SAON Board Meeting
25th March 2026
Venue: University of Aarhus, Denmark, Mødelokale 2.3 (1420-234)

(These notes have been prepared using AI)

1. Welcome and Adoption of Agenda

The meeting was opened by the Chair, who welcomed participants and initiated a round of introductions for both in-person and online attendees. The meeting notes from 3rd March 2026 were approved.

2. SAON Strategy and Workplan

The Board discussed progress under Goal 3 of the SAON Strategy, which focuses on ensuring the sustainability of Arctic observing and includes the objective of developing a strategy for long-term financial commitment. Members reviewed the current status of contributions to the table on national observing priorities and noted that some countries have not yet provided input. It was emphasized that contributions should focus specifically on observing-related strategic priorities rather than broader policy information.

The Board agreed that the purpose of the exercise is to produce a synthesis, approximately two pages in length, describing the current state of sustained Arctic observing. This document is intended to provide a high-level overview rather than a comprehensive mapping of all activities. It may later be shared with ministries to inform discussion and feedback.

The discussion also highlighted that the current SAON Strategy runs until 2028 and that the results of this exercise should inform the development of the next strategy cycle. The Board agreed that contributions to the table should be completed by the next meeting in May. Board members were tasked with expanding and finalizing their national inputs, while the Chair will prepare a synthesis document.

3. The Committees

3.1 Arctic Data Committee (ADC)

An update was provided on the activities of the Arctic Data Committee. Significant progress has been made on updating the IASC Data Statement, which is expected to be endorsed. It was noted that the Arctic Council has indicated interest in adopting the same framework, which could strengthen alignment across organizations.

Additional updates included the establishment of the International Polar Year Data Task Force.

3.2 Committee on Observations and Networks (CON)

The Committee on Observations and Networks reported on its work to develop use cases for observing asset inventories. A key milestone was the launch of the Registry of Polar Observing Networks (ROPON), which currently includes 51 networks and aims to improve the discoverability and integration of observing activities.

Work is ongoing to develop metadata models and improve interoperability across different types of observing assets, including networks, sites, and projects. It was confirmed that community-based monitoring initiatives are included within this framework. Participants were encouraged to review ROPON and suggest additional networks for inclusion.

4. SAON ROADS Process

4.1 Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel reported on the development of the ROADS Handbook, which is intended as a guide to support implementation of the ROADS process. A draft version will be presented and discussed at the Arctic Observing Summit.

The process is increasingly focused on implementation and on strengthening Indigenous engagement. Open questions remain regarding the role of the ROADS process in the context of International Polar Year planning.

4.2 Arctic PASSION and Beyond Arctic PASSION

The Board was informed that the Arctic PASSION project has concluded. A follow-up project, Beyond Arctic PASSION, funded by the European Union, is scheduled to begin in September 2026. This new initiative will focus on advancing an integrated, sustainable Arctic observing system with strong emphasis on governance, data systems, and stakeholder engagement.

4.3 RNA CoObs

Updates were provided on the RNA CoObs project, including progress by the salmon expert panel, which is nearing completion of its report.

5. ArORA

An update on the ArORA initiative highlighted that a draft implementation plan has been completed and refined based on community feedback. Current efforts focus on improving collaboration mechanisms, including engagement with Indigenous and local communities, and developing matchmaking approaches to support partnerships.

Some funding has been secured, but additional support is still needed, particularly for coordination and secretariat functions.

6. ICARP IV Process

The ICARP IV process was briefly described.

7. International Polar Year (2032–33)

The Board received a brief update on preparations for the next International Polar Year. A planning group is being established, and proposals for hosting the secretariat are currently under consideration. The SAON representatives will continue to engage in the planning process.

8. Upcoming Events

Participants were reminded of upcoming events, including the Arctic Observing Summit session on 29 March focused on status and governance, followed by the Arctic ROADS Open Partnership Meeting. Members were encouraged to participate in these sessions.

9. Any Other Business

No decisions were taken and no open questions were raised.

10. Next Meeting

The next SAON Board meeting will take place on 4th May 2026.

Appendix 1

SAON Board meeting
25th March 2026 16-17 CET / 11am-12pm EDT / 15-16 UTC

Venue: University of Aarhus, Denmark, Mødelokale 2.3 (1420-234)
Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87546840013 (requires password)

Draft agenda

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda (Mikko Strahlendorff) (3 min)
   [*Please note that the session will be recorded. The recording will not be shared, but only used for the preparation of minutes.*
   Meeting notes from the teleconference 3rd March 2026 are available here.
2. SAON Strategy and Workplan (30 min)
   The current SAON Strategy runs for the period 2018-2028. The Strategy is implemented by the SAON Board and the SAON Committees as described in the SAON Implementation document. The Strategy has three goals, and Goal no. 3 is to *Ensure sustainability of Arctic observing*. While Goal no. 1 and 2. are meant for the SAON Committees, then Goal no. 3 is meant for the SAON Board. The first objective under Goal 3 is to *Develop a strategy for long-term financial commitment in Arctic observations*.
   Board members have been asked to complete this table on national observing priorities
3. The Committees
   - Arctic Data Committee (ADC) (Chantelle Verhey) (3 min)
   - Committee on Observations and Networks (CON) (Alice Bradley, Heikki Lihavainen, Joao Canario) (3 min)
4. SAON ROADS process (10 min)
   - Advisory Panel (Sandy Starkweather)
   - *ArcticPASSION* and *Beyond ArcticPASSION* (BAS) (Michael Karcher)
   - RNA CoObs (Alice Bradley or Sandy Starkweather)
5. ArORA (Anna Nikolopoulos) (3 min)
6. ICARP IV process (Gerlis Fugmann) (3 min)
7. International Polar Year (2032-33, IPY) (Gerlis Fugmann) (3 min)
8. Upcoming events:
   - 29th March, 13:30-14:30: Arctic Observing Summit: Status and governance. Agenda
   - 29th March, 14:30 - 15:30: Arctic ROADS Open Partnership Meeting. Agenda
9. Any Other Business
10. The next Board meetings will be 4th May 2026.

Documents for the meetings of the Board are found here.
The list of Board members is found here.

Appendix 2

List of Participants

Agnieszka Beszczynska-Möller, Poland
Amanda Cliff, Canada
Axel Schlindwein, APECS
Chantelle Verhey, Canada, ADC Co-chair
Christine Barnard, ArcticNet, Canada
Jeremy Wilkinson, BAS, UK
Maribeth Murray, AINA, Canada
Michael Karcher, Germany
Ole Krarup Leth, Kingdom of Denmark
Rolf Rødven, AMAP Secretariat
Sandy Starkweather, ROADS co-lead, USA
Takashi Kikuchi, JAMSTEC, Japan
Tetsuo Sueyoshi, NIPR, Japan
Vito Vitale, Italy

Remote attendance:
Roberto Delgado, USA
Mikko Strahlendorff, Finland, Chair
Bill Manley, USA
Eva Kruemmel, ICC
Jórunn Harðardóttir, Iceland
Yongjun Wang, China

The list of Board members is found here.