

## **DECLARATION**

### **Fifth session of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Luleå, Sweden 20th January 1998**

1. We the Council have reviewed progress in the Barents Co-operation, in the five years since the Kirkenes Declaration and the foundation of the Council and the Regional Council in 1993. This review has included consideration of work completed and in progress, and the redefining of priorities in various areas of co-operation.

2. We affirm the continuing validity of the principles and aims in the Kirkenes Declaration and declare our determination to continue to act to ensure sustainable development and common and comprehensive security in the Barents Region. We recognize that regional co-operation is an important factor in promoting pan-European co-operation and security. We welcome the recent OSCE decision to develop a Document Charter on European Security.

3. We appreciate the key role of the Regional Council in the Barents co-operation. We welcome and endorse the admission of the counties Oulu and Vasterbotten to full membership of the Regional Council. Their admission substantially strengthens the Barents co-operation.

4. We pay particular attention to the views of the indigenous people regarding their living conditions and traditional subsistence activities and reflect these in our programmes.

5. We welcome the growing involvement of the Observer State in the work of the Council.

6. The accession of Finland and Sweden to the European Union provides the Union with a strengthened Northern dimension. The Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Communities and their member states and the Russian Federation will facilitate closer relations with Russia in many fields. These developments enhance the framework for the European Commission's contribution to the Barents Co-operation and have opened new opportunities for the use of existing Community instruments in the Region.

7 (8). Most of our programmes for co-operation are long-term and results may not be immediately visible. Nonetheless many programmes are progressing. We welcome as an indispensable achievement of the Barents Co-operation, the multiplying of contacts, ties and projects involving local government, non-governmental organisations, businesses, professionals and the thousands of individuals that have enriched the democratic values in the region and enhanced confidence in its future. Many links have been established with bodies capable of providing technical co-operation and financial development. These ties will be of great value to future co-operative efforts. We note also for instance the establishment of intra-regional air-connections and the "Cleaner Production" programme as well as projects under the regional "Barents Program".

9. Over the next years we shall place more emphasis on economic co-operation, the improvement of the environment including nuclear safety, the energy field, particularly energy efficiency, educational and research exchange and public health programmes.

We also welcome efforts to increase civic security in our co-operative objectives. Our governments will bilaterally encourage confidence enhancing contacts between our military institutions in the Region.

10. More remains to be done to encourage investment and promote trade. Obstacles still exist in the areas of infrastructure and trade barriers, related i.a. to legal and administrative procedures, high customs charges and taxes. To effectively address issues holding back co-operation in trade and investment is of crucial importance to economic exchange and prosperity in the Region.

11. The need to restore and protect the environment from further degradation is now widely understood and accepted. High priority will continue to be given to the implementation of projects in these fields.

12. We are particularly concerned about the handling of nuclear waste and nuclear safety in the region and encourage increased multilateral co-operation in these areas. The Lepse project and the project on treatment of liquid nuclear waste in Murmansk are good examples.

13. We should like steps to be taken towards sustainable management and development of the energy systems in the region, making use of its rich energy resources. A task of the ad hoc Working Group on Energy will be to follow up the Action Plan on Improvement of the Energy Situation in the Region.

14. In the interests of fostering people-to-people contacts and the sharing of experience across borders within the Region, we strongly support more active cultural and educational exchanges.