About the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG):

The SDWG plays the lead role in addressing the human dimensions of the Arctic within the Arctic Council. Maintaining a focus on the three pillars of sustainable development – social equity, economic development, and environmental protection – the working group encourages the generation and acquisition of new knowledge, capacity building, and innovative approaches to the unique challenges and opportunities emerging in the Arctic. Building self-sufficient, resilient, and healthy Arctic communities for present and future generations – while protecting the environment, subsistence lifeways, and cultural traditions – is a primary goal of the working group.

Through undertaking cooperative, circumpolar-wide, projects and initiatives across a broad set of priority areas, the SDWG advises the Senior Arctic Officials and Ministers of the eight Arctic Council member states and leadership of the six Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations on sustainable development in the Arctic.

Circumpolar Cooperation
The SDWG’s stakeholders are the governments of the eight Arctic Member States and the six Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations. The beneficiary stakeholders are the Arctic communities, comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The working group aims to create an environment of collaboration with other Arctic Council working groups as well as with Arctic Council Observers and other stakeholders, including: international organizations involved in sustainable development in the Arctic; the Arctic natural and social science communities; academic, research and educational institutions; industry; nongovernmental organizations; business; and media.

SDWG Expert Groups
Two subsidiary expert groups contribute to the work of the SDWG. The Arctic Human Health Expert Group pursues efforts to increase awareness and visibility of health concerns of circumpolar residents. The Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group seeks to advance sustainable development across the Arctic.
Prioritizing Community Engagement & Expertise
The SDWG seeks to meaningfully engage local communities and stakeholders in its work. The working group aims to provide decision-makers with knowledge-based information, derived from a combination of scientific data, Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge and to provide this information through outreach and communication channels appropriate for its stakeholders. In this regard, the SDWG requires the integration of such knowledge into all of its projects and activities, as appropriate.

Contribution to Global Sustainable Development Efforts
The SDWG strives to be a leading force for sustainable development in the Arctic. Through its regional leadership, it contributes to global sustainable development efforts such as the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and to climate-change mitigation, and adaptation efforts such as the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015). The adoption of Agenda 2030 in particular provides new momentum to enhance sustainable development activities relevant to the Arctic and resonates with the past, present and future work of the SDWG.