# Sustaining Arctic Observing System (SAON)

## Introduction

SAON was established following the 2011 Arctic Council (AC) Nuuk Declaration. The declaration recognizes the “importance of the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) process as a major legacy of the International Polar Year for enhancing scientific observations and data-sharing.” The declaration text also defines the SAON governance structure, and Terms of Reference for SAON was approved in 2012[[1]](#footnote-2). SAON is a joint initiative of the Arctic Council and the International Arctic Science Committee.

The SAON Strategy was approved in December 2017 and key elements in this are described in this document.

## SAON Vision

SAON's vision is to facilitate a connected, collaborative, and comprehensive, long-term, pan-Arctic Observing System that serves societal needs.

## SAON Mission

SAON facilitates, coordinates, and advocates for coordinated international Arctic observations and mobilizes the support needed to sustain them.

## SAON Guiding Principles

SAON’s guiding principles reflect its overarching philosophies that inform how SAON operates. They include:

* SAON values both research and operational needs for Arctic observations;
* The design and operation of the Observing System is guided by a balance between bottom-up and top-down needs and priorities;
* The Observing System will be implemented and sustained in a transparent and open cooperation and collaboration with all those committed to Arctic observations;
* SAON promotes contributions of all types of Arctic observations including but not limited to *in situ*, remotely sensed, and community-based observations, and the infrastructure supporting them;
* The Observing System will utilize Indigenous and local knowledge guided by ethical use and honouring the proprietary rights of data contributors;
* SAON promotes ethically free and open access to ethically-collected data;
* SAON works with counterparts in Antarctic, global, as well as national observation communities, where appropriate.

Following these principles, SAON will promote Arctic observing and mobilize the support needed to achieve full implementation and sustained operation on time scales of decades and beyond.

SAON itself will not undertake research, science planning, policymaking, observations, data archiving, or funding of these efforts, which will remain the responsibility of the ongoing networks/sites/systems and data centers, the organizations that support them, or appropriate decision-makers.

## SAON Goals

In keeping with the above vision and mission, SAON has adopted three goals that it shall pursue and emphasize. SAON’s guiding principles support its work across these three goals and define SAON’s operating procedures.

The SAON Strategy is organized around three key goals:

1. Creating a roadmap to well-integrated Arctic observing system;
2. Free and ethically open access to all Arctic observational data; and
3. Ensuring sustainability of Arctic Observing.

Addressing the goals will require the expertise and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge systems. While the Arctic Council is well-positioned to coordinate state level priorities and actions, effective implementation of the SAON Strategy will require partnership with policy makers at all levels, Arctic Indigenous Peoples organizations, non-Arctic states, academia, civil society and the private sector at the national level, as well as engagement from other multilateral/international groups. Effective implementation generally requires gender-responsive and gender-balanced approaches, and the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

1. https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Terms\_of\_Reference/saon-terms-of-reference.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)