

1. Background

Since the last Arctic Science Ministerial in 2018, changes in the Arctic ecosystem and the resulting impacts locally and globally have been severely felt. While the reasons for these changes in climate largely stem from activities outside of the Arctic, the Arctic is warming at a rate of nearly double the global average. Considering the need for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and repair measures, the relevance of an international Arctic Science Ministerial has never been greater. It is necessary to strengthen scientific cooperation and collaboration among both Arctic and non-Arctic States in order to develop our understanding of the rapid changes impacting the Arctic.

The First Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM1) was hosted by the United States in 2016, and two years later, the Second Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM2) was co-hosted by Germany, Finland, and the European Commission. The Third Arctic Science Ministerial will be co-hosted by Iceland and Japan and take place on the 21st and 22nd of November 2020 in Tokyo, Japan.

2. Rationale

ASM3 aims to use the well-established foundation of the Ministerial as a means to take action on coordinated Arctic observing and research in an open and transparent format which includes all Arctic stakeholders. The involvement of States, Indigenous participants, and international organizations for Arctic research shows a broad recognition at the government level of the urgent response and action needed. The importance of coming together to develop and strengthen Arctic research cooperation and collaboration is essential.

A vital element of ASM3 is the development of education and capacity building for future generations, with an emphasis both on scientific and local knowledge in Arctic and non-Arctic States. This is important because scientific progress depends on a healthy, multi-generational scientific community in which the best minds receive the training and mentorship they need to contribute to knowledge creation. It is necessary to find avenues for making Arctic science research inclusive and engaging for the next generation, for whom global climate change will impact most.

Japan and Iceland offered to co-host ASM3 in the autumn of 2020, which was welcomed and agreed unanimously by ASM2 participants in Berlin. Although the ASM strongly supports the Arctic Council, the ASM is separate from the Arctic Council. It will be the first Ministerial meeting regarding Arctic issues held in Asia, and it is hoped that this event will highlight the value of Arctic science research conducted by non-Arctic States.

3. Structure of the event and expected objectives

The format of the ASM3 will be decided by the co-organizers building on the development from ASM1 and ASM2 and the growing relevance of Arctic science research.

The main difference in structure from ASM2 to ASM3 will be a shift in the format on the ASM2 Science Forum. In order to create a transparent and open dialogue with the Arctic science community, the organizers plan to implement a year-long process beginning with the official handover of ASM2 to ASM3 at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2019 in Iceland. Instead of holding a Science Forum in conjunction with the Ministerial, the organizers plan to engage Arctic natural and social scientists in the lead up to the Ministerial in November 2020 at the following Arctic Science meetings:

1. the 6th International Symposium on Arctic Research (ISAR-6) in March in Tokyo, Japan;
2. the Arctic Observing Summit 2020 (AOS2020), and the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW2020) both at the end of March and into April in Akureyri, Iceland;
3. the 10th International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS X) in June in Arkhangelsk, Russia.

This process will also include input and collaboration with Arctic indigenous and local communities to both share what Arctic research issues are most important to them and provide opportunities for discussion and dialogue with the broader Arctic research community.

A Science Advisory Board, which will be created in 2019, will help guide these processes, provide a science summary, and support the organizers in drafting the Joint Statement. An announcement on this structure and the timeline will be made public and accessible, especially regarding the processes for receiving feedback from the larger community so that scientists and local Arctic people can be properly prepared to engage with the ASM3 process.

A Joint Statement signed by all parties will be one of the principal outcomes of ASM3. In addition to the Joint Statement, a science summary on the actions implemented in the previous two years will be released. The summary will feature an updated list of information from participating countries and a recommendation of the follow-up actions. In order to do this, a discussion amongst the Science Advisory Board must take place to identify new deliverables and agree to the direction of actions preceding the Ministerial meeting. The follow-up actions will include the implementation of the observing system and data management in the Arctic. The discussion to develop new deliverables should start well in advance of the Ministerial meeting in order to find contributions agreed on by Arctic and non-Arctic states.

4. Date and Venue

The Third Arctic Science Ministerial will be held in Tokyo, Japan, on the 21st and 22nd of November 2020.

