Meeting Presenters](#)
- [IMO Circular Letter No.4208/Rev.1 \(19 October 2020\) \(Fourth Annual Meeting of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum\)](#)
- [Meeting Press Release](#)

## FORUM NEXT STEPS

As set out in the Forum's Terms of Reference, Chairmanship of the Forum rotates with the Arctic Council Chairmanship. The Russian Federation will therefore assume the role of Forum Chair from 2021-2023.

At the Forum's fourth annual meeting, comments were invited on the proposition that remit of the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum be expanded to include the safety and sustainability of all Arctic maritime operations. This is in line with the purpose of the Forum, which to support the implementation of the Polar Code in the Arctic.

## FORUM OPERATIONAL DOCUMENTS:

- [Terms of Reference](#)
- [Methods of Operation](#)
- [Factors to be Considered in Selecting Hyperlinks for Posting to the ASBPIF Web portal](#)

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