

**Short Report from the 79th meeting of the EISCAT Council
Held 5 – 6 February, 2013 at the
Beijing JiuHua Resort & Convention Center, Beijing, P. R. of China**

Present: Dr. A. Aikio, Finland, Dr. T. Andersson, Sweden (Chairperson), Prof. Q. Dong, P. R. of China, Dr. B. Jacobsen, Norway, Dr. K. Kauristie, Finland, Dr. I. W. McCrea, UK, Dr. H. Miyaoka, Japan, Prof. D. Murtagh, Sweden, Dr. K. Sulonen, Finland, Dr. M. Schultz, UK and Prof. J. Wu, P. R. of China (Vice-Chairperson).

Invited: Prof. Cesar La Hoz, SOC Chairperson, Dr. E. Turunen, previous Director and Mr. A. Øvergård, Consultant, Svalbard Ant III project.

In Attendance: Mr. H. Andersson, Head of Administration, Dr. C. Heinselman, Director and Dr. I. Mann, Head of Projects, all Headquarters. From CRIRP, Dr. Z. Ding and Dr. Jun Wu.

Association and Associates

Council thanked Dr. Esa Turunen, for his work as Director for the Association from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2012. The new Director, Dr. Craig Heinselman, gave an introductory speech.

The agreement rewriting group summarised the changes they wanted to see in the new agreement. These include the reintroduction of an administrative and finance committee, adding more advisory tasks to the science committee, cover two types of memberships in the Association, foundation members and affiliates, and finally, a rolling strategy planning concept. The new agreement will be handled as an amendment to the one now in place and will allow new countries and institutes to join the Association more easily than today. Council noted these suggestions and agreed that these would be detailed, together with other modifications, into a full amended agreement text. The planned implementation schedule will be the following: consideration by Council in the May meeting, thereafter assessment and legal checks by the present Associates and others interested in joining the Association with reporting and final editorial changes in October such that Council can open the amended agreement for signing and re-signing at the November meeting. With such schedule, the amended agreement could be in place from 1 January 2014.

Council decided, in preparation for EISCAT_3D, to establish a Decommissioning Reserve principle. The purpose of this reserve is to cover the funds needed for final removal of old systems. For EISCAT_3D, a fraction of the initial investment funds will be redirected into the reserve. Payments from the annual budgets will supplement the initial transfers such that the Decommissioning Reserve can also at some point cover past investments, like the old mainland radars. This new principle will be included in amended agreement.

Council endorsed a bilateral UK and Canada collaborative agreement allowing scientists to make use of some research infrastructures in both countries. For the Association this means that Canadian scientists can make use of the facilities within the UK allocation. The agreement will run as a pilot project for two or three years.

The next Council Chairperson will be Prof. Jian Wu, P. R. of China. He will take the chair from the regular May 2013 meeting and will serve for two years. The Vice-Chairperson will come from UK.

The national initiatives regarding EISCAT_3D lead to a Norwegian submission in October 2012 in response to a call and the Swedish community have started the work to submit an application to a call coming with a deadline end of March 2013. UK scientists are getting prepared to submit an application at short notice and Japanese scientists will submit a funding application later this year. The Finnish user groups are working to get EISCAT_3D on the Finnish roadmap that will be revised during 2013. The Chinese Associate is currently focusing on the Ant III project but is ready to work for getting EISCAT_3D funding into the next Chinese five-year plan that starts 2016.

Systems status

The UHF to VHF conversion of the Kiruna and Sodankylä remote sites was successfully done last summer such that tristatic operations are again possible. The spare parts needed for the repair of the broken Svalbard 32 meter antenna gear-box had finally been ordered and will be delivered in March. Provided the repair goes smoothly, the antenna should be in full operation again in time for summer campaigns. Council decided to work for having the present mainland radar systems in operation for an additional three years, 2014 - 2016, such that mainland radar capabilities would still be available for users while EISCAT_3D is to be constructed.

New system developments

The findings from the VHF transmitter replacement study were reported and it shows that replacing the old klystron with a solid state solution would indeed be possible. A very rough budgetary estimate indicates a total investment of around 10 MEUR for the new hardware and installation.

Operations

The systems did operate reliably during 2012 except for the Svalbard operations where only non-scanning experiments were possible due to the antenna fault. The peer-review programme continued to show large interest and in the second application round for the year, five applications were given time on the systems.

EISCAT_3D preparatory phase project status

The preparatory phase project progresses well. The first periodic report covering the first 18 months of the project, 1 October 2010 – 31 March 2012, was submitted and accepted pretty much as envisaged. The contract with the European Commission and the consortium agreement among the partners in the project will both be amended to cover the inclusion of a new partner: Uppsala University hosting the Swedish National Infrastructure for Computing (SNIC), plus some other changes needed. The amendment details are being worked out by the Coordinator, EISCAT, and should be ready for dispatch to the Commission in March.

A first preferred setup of EISCAT_3D sites will be presented to Council by the Executives at the autumn 2013 meeting.

Proposal to build a third antenna on Svalbard

The Svalbard Ant III project consultant, Mr. A. Øvergård, briefed Council about the status of the project. The final permission needed by the local authorities is out for public hearing. The needed site infrastructure constructions have been designed and the next step would be request for quotations for that work. An optimum schedule would be: ground work, including widening of the access road, and foundation and building constructions to be done summer 2013. Antenna manufacturing starting in 2013 with shipment and major installation works in 2014. Commissioning thereafter and regular operations starting from 2016. In order to start ground works this summer, Council would need to make a decision to go ahead with the next step in the project, tendering, at this meeting.

The investments will be covered by the Chinese Associate. The operating costs for the new infrastructure will need to be added to the regular EISCAT budget. Council agreed that the investment can be handled as an in-kind contribution, at a level to be agreed, but raised serious concern that the regular EISCAT budget and annual funding levels are not in such shape that this kind of expansion can be included without new income from either Associates or other sources. It was therefore agreed that a full implementation analysis is needed before Council can make any kind of decision. Since the next regular meeting of Council is only in May, which would be too late if trying to get ground works started this summer, it was agreed that Council will meet in an extra-ordinary meeting to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, Wednesday 17 April, 2013. The implementation analysis will be prepared by the Ant III consultant, the Chinese team and the Director.

2012 Financial development update

The deficit foreseen in the spring meeting was still a fact and in order to cover this shortage, the Executives had taken a decision to make use of project financing annually instead of mainly at the end of a project when the total project financing would be known and confirmed. This change would not alter the total income, but change the timing such that the deficits for 2012 and 2013 can be covered. Using the project financing in this way will though create a significant shortfall in 2014, which will then need to be addressed separately.

Budget 2013

There were no major changes included in the 2013 budget compared with the practice and operating targets set for 2012. Since the budget needed approval before the start of the year, Council made that decision in December 2012.

Five years plan: 2013-2017

Council discussed ways of how to balance the five years plan after 2013 and agreed that fixed-cost reductions as well as further income will be necessary to handle the situation.

A proposal to inflationary compensate the annual contributions find liking and it was agreed that each Associate will be approached requesting an increase to cover primarily 2014 but also for 2013 to ease the situation.

The findings and other ways of balancing the five years plan will be discussed at the extra-ordinary Council meeting planned for 17 April.

Next meetings

An extra-ordinary, 79b, Council meeting will be held 17 April in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The regular and 80th spring 2013 meeting will be held in Norway, likely Bergen, Monday 27 May - Tuesday 28 May, 2013.

The autumn 2013 will be held in UK and the spring 2014 meeting will be held in Japan.

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Photos: CRIRP and EISCAT