



# HOUSE OF LORDS

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## **The Select Committee on the Arctic**

Inquiry on

### **THE ARCTIC**

*Evidence Session No. 17*

*Heard in Public*

*Questions 226 - 236*

TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2014

12 noon

Witness: Vincent Rigby

Members present

Lord Teverson (Chairman)  
Lord Addington  
Baroness Browning  
Lord Hannay of Chiswick  
Viscount Hanworth  
Lord Hunt of Chesterton  
Lord Moynihan  
Lord Soley

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**Examination of Witness**

**Vincent Rigby**, Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials, the Arctic Council

**Q226 The Chairman:** Mr Rigby, can I welcome you to the second session today of the Lords Select Committee on the Arctic? We are very grateful to you for getting up very early where you are and being able to go through a number of questions as part of the evidence for our report on Arctic issues. To go through one or two formalities, you should have been given a list of our own interests that we have in Arctic affairs, so you are aware of those. I suspect that the session will last just under an hour, and we are being broadcast live. It would be useful to us and members of the public listening in and in the room here if you could, for the record, briefly introduce yourself. I am not sure whether you would like to make a short opening statement. That is entirely up to you. We will then move into questions.

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you very much. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. It is not too early in Canada. I am a bit of an early riser, so I am okay. I have had three or four cups of coffee, so I should be ready to go. I would like to introduce to my left, to your right, Ingrid Nielsen, who is senior policy adviser to the Chair of the SAOs, which is my position.

I was told to try to avoid opening statements, so I have not prepared one. My understanding was that this would be primarily in the form of an interview and a response to some of the questions you have laid out beforehand, with perhaps some ancillary questions as well. Perhaps I could start by saying what my role is as chair of the Senior Arctic Officials and how it fits into the hierarchy in the Arctic Council. I can probably do that in one or two minutes, and then I will be very happy to field your questions.

As to how I fit into the hierarchy, at the top of the pyramid, if we can call it that, would be the Chair of the Arctic Council. Right now Canada's chairmanship is led by The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq. She is Canada's Minister for the Arctic Council and also happens to be Canada's Minister of the Environment.<sup>1</sup> She is responsible for the broad direction of Arctic Council activities and establishing the agenda, programme of activity and so on, working very closely with the other Ministers of the Arctic states in the Arctic Council. She will chair a ministerial in the spring of 2015, which is standard procedure. There is a major ministerial conference every two years in the Arctic Council, and that is where a broad ministerial declaration is issued. The SAOs, the Senior Arctic Officials, report to the Ministers, and so that is where she finishes off her role and passes it on to the next chair, which of course will be the United States. She works very closely with her ministerial counterparts, as I say, in establishing that broad direction and working on the agenda.

A little lower down in the pyramid comes my position, which is Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials. If you have the broad direction set at ministerial level, I am responsible for implementing that broad direction—the programmes, projects and activities of the Council, and overseeing, with the support of the national Senior Arctic Officials and the Permanent

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<sup>1</sup> Note by witness: Minister Aglukkaq is Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council. Minister Aglukkaq is also Chair of the Arctic Council during Canada's Arctic Council chairmanship.

Participants—the PPs, the representatives of the indigenous communities—the work of the working groups and the task forces. This is really where the meat and potatoes work of the Arctic Council is done: within the working groups and within the task forces.

I was fortunate enough, just to finish off, chairing my first SAO meeting in Yellowknife last week, where we had reports out from all the working groups and task forces, and I had a chance, with my SAO and PP colleagues, to provide some guidance back to the working groups on how their work is done. Again, that was looking forward to the ministerial in the spring to make sure that we have some good, hard deliverables, but also—I think this will address one of your questions, but I would be happy to come back to it in more detail later—that we have continuity through the various Arctic Council chairmanships. I made very clear at the Yellowknife meeting last week that I have two priorities as we head into the home stretch of Canada’s chairmanship: the hardcore deliverables and outcomes—the bright and shiny things, so to speak, that we want to put in the storefront window to highlight Canada’s chairmanship; and making sure that we have a smooth transition to the US chairmanship in 2015 and continuity in our work. Our work is not just about the current chair or two-year cycles; it is about longevity and the viability of the Arctic Council over the longer term.

Finally, you have the Senior Arctic Officials and the Permanent Participants themselves. The SAOs are the national representatives from the eight Arctic-state countries. The Permanent Participants come from the six indigenous organisations that are represented in the council. I often refer to the Permanent Participants as the real connective tissue to the work of the Arctic Council and the people on the ground in the north. One of the unique features of the Arctic Council is the role of the Permanent Participants. I do not see it in any other international body that I have worked on, certainly. Canada has put a lot of stress and emphasis in its chairmanship on the human dimension of the Arctic, on “development for

the people of the north,” and we have relied very much on the Permanent Participants and the indigenous communities to help us define that agenda. They have a very important role to play, along with the Senior Arctic Officials. Again, my role as chair of that body of SAOs and PPs is to listen to their advice and, based on consensus—because it is a consensus body—work together to make sure that we achieve the outcomes for the Arctic Council.

That is effectively it. I have been on the job for a little over three months, so I am still a little wet behind the ears. If I cannot answer all your questions today, I will certainly commit to getting you answers as soon as possible. However, the timing is great, given that I just chaired my first meeting of the SAOs and the PPs last week. I am a little smarter than I was the week before, but not that much. We will see today.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Mr Rigby. That was a very good and very comprehensive introduction.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Can I just ask how often the senior officials meet?

**The Chairman:** I will do it on behalf of Lord Hannay; he was asking how often the SAOs meet. I think it is twice a year, is it?

**Vincent Rigby:** Twice a year, about every six months or so in person. We had the meeting last week in Yellowknife. Before that it was in Whitehorse, I believe in March, but it was before my time. We also have regular telephone calls. For example, there was a teleconference in June under my predecessor, and I held another teleconference in August. There is very regular consultation, and we are going to hold another SAO meeting in March in Whitehorse just before the ministerial meeting, but I have also made a commitment to my SAO and PP colleagues that I will hold as many teleconferences as necessary. I suspect we will need a few to make sure that we have a good, strong agenda for the ministerial in the spring.

**Q227 The Chairman:** That is very useful, thank you. If I could move on to the first question, when the Committee visited Tromsø, Norway, recently, we met members of the permanent secretariat, and we asked similar questions. What are current priorities of the Arctic Council? Is the council evolving in the direction of being concerned with sustainable development and policy development as opposed to its origins in environmental protection and science? Do you think the Arctic Council is becoming a decision-making body instead of an advisory and decision-influencing body? That is a good area to start off with.

**Vincent Rigby:** Absolutely. There are two broad questions there: the current priorities of the Arctic Council under Canadian chairmanship, and the evolution of the Arctic Council—a decision-making body versus a decision-influencing body, perhaps informing decision-making as much as anything else.

On the current priorities, under Canada's chairmanship, as I said before, there has been a great deal of focus on the human dimension of the Arctic and very much on economic and social living conditions for people who live in the Arctic, both indigenous communities and otherwise.

The actual broad theme for Canada's chairmanship has been "development for the people of the North," and this is a very personal commitment on the part of the Chair of the Arctic Council, Minister Aglukkaq. Minister Aglukkaq is an Inuk from the north and she has a very close connection to conditions and circumstances in the Arctic and to the people. Before Canada's chairmanship was even up and running, she went out and consulted extensively in the north on what Canada's priorities should be. She listened to what people had to say, and what she heard from people on the ground in the Arctic was that jobs, mental wellness, the importance of traditional knowledge and ways of life, climate change et cetera were all important and affected their lives on a day-to-day basis. That has been very much the focus.

There have been three sub-themes: responsible resource development, safe Arctic shipping and sustainable Arctic communities. We have a variety of initiatives and projects under each of those three sub-themes. I can talk about those in a little more detail if you would like, but generally speaking an example of responsible resource development would be the Arctic Economic Council, which I think you may want to talk about in a little more detail later.

**The Chairman:** We will come on to that next.

**Vincent Rigby:** Regarding safe Arctic shipping, the Council is looking at ways to promote safe shipping for cruise ships and tourist ships in the Arctic. We are looking at possible guidelines there. On the question of sustainable Arctic communities, again the Council deals with issues like climate change but also black carbon and methane and things like that, as well as mental wellness, traditional ways of life and so on.

On the question of sustainable development versus environmental protection, I do not think there is a trade-off there. I feel very strongly that it is not an either/or. They are complementary and mutually reinforcing; they are not mutually incompatible. I know there has been a bit of a sense in the public that perhaps Canada has moved the chairmanship a little more in the direction of sustainable development and a little less in the direction of environmental protection. I do not see that. Indeed, if you look at the Ottawa Declaration of 1996 it is very clear that those are seen as two strong pillars. There is this notion that we have moved away from environmental protection, because that was the focus early on, and Canada has put more emphasis on sustainable development, but those were always two pillars. It was never an either/or. We were expected to do both.

That remains the case, and under Canada's chairmanship, as I have already mentioned, one of our task forces has been working on black carbon and methane. We are doing a lot of other work on climate change with respect to establishing an online adaptation information

portal to enhance information exchange on climate change issues in the Arctic, for example. We are doing a lot on broader environmental issues with respect to oil pollution prevention and response et cetera. I am sure you have seen a lot of this work. I think that under Canada's chairmanship there has still been a strong emphasis on pollution prevention, scientific research, climate change etc. while also pushing some of these other areas—perhaps a little more than predecessors. It is a debatable point but, again, going back to what I said about Minister Aglukkaq's personal commitment in the Arctic, I think it has been a welcome development if we have put a little more emphasis than in the past on things like an Arctic Economic Council and social and economic well-being et cetera.

Your second broad question was about decision-making versus decision-influencing. I would say again we are probably a little of both. It depends on your definition of decision-making. We are not a military alliance, obviously; we are not NATO or even in the vein of a G7. We are countries in the Arctic that want to co-operate on Arctic issues related to sustainable development and to environmental protection. We do a lot of very important scientific research that supports decision-making among Arctic countries, whether it is the Stockholm convention or some of the work that we have done in the area of mercury, which has led to some national initiatives. That has been very helpful. I think we have been very good in standards setting, guidelines, information exchanges and setting an atmosphere of co-operation in the Arctic, and we still are.

There may be a bit of a trend regarding decision-making, again depending on how you define decision-making, but I refer to the two legally binding agreements that we have right now on search and rescue and oil spill responsiveness and prevention.<sup>2</sup> That could be seen as a bit of a move in broader legally binding decision-making.

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<sup>2</sup> Note by witness: *The Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic* (2011) and *The Agreement on Cooperation on Maritime Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the*

**The Chairman:** I think that ties it up and it is fully answered, but do you see there being more instances like those two agreements that have been made in other areas, or is that it for the moment? A brief response will be fine.

**Vincent Rigby:** For the moment, that is it, but I can also tell you that we are certainly looking at possibilities down the line. Will there be any announcements of new legally binding agreements for the spring? I would say probably not, at this point, but under the American chairmanship I cannot say. However, there may be the beginning of a trend there.

**The Chairman:** That is fine. Thank you.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Presumably the IMO's Polar Code comes into the category of not involving a decision taken by the Arctic Council but being extremely relevant to the whole lot of its work, and when that comes into force it will in itself fill another gap in the international legal apparatus.

**Vincent Rigby:** Absolutely. The Arctic Council has been very supportive of the work of the IMO. The secretary-general of the IMO made a presentation to Arctic Council SAOs I believe last year or earlier this year, if I am not mistaken. Their work is very complementary, very connected, and we support their ongoing efforts to establish a Polar Code.

**The Chairman:** Lord Hannay, do you want to continue?

**Q228 Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Yes. I wonder if we could just have a quick word about the Arctic Economic Council, which I think has been recently set up: a Canadian initiative. Briefly, what have its proceedings led to so far, and do you think it will continue to play a prominent role under successive future chairmanships, the United States most immediately but others after, or do you see rather that each chairmanship seems to have an idea of its own that it then pursues, and then the next one has another idea of its own? That could

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*Arctic* (2013) are the two legally-binding agreements negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council.

lead to a certain amount of discontinuity. Finally, do you think there is any prospect of a regional seas agreement?

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you very much for those three questions on the AEC specifically, chairmanship priorities and then regional seas. On the Arctic Economic Council, these are very early days. It was only formally set up at the beginning of September. I was fortunate enough to attend that inaugural meeting in Iqaluit. This is one of the flagship initiatives, if not the flagship initiative, of Canada, and we are very proud to be pushing this. We think it is a very important initiative, again under this notion of sustainable development and creating business-to-business links, promoting trade and investment in the Arctic region and improving the overall economic health, including jobs, of the Arctic, while still providing for environmental protection. It is important to remember that again it has been up and running for less than two months, so we will see where it goes, but certainly Canada, the Arctic Council states as a whole and the Permanent Participants have very high hopes for it. It is important to remember that it is business led. It was mentioned in the Kiruna declaration in 2013 that the Arctic Council would set this up, and it has been set up as an independent body led by business: business has decided on its governance and its operating procedures et cetera. However, Arctic Council states feel that there should be a connection back to the Arctic Council itself. The strength of that connection will be seen over time, but from Canadian point of view it would be rather odd to set up an Arctic Economic Council and then have it completely divorced from the Arctic Council itself and not provide advice on a regular or quasi-regular basis. However, taking off my chair hat and putting on my Canadian official hat, Canada certainly thinks that this is going to be an important initiative and central to improving the economic and social conditions of people in the north.

As to how it is going to play out in further chair priorities, I cannot say with any great definitiveness right now. It would be a good question for you to ask of the United States. The US representative for President Obama on Arctic issues, Admiral Papp, whom I believe if you have not met yet you may be speaking to at some point, spoke in the CSIS conference in Washington back at the beginning of September and said that the US would still be putting a lot of emphasis on the human side of the Arctic. Last week in Yellowknife we got a very good briefing from the US Senior Arctic Official on US priorities, and we certainly saw a role for the Arctic Economic Council there, and certainly from my conversations with my US colleagues I think everybody is agreed that the Arctic Economic Council is here to stay, obviously, and that it will continue to play an important role in future chairmanships. However, I cannot say to you right now to what extent the US will make it its number one priority versus its number seven priority. We will have to see, as those US priorities play out. On your question about chairmanship, the two-year rotating cycle and longer-term priorities for the Arctic Council, I think this is the dilemma of any international body with a rotating chair. I said to you before that to my mind my biggest priority moving forward is striking that proper balance between chairmanship priorities, which are still the Arctic Council priorities but are shorter term, let us be honest, if you are looking very much for solid, concrete outcomes at a ministerial meeting, versus those longer-term objectives. Again, I do not think those are mutually exclusive. One of great things about having the two-year chairmanship is that it helps to focus the mind and move initiatives along. It does help to hold Arctic Council states' and Permanent Participants' feet to the fire in many ways. If you had a five-year rotating chairmanship, for example, we might actually move at a slower pace. One year would probably not be enough, two years is probably a good balance, but we are all very cognisant in the Council of the importance of the longer-term work. When

we have the ministerial in the spring, that is not for us wash our hands and go, “Well, we have had a great two years; now we start all over and see where we are going to go”. When the American priorities come out in greater detail, I think you will see that they are building on all the work that has been done in the past. There is a constant building on a solid foundation in the Arctic Council.

One of the last things I will say in that regard is just the importance of accountability. I have served in a lot of different bodies over my career. I am actually the Canadian sous-Sherpa for the G7 right now, and I cannot overemphasise the importance of accountability for Canada. One of the things that Canada has done in its chairmanship is set up a tracking tool to map all the Arctic Council’s projects and programmes, of which there are about 80 in the hopper right now. That monitors where they are, what their status is, what their due date is, when the deliverables are going to be, and that again, speaking of holding people’s feet to the fire, holds the working groups and the task forces’ feet to the fire on delivering. We are going to make that a very public dimension of the Arctic Council, so that when Senior Arctic Officials report to Ministers in the spring, the tracking tool will be attached to that report. We think that it is very important publicly, so that everybody can see what our commitments are and how we are delivering on those commitments. If we fail to deliver, I think we will get pressure to step up our game.

**The Chairman:** Mr Rigby, because of timing, we are going to have to keep the questions and answers a bit shorter, I am afraid, but that is really very useful. Lord Moynihan has a supplementary question.

**Lord Moynihan:** Mr Rigby, specifically on your comments on the Arctic Economic Council, we have had a copy of the *Alaska Dispatch News* article sent to us, which states, “it’s an open secret that the State Department is unenthused by the whole thing; another”—person—

“offered that ‘at least’ the Americans didn’t block it. Not a ringing endorsement”. Why do you think that is the position?

**Vincent Rigby:** First of all, I apologise if I am being a little too loquacious. Maybe I had too many coffees this morning. I will do my best to keep my answers a little shorter. Sir, I would be very cautious about passing any comment on US motivations and where the United States is on the Arctic Economic Council. I can tell you from talking to my colleagues that there is support for the Arctic Economic Council. You have to remember that this is a consensus-based body. The reference to the Arctic Economic Council would never have been included in the Kiruna Declaration if the United States had not supported it. The same goes for its implementation and the way it has been set up and the meeting in Iqaluit: if there had been strong opposition from Washington, we would probably have had to do it in a different way. This is a consensus decision, and certainly I can tell you, from talking to my colleagues among the SAOs and others in the State Department, there is support for the Arctic Economic Council. There is still debate about the relationship between the AEC and the Arctic Council itself, but that is among all the SAOs as we move forward. I would prefer not to comment directly on the *Alaska Dispatch News* article and whether there is a split between Alaska and Washington.

The Chairman: Thank you.

**Q229 Lord Soley:** In part, you have already suggested that the two-year rotating chairmanship is the best model at the moment, but can you tell us a little more about how much broad agreement there is on the role and function of both the council and the council’s secretariat? Is there broad agreement? Is that a fairly easy matter, or is it changing and is there pressure for change?

**Vincent Rigby:** My answer to that, sir, would be that there is very broad and very strong agreement, in terms of both the Arctic Council and the secretariat. Let me speak to the Arctic Council briefly first, and then I will return to the secretariat, which is of more recent vintage, as you know—it has only been around two years. It is still evolving.

The Arctic Council, from the beginning, has been identified as a body that would promote, again, environmental protection and sustainable development, collaboration, co-operation and integration among the Arctic Council states, so that is what it does and that is its mandate, and it has been doing that very successfully. I do not think anybody would disagree with that. It is basically enshrined in the Ottawa Declaration.

On the secretariat, I know you have had a chance to visit Tromsø and talk to my good colleague Magnus Johannesson. That is a secretariat that provides administrative support to the Arctic Council. It helps in the smooth and efficient running of the council writ large. I have telephone conversations with Magnus every couple of weeks to talk about how his secretariat supports the broader council initiatives, the Canadian chairmanship, the smooth running of meetings, logistics and communications. I am sure you have all had a chance to take a look at the website, which I think is becoming a really excellent website. They do a lot of work in terms of providing documentation. There is a major initiative right now on archiving and making sure we have a good outreach programme that reaches out to universities et cetera, which is growing. So, that is its role: it is primarily administrative support, and I see that continuing into the future.

**Lord Soley:** Big issues come up largely following the ministerial meetings and so on, and you talk about them carrying over, but I am a little puzzled as to how much pressure goes on the sitting chairman to maintain those issues or develop their own.

**Vincent Rigby:** I would say it is a consensus-based organisation. I can tell you, having sat through the meeting in Yellowknife and listened very carefully to everybody around the table, there is a great desire among the SAOs and Permanent Participants to have some measure of continuity across all the chairmanships, and I am not saying that Canada expects the United States to pick up every single one of its priorities. There is always going to be slight variance under individual chairmanships. It will come as no surprise to you that the United States will put a great deal of emphasis on climate change, for example. Again, we have done a lot on climate change too, but I think the US is likely to put even more emphasis there. However, that does not mean that is incompatible with the Canadian chairmanship; not at all. It will build on a lot of the work that we have already done.

I think the key to this is not a matter of pressure being put on new chairs to come in and continue the old work; it is a matter of discussion and dialogue. I have already been down to Washington. I went down in September for the CSIS passing the Arctic Council torch conference. I had a chance to speak with Admiral Papp, and other officials in the US State Department about their upcoming priorities. I do not think my American colleagues would be averse to me saying this, but we have set up almost an ad hoc working group to ensure that the transition from the Canadian to US chairmanship is a smooth one. I mentioned to you that the US brought some of their chairmanship priorities to the SAO meeting last week. Those are now going to be the subject of discussion among the broader SAO and Permanent Participant community.

Yes, there is pressure on the US to have its own priorities; there is pressure on the US to continue with some of the older priorities and build on that foundation. It is a very iterative process, and again it is a consensus-based body, so there has to be agreement on how we move forward.

**Lord Soley:** I understand that, but then you are talking constantly about your relationship with the United States—obviously, because they are taking over next. What about the other states? What about Russia, for example?

**The Chairman:** Following on from Lord Soley, has your relationship with your Russian opposite number been more difficult over last few months? I know particularly the Canadian Government have taken quite a strong view in terms of Russia and Ukraine. How has this affected your work with your Russian opposite number?

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you for the questions. In terms of Russia and chairmanship priorities, again, Russia is around the table with the other Senior Arctic Officials. They will certainly have comments on US and Canadian priorities, and they will provide their input without a doubt. They are fully a part of that process. With respect to Russia more broadly and the impact of the current geo-strategic situation, if I can call it that, on the Arctic Council, I am happy to report that the Arctic Council has been functioning much as it always has over the last six to eight months. The work is ongoing. Yes, there have been a couple of small bumps along the road, but my Russian SAO colleague was in Yellowknife last week. He has been collegial and supportive of Arctic Council initiatives, and he has told me that at this point in time Foreign Minister Lavrov will be in Iqaluit in the spring. The work continues. I am happy to report that—I really am.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

**Q230 Lord Moynihan:** Mr Rigby, you have listed some of the lasting legacies of the Canadian chairmanship of the Arctic Council: the development for the people of the north and the Arctic Economic Council. Perhaps you could concentrate your mind on whether you feel the mechanisms are in place to ensure that the Arctic Council decisions are implemented. Again, the Committee has seen reports both from the US Government Accountability Office and

from Sweden. The US Government Accountability Office states that “state officials said that the council needs to more clearly specify and prioritise recommendations, but the council does not have guidelines for doing so”. On the receiving end, the Swedish National Audit Office has stated that “the Government”—have not— “assigned responsibility for ... a process”: that is, to rank and implement decisions. “It is not clear whether the Arctic Council’s recommendations have been implemented in Sweden”. Are you content with the mechanisms that currently exist for Arctic Council decisions to be implemented, and if you are not, what recommendations would you make?

**Vincent Rigby:** I would say a couple of things. I have been in the chair for only several months, and this is perhaps just anecdotal—it is not a mechanism per se—but I and all my colleagues on the Canadian side carry the Kiruna declaration in our back pocket and consult it, I would say, almost on a daily basis. I made a joke the other day that I would like a wallet-sized version of the Kiruna declaration so that I can whip out of my wallet at any point. I say that simply because we are constantly referring to it to ensure that when we come to Canada’s Ministerial in the spring we can tick off every box—every commitment that was made in the Kiruna declaration. We have followed very closely the wording in the declaration, whether it is seeking an arrangement versus an agreement versus progress, and I certainly have been instilling that in my SAO and Permanent Participant colleagues. The Kiruna Declaration is the bible for our chairmanship, and we hope that the Iqaluit Declaration will be the bible for the US chairmanship. Again, I know it is not a formal mechanism, but I can tell you that we have been very conscious of accountability under the Canadian chairmanship.

The second thing I would mention—again, I will not go into any detail because I have already mentioned it—is this tracking tool. I believe it is going to be a very important accountability

mechanism. In making it public in particular, it is really going to apply much-needed pressure on the Arctic Council to deliver on its commitments and to make sure that we carry through on our priorities. We are certainly looking forward to that, and I think it is going to be an extremely useful document.

In terms of recommendations for further mechanisms and other ways that we could ensure that we are prioritising properly—in that we do not have too many priorities and we are carrying through with the priorities we do have—I do not think you can have too much accountability. I do not think you can have too many checks and balances in that regard. Beyond the tracking tool, which we are very focused on, I do not have any further firm recommendations right now, but I am open to any suggestions to make sure that the Arctic Council carries through on its commitments. If we do not, we are an empty vessel, and we are going to be judged on what we deliver and how we fulfil our commitments, not on pretty wording in ministerial declarations and reports from SAOs to Ministers. We are very cognisant of that. We have to deliver.

**Q231 Lord Addington:** Mr Rigby, does the Arctic Council need further funding and institutional support in order to sustain itself in the light of all the new observers—the working groups, the task forces, and new developments such as the economic council? How has the influx of new observers impinged on the working of the council, and are other groups that have traditionally been there feeling that they have been marginalised? I am of course thinking about indigenous peoples in the first order here.

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you very much for the question, sir. Again, I think there are two parts there: one on the dollars, and one on the role of the Permanent Participants given the influx of observers et cetera. On the dollars, I do not think I have ever been part of an international body or organisation that felt it had enough money. Even in government, we

are all aware that we could always do with more resources. I do not think the Arctic Council is any different. The Council is driven by the states themselves and their budgets, along with assistance from observers and some other sources. We are constantly looking at ways to increase our funding in any way we can and deliver the projects that we feel are necessary to deliver on the broader mandate of the Arctic Council, so that is always an issue. I think we have been doing a good job up to this point, but certainly I would be lying to you if I said that resources did not come up on a fairly regular basis.

With respect to Permanent Participants and observers and so on, I said at the beginning that I think the unique feature of the Arctic Council is the role of the Permanent Participants. If I were going to speak about resources, I would focus more on making sure that Permanent Participants have the tools to do the job than anything else. This has been an issue for a long time in the Arctic Council—that Permanent Participants are not governments. While we may bemoan the fact that we do not have as many resources as we would like on the government side, the Permanent Participants are in an even more difficult position. We actually held a workshop on the margins of the Yellowknife meeting last week dealing exclusively with support to Permanent Participants and making sure that they have the resources to carry out their mandate in the Arctic Council to be able to make a substantive and meaningful contribution to the Council's activities.

We are looking at a number of options, including some external funding sources through foundations and so. I know there has been some talk of perhaps observers contributing more to Permanent Participants at some point in the future. That will be an ongoing discussion, I am sure. However, yes, that is an issue. Canada, I think, would like to move the yardsticks, if it could, during its chairmanship to see what it can do to provide a little more support to Permanent Participants in travelling to meetings, research capacity and, again,

the ability to make a real, substantive contribution. I told my colleagues when I opened up the workshop last week that we are coming up on the 20th anniversary of the Arctic Council and we are still talking about this. I think it is time to try to break the impasse in some way, so we are definitely looking at that.

**The Chairman:** Lord Hunt, I think partly the question has been answered, but would you like to expand on it?

**Q232 Lord Hunt of Chesterton:** Do you feel that the Arctic Council covers all the major issues in its discussions? One of the issues that has not been discussed much in our Committee but I know is important to Canada and Russia particularly is nuclear radiation and waste. In fact, the Canadians supported important programmes of this sort. This slightly brings me on to the role of observers and the UK, because the UK works quite closely with Russia on some aspects of the question of dealing with nuclear waste. Equally, the UK works closely with many of the Arctic states on climate, weather forecasting, shipping and charting. I just wonder whether you would like to comment on those points.

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you very much for the question. Certainly in my four months on the job, nuclear radiation and waste has not come up explicitly—perhaps in passing but not explicitly—as a top priority but certainly more broadly under the rubric of environmental protection. I think it is there, and it may be something that we will want to come back to in the future. We know it is a very important issue. The fact that it is not necessarily a number one priority right now under the Canadian chairmanship does not mean that we are not acutely aware of it, so there is perhaps more to come on that.

On the role of observers, as a segue into the UK's role and that of other observers, I am going to be honest with you: I called the observers together when I was in Yellowknife last week, and we had a meeting. I am trying to get my head wrapped around the role of the

observers, perhaps much like you are. There are 32 of them—quite a number—a slight minority of which are state Governments, including the United Kingdom. I know they play a very important role in the work of the working groups and that they contribute a lot of scientific and policy expertise. They have also provided financial contributions at times. They have clearly been playing their role. Ultimately, their primary role is to observe and understand even more the impact that their policies may have on the Arctic and the impact that policies in the Arctic may have on them. Again, going back to my earlier point, I am trying to get my mind wrapped round it, because I do get a sense from a lot of the observer states that they would like to do more. Not just the states but the IGOs and NGOs would like to have a slightly more prominent place in the Arctic Council. At this point, I cannot say what that would be, and I will need to have further discussions. I promised the heads of delegation that I met in Yellowknife that I would follow up with them. I think they have been playing a very important role up to this point. I have given you examples of the kind of work that they have been doing. However, if they were to do even more, that would have to be the basis of another discussion.

**The Chairman:** Lord Soley, do you want to follow on from that?

**Q233 Lord Soley:** I think that leads in very well to my next question, because we as an observer state are concerned to get the balance right. Obviously, we have an interest and we would like to help, but we are also conscious of the importance of not treading on the toes of the full members. Any more thinking you do on that would be very helpful.

Do you have any specific things that you think the United Kingdom could do well, either on task forces or working groups or, indeed, anything else? Is there something you could put your finger on and say, “Yes, Britain can really help on this.”? What would it be?

**Vincent Rigby:** Again, I know that you have done some great work through some of the working groups. I do not have the details at my fingertips. Given the number of observers, I do not have all the ins and outs. However, I would certainly be happy to go away and give that some thought and provide you with an answer. I know that on the scientific side, if I am not mistaken, you have been providing a lot of assistance and advice, so obviously we would like to see that continue. However, in terms of more concrete suggestions or proposals, if you would let me take that one away, I would be happy to get back to you.

**Lord Soley:** That would be useful. We are, in fact, quite close to the Arctic; the most northern bit of the UK is only 400 or 500 miles away from the Arctic Circle, so it is of interest to us. I am sure the science and research bit is particularly important, and anything related to the climate change area, but I also think that search and rescue, which we have talked about, and co-ordination and structures on that are all areas that near-Arctic states, not just the UK, have an interest in.

**Vincent Rigby:** Understood completely—I will definitely follow up with you on that.

**Lord Soley:** Thank you very much.

**Q234 The Chairman:** Thank you, Mr Rigby. To come back on that, obviously the UK is one of the original observer states. There has been a large intake of Asian states recently. Do you see a natural limit on the number of observer states that can come into the Arctic Council? How many would make it, if you like, inoperable? Where there is real genuine interest from a nation state elsewhere in the globe, should they have the principle of access even if it takes a while to agree that? How do you see that equation working?

**Vincent Rigby:** Perhaps I can answer that question in two parts. First, I would say that 32 observers is a big number, and it has come up in back-room discussions and what have you

in relation to the number of observers and the point at which we say “enough is enough”, to put it crudely.

The second part of my answer is that ultimately that is going to be a decision for Ministers. It is probably not my place to be saying I think it should be this number or that number. Senior Arctic Officials make recommendations up to Ministers, who then make a decision at the ministerial on new applicants. Under Canada’s chairmanship, there may well be further applicants, and Ministers will make those decisions on whether or not they want to accept them.

**The Chairman:** Just on the UK’s role, do you have any feeling for how involved the UK is on the working groups and how many meetings it turns up to? You mentioned, I think, 80 projects that you have at moment, and I just wondered how many of those the UK was involved in. What is the feeling on that—or the facts, if you have them?

**Vincent Rigby:** I am smiling, because just before I came into the meeting I thought, “I really should have asked my staff about the number of projects that the UK has been involved in and financial contributions, et cetera”. I do not have those numbers at my fingertips, but I can certainly get them to you. However, I have been informed by my staff that you have made a significant contribution, and an important one, but I am happy to provide you with hard numbers.

**The Chairman:** That sounds like a very diplomatic answer. That is excellent, Mr Rigby. I am going to ask Lord Addington to move on. Thank you.

**Q235 Lord Addington:** Mr Rigby, what merit might there be in the suggestion of a summit of Arctic Heads of Government in, say, 2016 or 2017, just to give it impetus and push? I am just throwing that one out there; let us see how you knock this one back.

**Vincent Rigby:** Do you want me to be diplomatic or undiplomatic? Well, you know as well as I do this has actually been mentioned already as a possibility. The US has thrown it out there. I think Admiral Papp might have mentioned it in passing in his speech in Washington back in September. I believe that the Finns have also perhaps floated it as a possibility under their chairmanship. As I mentioned earlier, the 20th anniversary of the Arctic Council is coming in 2016, so there may very well be some value in having a broader summit that would catalyse Arctic Council activities and initiatives and so on. It is definitely worth considering, but one of the things we will have to keep in mind also is the geo-strategic situation at the time, and I do not know where we are going to be in 2015, 2016 or 2017 in terms of those broader issues. You asked me question about Russia before, and obviously if we were to have some kind of a global summit like that, we would have to factor that geo-strategic situation into the decision-making process. However, it is definitely an idea worth considering.

**Q236 The Chairman:** Mr Rigby, lastly, as you know the European Union has been trying to achieve observer status for some time. When I was at the parliamentary meeting of the Arctic Council as an observer in Whitehorse in September, the problems with the seal ban and all that came up. How do you see the EU side progressing? Is that going to be something that can be resolved, or are some of those issues going to stay in the way permanently?

**Vincent Rigby:** Well, this has been a thorny issue, you are absolutely right. We have the wording in the Kiruna declaration that the EU application for observership had been received “affirmatively”, but that implementation would remain pending until certain issues had been resolved, as set out in President Barroso’s letter in May 2013. Canada and the EU have made a great deal of progress in resolving that issue on seals. There is the separate issue of

fully accredited observership for the EU in the Arctic Council. As you know, although it is not fully accredited right now, the EU has been participating in all the work of the Arctic Council, and one of my EU colleagues was at the meeting in Yellowknife. However, a decision on observership will take place at the ministerial. That is the usual time when these decisions are taken, so I would just leave it at that at this point in time.

**The Chairman:** Mr Rigby, thank you very much indeed again for joining us at what sounds like, from what you said, your usual time in the morning; it would be a bit early for us. Thank you very much for joining us. We very much appreciate your answers. If there is any further information you wanted to provide us with on some of the things we have gone through, we would be very grateful for that. Thank you very much, again, for your participation in this process. We very much appreciate the opportunity to go through these issues with you. Thank you very much indeed.

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you, Mr Chairman, for this opportunity. It has been a pleasure for me to speak with you. I guess I would just say “ditto” in terms of anything else I can provide to you. Please do not hesitate to give me a shout. I think I do have a couple of things to follow up on, especially with respect to the UK projects and some ideas as to how the UK could play a greater role as an observer. I will follow up with you on that, for sure.

**The Chairman:** Good.

**Vincent Rigby:** Many thanks.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed.

**Vincent Rigby:** Thank you.

**The Chairman:** I bring this public session to an end at this point, and for those of the public who have been listening or are here, I thank you for your presence.