



**BEAC ANNIVERSARY
DECLARATION**

Date: 11 January 2003

***BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC 10 YEAR
ANNIVERSARY***

DECLARATION

adopted at a Meeting of Heads of Government of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden, together with a representative of the European Commission and in the presence of the Presidency of the European Union:

Much has been achieved through 10 years of Barents co-operation. This is a unique undertaking that confirms the value of close interaction between intergovernmental co-operation, co-operation among county administrations and direct people-to-people co-operation. It also has an important role in the strengthening and further development of the Northern Dimension of EU policies and the implementation of its Action Plans. Furthermore, it is an important framework for interaction with Canada, Japan and the United States in the high north of Europe.

The Barents co-operation has from its very start aimed at answering the challenges in our northern areas and improving the living conditions of the people. These aims can only be reached through continuous, multifaceted efforts in many areas, ranging from overall security, environmental concern and economic development to the human dimension and indigenous peoples' interests.

On the basis of our discussions today we have made the following specific commitments to advance co-operation:

We undertake to develop our societies in full respect of internationally recognised principles for ensuring sustainable development through a balanced and integrated approach to economic development, social development and environmental protection.

We will improve conditions for transport and travel in the eastern and western directions within the Region to facilitate trade and mobility. We encourage economic operators to take advantage of increasing business opportunities.

We will ensure that all border crossings in the Barents Region fulfil the objective that goods should pass in no more than two hours and will make every effort to facilitate travel for people across borders.

We intend to reinforce co-operation among our customs, police, immigration and border authorities to combat crime. We will make a concerted effort to stop trafficking in human beings in the Barents Region.

We support the work initiated regarding the preparation of a Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being. We urge our health and social authorities to gain full control of the spread of tuberculosis in the Barents Region within 10 years.

We favour expanded co-operation in education and research to maintain a high level of knowledge and skills as a basis for the development of the Region.

We welcome the ambitions pronounced by the Governors and the political leaders in the Barents Region in their Memorandum, their Youth Programme and their Action Plan for Cultural Co-operation.

We encourage co-operation between youth groups and will continue to improve opportunities for youth mobility and multilateral co-operation in the Region.

We stress the need to strengthen the Barents cultural identity, with due respect to its historical traditions, and will encourage co-operation between cultural stakeholders. We are launching a process to shed new light on the history of the Barents Region.

We will further strengthen the involvement of indigenous peoples (Saami, Nenets and Vepsian) in the Barents co-operation.

We note with concern the possible impacts of climate change in the Barents Region and will co-operate closely to implement mitigation measures and to adapt to the effects of climate change. We are all committed to the goals of the Kyoto Protocol and look forward to its early entry into force.

We express our satisfaction with the breakthrough reached during our discussions on the MNEPR¹ Agreement. We welcome the invitation by Sweden to host the signing ceremony when the final text is ready. We will ensure that concrete and tangible results are achieved regarding nuclear safety in the Barents Region, especially in areas such as the Andreeva Bay. Through the NDEP² and its Support Fund, a multilateral response will be given to contamination, pollution, spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste problems affecting North West Russia. We also support the instrumental role of the NEFCO³ in implementing small and medium sized environmental and cleaner production projects.

We will enable our emergency and rescue services to assist each other in the Barents Region. Major civil-military exercises like Barents Rescue 2001 will be conducted at regular intervals. We welcome the offer by Norway to host the next such exercise in 2004 or 2005.

We stress the importance of the enhanced co-ordination and co-operation between the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other intergovernmental regional bodies, such as the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, with the aim to maximise the effectiveness of our efforts in different areas.

Kirkenes, 11 January, 2003

¹ Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation

² Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership

³ Nordic Environment Finance Corporation