

Arctic Ocean Resilience: Can critical tipping points still be avoided?

Friday, 9 June, 2017 • 1:15pm - 2:30pm • Conference Room 4 • Light lunch provided



Side Event – UN Ocean Conference

Hosted by:

Government of Sweden, Stockholm Environment Institute and Stockholm Resilience Centre

Co-organizers:

WWF Arctic Program; Ministry of Environment of Finland; Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP);

The Arctic is often thought of as a distant and isolated region, yet it is also a bellwether of global change. Newspaper headlines and scientific publications over the past year chronicle a speed and breadth of ecological and social change that is even greater than many other regions of the planet. These changes are often dramatic: new record lows for sea ice extent, temperatures dramatically above seasonal norms, permafrost thaw, eroding coastlines and acidification of the Arctic Ocean at roughly twice the rate for the world's oceans in general.

Each of these changes disturbs the stability of marine ecosystems of the Arctic Ocean. Each also creates both opportunities and disruption for those living in the Arctic, yet they are largely driven by activities carried out elsewhere in the world. At the same time, what happens in the Arctic isn't confined to the Arctic. It is an important part of our planet's cooling system, influences weather and climate conditions the world over, and is a crucial region for migratory birds, for marine life, and for people.

The Arctic Ocean is literally the center of this region, and its resilience is being undermined by a diverse range of changes. The Arctic

Resilience Report, released in November 2016, lists a variety of potential regime shifts, or tipping points, identified in the scientific literature, that impact Arctic Ocean ecosystems and the people who depend on them. These range from ice-free summers to coastal marine eutrophication, from disturbances in Arctic marine food webs to the collapse of fisheries. Potentially critical changes for which threshold effects are not known are also underway, such as Arctic Ocean acidification, (identified by Arctic Council reports), while other changes are more direct human responses to the many changes in the region: accumulation of long range pollutants and plastics, increased shipping traffic and tourism, increased interest in resource extraction, and disruption of traditional livelihoods. And while the countries of the Arctic region are wealthy, the populations of many Arctic sub-regions are often economically poor and in dire need of development.

Virtually all of these threats are significantly influenced or caused by human activity, and the choices made by people both within and outside the Arctic can therefore have a decisive impact on the resilience of the Arctic Ocean and the inhabitants of the region.

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Program:

OPENING REMARKS:

- H.E. Ms. Isabella Lövin – Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister

THE CHANGING ARCTIC OCEAN: TIPPING POINTS AND THREATS TO RESILIENCE

- Dr. Marcus Carson – Stockholm Environment Institute, Project Director, Arctic Resilience Assessment
- Stephanie Meakin – Science Advisor, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada and Greenland (TBC)
- Dr. Tom Armstrong – Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program

PANEL DISCUSSION: ARCTIC OCEAN RESILIENCE AND SDG 14: PATHWAYS FOR ACTION

Moderator: Johan Kuylensstierna – Executive Director, Stockholm Environment Institute

Questions from the audience are welcome.

Panelists:

- Mr. Joel Clement – Director, Office of Policy Analysis, U.S Department of the Interior
- Dr. Pinsak Suraswadi – Director, Marine and Coastal Resources Research Institute, Bangkok, Thailand
- Ms. Liisa Rohweder – Secretary General, WWF Finland, Chair - WWF Arctic Program
- Ms. Matilda Ernkrans, Member of the Swedish Parliament, Chair of the Committee for Environment and Agriculture
- Dr. Tom Arnbom – Senior Advisor, Marine and Arctic, WWF Sweden

Closing Remarks:

- Ambassador Jouni Laaksonen – Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN



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