

Workshop on development of a draft Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region

Prepared for the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment as input to
work under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council

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Executive summary

The Norwegian chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) for 2012-2013 has ranked the elaboration of an Action Plan on Climate Change as one of its top priorities. Climate change will affect everyone and active involvement of all Working Groups under the BEAC in the elaboration of an Action Plan is essential.

To initiate a process for elaborating measures and projects that are both ambitious and realistic, a workshop was held 20-21 March 2012. The workshop was organized by the Norwegian Ministry for the Environment in consultation with the Chair of the BEAC Working Group of Environment. Ten of the working groups participated and provided initial comments on the groups' possible contribution to the work. Their comments are briefly summarized in this report.

In line with previous reports and recommendations within the BEAC cooperation, the workshop agreed that the following four policy areas were adequate for grouping the measures and projects to be developed: Mitigation; adaptation; research, observations, monitoring and modeling; and outreach.

All working groups were invited to develop a limited number of measures and projects within their field of activities. The proposed recommendations should be ambitious and achievable.

Proposals are to be submitted as soon as possible but not later than 10 September 2012 to Ingrid Lillehagen, Norwegian Ministry of the Environment (Ingrid.Lillehagen@md.dep.no) with a copy to Jan Thompson (jt@md.dep.no). On the basis of the submissions, a first draft of the Action Plan will be prepared and sent all groups by the end of September for their comments. Comments to the draft will be collected through an e-mail exchange, possibly supplemented by another workshop. Thereafter the draft will be revised and submitted to the CSO.

1: Introduction

At the meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) in Oslo in December 2011, an Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region was a key issue. This was in response to the call from the XIII Session of the BEAC in Kiruna on 12 October 2011, where Foreign Ministers of Finland, Russia, Sweden and Norway in the joint communiqué *“welcome the development of an Action Plan on Climate Change in the Barents Region that will contain concrete recommendations to the Member States and call upon all sectors to engage in these efforts”*.

Previously Environment Ministers had made strong calls for development of an Action Plan on Climate Change in the declarations from their meetings in Tromsø in 2010 and in Umeå in 2011.

The Norwegian chairmanship of the BEAC for 2012-2013 has ranked the elaboration of an Action Plan on Climate Change as one of its top priorities. Climate change will affect everyone and active involvement of all Working Groups and sectors in the elaboration of an Action Plan is essential. To initiate a process for recommending measures and projects that are both ambitious and realistic a workshop was organized to engage all Working Groups under the BEAC.

2: The Losby Workshop

The workshop was held 20-21 March 2012 at Losby Gods, near Oslo. It was organized by the Norwegian Ministry for the Environment in consultation with the Chair of the BEAC Working Group of Environment. The agenda of the workshop is included in Annex 1. In total it was attended by 32 persons. Ten Working Groups of the BEAC and Barents Regional Council (BRC) were represented, see list of participants in Annex 2. PowerPoint presentations made at the workshop are available at <http://www.beac.st>.

The workshop heard several presentations on recent developments in science and policy related to climate change in the Arctic region. The representatives of the Working Groups presented initial reactions to the theme of the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to create a common baseline for the subsequent discussions in the Working Groups on their contribution to the Action Plan. The outcome of the groups' discussions, by way of proposals for concrete actions and projects, is to be submitted for the preparation of a document for further consideration by the CSO. This report, providing a brief summary of the workshop, is intended to facilitate the further working in the Working Groups. Additional information on the further process is given in Section 5.

In the opening part of the workshop it was underlined that climate change is already observed in the Arctic and the Barents Region, and that strong changes are to be expected unless large global emission reductions are implemented. The special challenges posed by the permafrost in the region were pointed out, as well as the challenges connected to the sources and sinks in the region (melting permafrost with release of methane and CO₂, and increased forest growth in a warmer climate).

The CSO is aiming at developing concrete recommendations to governments. Climate change will affect all areas of the society and it is therefore of utmost importance to involve all sectors and working groups – climate change is not just an environmental issue. The aim should be to develop recommendations that are ambitious, realistic, and achievable. An important consideration should be to focus on those areas where cooperation within the framework of the Barents Region offers specific value added relative to other forums of cooperation, and to avoid duplication of work.

3: Scientific and policy developments in recent years

The ACIA-report (Arctic Climate Impact Assessment) published in 2004 provides the most comprehensive assessment of climate change issues in the Arctic. Important developments in climate change science after the release of the ACIA report are reflected in the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in 2007, and the Fifth Assessment Report to be published in 2013/14 will provide further updates.

Presentations were made of recent developments with particular focus on the Arctic and the Barents Region. The main findings of ACIA are still valid, such as: The Arctic climate is now warming rapidly (2011 is the warmest year on record) and larger changes are projected; Arctic sea ice is disappearing at a rate that is higher than projected; Arctic vegetation zones are projected to shift; extreme weather events with a range of different impacts are expected to increase; reduced sea ice is very likely to lead to increased marine transport and easier access to resources; and thawing ground will disrupt transportation, buildings, and other infrastructure.

The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) has undertaken a significant amount of work related to climate change in the Arctic. This includes for instance an assessment of the latest findings about the changing state of the Arctic Cryosphere presented in a report on “Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic” (SWIPA).

The workshop also heard presentations on recent work in Finland and the Russian Federation.

Perhaps the most important development in relation to climate change in the Arctic during the last few years has been the knowledge becoming available on the importance of black carbon and other

short-lived climate forcers (or pollutants). By reducing emissions of black carbon it is possible to reduce the increased warming predicted for the coming two-three decades by about two-thirds. The Arctic Council reported on the substantive work that has undertaken on short-lived climate forcers, in particular on black carbon. The work was the basis for the recommendations at the ministerial meeting in Nuuk (2011) encouraging Arctic Council nations to voluntarily consider actions to reduce emissions of black carbon. Work on short-lived climate forcers is continuing with increased focus on methane. Sweden presently holds the chairmanship of the Arctic Council and is exploring possibilities for developing a treaty among Arctic nations to reduce emissions of short-lived pollutants. It was pointed out that a relevant area for cooperation between the Arctic Council and BEAC could be on reducing emissions of black carbon from sources such as land based and maritime use of diesel, residential heating, and biomass burning.

4: Initial comments from Working Groups

Representatives from 10 BEAC and BRC Working Groups, as well as the International Barents Secretariat and NEFCO provided initial comments on their work in relation to climate change, as well as on efforts that could be undertaken in the coming months to develop input to the work on a draft Action Plan. Some of groups had prepared presentations on their activities; these are included in www.beac.st. A very short summary of the comments from the representatives of the groups are given below. It should be noted that climate change is a new issue for several groups which has not yet been addressed in the work of the groups. However, none of the groups objected to making an effort in preparing input to the further work. For several of the groups there are evident points of common interest, in particular with the Working Group on the Environment. Groups were encouraged to cooperate in the further work. It was also underlined that one should avoid overlap with activities under the Arctic Council, but rather seek cooperation.

Working Group on Economic Cooperation (WGEC): The group's work includes northern sea route and mining sectors through seminars and other forms of information exchange. The group has not yet discussed input to the draft Action Plan, but will take it up when the group meets in mid-April.

Barents Forest Sector Task Force (BFSTF): Relevant issues for consideration are for instance forests and other vegetation as sources and sinks for greenhouse gases, as well as forest fire control. The group intends to prepare concrete proposals to the draft Action Plan and will start the work immediately.

Working Group on Environment (WGE): Work on climate change is very important for the group, and appreciates this opportunity to work with other groups on climate issues. The work of the WGE is

organized in four sub-groups on nature protection, water issues, cleaner production and hot spots. The activities of the four subgroups can both directly and indirectly be linked to climate change issues. The group will work on input to the plan through recommendations they consider achievable. There are evident points of common interest i.a. with the Barents Forest Sector Task Force, the Working Group on Economic Cooperation, the Steering Committee for the Barents Euro- arctic Transport Area, the Joint Working Group on Energy, Joint Working Group on Youth, and Joint Working Group on Education and Research.

Steering Committee for the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA): The general objective of the group is to improve transport connections in the region. Climate change challenges are faced in efforts to reduce CO2 emissions from the sector, land use planning, and public transport in cities. Extreme weather events with closure of roads and rail are posing problems. Safe sea transport is an additional element of the work. Possible input to the further work on the Action Plan will be discussed at the group's forthcoming meeting in May.

Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS): The group has not yet been addressing climate change issues, but this will be taken up shortly. It is expected that input from the group will most likely be on adaptation and outreach.

Joint Working Group on Education and Research (JWGER): The representatives reported that the group has not yet taken up climate change issues. With the strong group of the Universities of Tromsø and Arkhangelsk, working together under the umbrella of The University of the Arctic, it should be possible to contribute on research and education, as well as on outreach.

Joint Working Group on Energy (JEWG): Energy efficiency and renewable energy are important elements of the group's work, and these are highly relevant for climate change, as well as for security of supply and competitiveness. Exchange of best practises and other information are important in the group's work. This includes workshops where also the EU- Commission has participated. It is expected that the next meeting of the group will be held in the autumn.

Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY): The ambition is to undertake work related to environmental issues. Since the group does not have special expertise on environmental issues outreach seems to be the most relevant area of work for the group, which will hold its next meeting in mid-April.

Regional Working Group on Environment: This group cooperates closely with the Working Group on Environment, but is in addition working in relation to the mining industry. Climate change is part of practically all work in the group. It is expected that the group may contribute most to the outreach area, with special emphasis on use of local input. Providing information to local administrations and regional decisions are very important issues.

Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (WGIP): This group has good access to local knowledge, not least when it comes to adaptation to changing natural conditions. An important issue is the increased pressure and risk of conflict between local indigenous communities, especially traditional reindeer herding and land use change (such as forests, wind power, and mining).

International Barents Secretariat (IBS): The secretariat is prepared to play an active role in follow-up of an Action Plan. It could most likely play an important role in outreach, particularly in preparing and dissemination of information.

NEFCO – Nordic Environment Finance Corporation: With Nordic funding, NEFCO carries out project preparation and financing of cost-efficient environmental projects in several former Soviet countries, in particular the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Belarus. NEFCO covers a broad scope of activity. In the Barents Region, present focus is on hot spots, energy efficiency and cleaner production also being important target areas. NEFCO can provide important feed-back from real life projects, including carbon financing. NEFCO is not, however, funding projects on education, research and capacity building as such.

5: The process for developing a draft Action Plan

In line with previous reports and recommendations within the BEAC cooperation, the workshop agreed that the following four policy areas were adequate for grouping the measures and projects to be developed:

- Mitigation
- Adaptation
- Research, observations, monitoring and modelling
- Outreach

All working groups are invited to develop a *limited number* of measures and projects within their field of activities. The proposed recommendations should be ambitious and achievable. The groups are invited to consider whether it would be feasible to attach indicators to each recommendation to facilitate reporting and assessment of progress. Throughout the process, the Working Groups are

encouraged to make contacts between themselves and cooperate, as appropriate, in order to arrive at an optimal division of labour and to capture synergies.

Proposals are to be submitted as soon as possible but not later than 10 September 2012 to Ingrid Lillehagen, Norwegian Ministry of the Environment (Ingrid.Lillehagen@md.dep.no) with copy to Jan Thompson (jt@md.dep.no). On the basis of the submissions, a first draft of the Action Plan will be prepared and sent all groups by the end of September. The groups will be invited to comment upon the draft through an e-mail exchange, possibly supplemented in a workshop, if this is considered useful. Thereafter the draft will be revised and then submitted to the CSO.