



Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Ninth Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment
17 February 2010, Tromsø, Norway

Declaration

Deputy Environment Ministers and senior representatives of Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission met in Tromsø on 17 February 2010 for the Ninth Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). The meeting was also attended by representatives of observer states, the Barents Regional Council (BRC), the Regional Working Group on Environment, the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples, the Nordic Environmental Finance Corporation and other invited guests.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council Environment Ministers

recalled the commitments stated in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Environmental Action Programme adopted in Bodø in 1994 and followed up by Environment Ministers meetings in Rovaniemi in 1995, in St. Petersburg in 1997, in Umeå in 1999, in Kirkenes in 2001, in Luleå in 2003, in Rovaniemi in 2005, and in Moscow in 2007;

expressed their deep concern for the major environmental challenges facing the Barents region, connected to climate change, contamination by hazardous substances, pollution of water, and loss of biodiversity, and *stressed* the importance of regional co-operation to meet these challenges, including joint efforts for capacity-building, investments in cleaner technologies, rational use of the natural resources, and efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity;

welcomed the Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BEAC, adopted in Murmansk in October 2009, and *noted with anticipation* the focus area of eco-efficient economy, including revitalised work in BEAC on climate change, which will receive special attention under the Swedish Presidency 2009-2011;

stressed the importance of active co-operation between the Working Group on Environment, the Barents Regional Council, and the Regional Working Group on Environment;

highlighted the importance of active engagement of indigenous peoples in addressing challenges and opportunities in the Barents region;

welcomed the Declaration of the Arctic Council Ministers, adopted in Tromsø in April 2009, and *stressed* the importance of strengthening the co-operation between the working groups under BEAC and the Arctic Council in order to find synergies and avoid duplication of work

welcomed the second meeting of the Russia-EU Permanent Partnership Council on Environment held in Moscow November 2009, and *called for* considering synergies between

the activities of the Working Group on Environment and of the respective working subgroups of the EU-Russia Dialogue on Environment;

welcomed the contribution of the International Barents Secretariat(IBS) to strengthening the co-operation in the Barents region;

expressed appreciation of the work carried out in the Subgroups on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption, Nature Protection and Water Issues under the BEAC Working Group on environment and *endorsed* the Report of the BEAC Working Group on Environment on the activity in 2008-2009.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Environment Ministers

1. alarmed by the speed of climate change in the Arctic, with increasing temperatures, shorter winter season, reduction of sea ice, thawing of permafrost and release of methane the Ministers *noted with concern* the impact of the climatic processes in the Arctic on the global climate system, as well as increased economic losses and threats to nature and people in the Barents Region, in particular to indigenous peoples;

2. *acknowledged* the 15th Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen in December 2009 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) as an important step on the way to the development of a comprehensive, global and binding agreement aiming at preventing the global temperature rise from exceeding two degrees;

3. *welcomed* the recommendations from the conference on climate change in the Barents region, held in Vadsø September 2009;

4. *emphasised* that climate change issues concern the whole Barents cooperation and *called for* co-ordinated action, involving indigenous peoples, to develop an action plan for further work on climate change in the BEAC under the lead of the Committee of Senior Officials,. Such a plan should be based on previous work and include cross-sector interaction, for example strengthened co-operation to identify climate-related health challenges;

5. *called for* more systematic collection and sharing of knowledge throughout the Barents Region on strategies and measures for adaptation to climate change, and *encouraged* active distribution of information on climate change issues in a form accessible to the general public and in the educational system;

6. *supported* the priorities set by the Arctic Council to pay increased attention to adaptation to climate change, including issues related to biodiversity and the role of indigenous peoples, as well as to mitigation of short lived climate forces in the Arctic, and *encouraged* the exploration of synergies between these activities and the work within BEAC;

7. *recognised* the need for increased knowledge and international co-operation on climate change and environmental issues in the High North and *welcomed* the establishment of a Research Centre on climate change and environment in Tromsø;

8. *welcomed* the up-coming meeting of BEAC Ministers for Enterprise, Energy and Communications on energy efficiency and renewable energy in 2010, enhancing the work towards an eco-efficient economy, and in this regard *emphasised* the important role of the Energy Efficiency Centres in the Barents region.

THE BARENTS ENVIRONMENTAL “HOT SPOTS”

The Environment Ministers

9. *recalled* that the Barents environmental “hot spots” listed in 2003 were considered the most urgent areas of concern related to pollution in the Barents region and *noted with appreciation* the co-operative efforts made to reach the target agreed in 2003 to launch investment project in all “hot spots” within 10 years;

10. *noted with appreciation* that 50 sector studies, defined project development measures or actual implementation of key projects have been approved for funding by the Barents Hot Spots Facility, managed by The Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO);

11. *welcomed* the report of the Ad-Hoc Task Force on elaboration of criteria and procedures for excluding Barents environmental “hot spots” from the list, *supported* the method of work presented in the report and *underlined* the important role of Russian authorities in the process of excluding “hot spots” from the list;

12. *recommended* that the ad hoc task force should continue in the capacity of a temporary subgroup under the Working Group on Environment, co-chaired by Russia and the Presidency and in close co-operation with regional representatives, with the mandate to facilitate the process of excluding “hot spots” from the list in line with the proposed criteria and procedure until the next ministerial meeting;

13. *called for* the Working Group on Environment to oversee the work as outlined in the report on elaboration of procedures and criteria for excluding hot spots and give necessary guidance, and to the next ministerial meeting assess progress made and consider to revise the hot spot list, excluding the “hot spots” that fulfil the criteria, and present it to the Ministers;

14. acknowledging the need to prioritise and initially focus on certain hot spots in order to achieve tangible results, *encouraged* further efforts to:

- explore possibilities for projects together with the sub-group on cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption;
- strengthen and build on the work of existing regional working groups on “hot spots” in the Republics of Komi, Karelia and in Murmansk Oblast and encourage the development of analogous working groups in Arkhangelsk Oblast and Nenets Autonomous District;
- make use of the NEFCO Barents Hot Spot Facility in the work on exclusion, and explore possibilities for synergies with the work carried out in the Arctic Council, including its Project Support Instrument, and NPA Arctic, and other sources of financing;

15. *underlined* the need for raising the awareness about the Barents Environmental “hot spots” and *called for* the development of an information system about the Barents Environmental “hot spots” list as part of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council’s web site by the end of 2010.

CLEANER PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND CONSUMPTION

The Environment Ministers

16. *emphasised* the importance of the extraordinary meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in their efforts to achieve greater coordination, and *highlighted* the importance of the up-coming negotiations on a convention for minimising and, where feasible, ultimately eliminating global anthropogenic releases of mercury, thereby also protecting human health and the environment in the Barents region;

17. *welcomed* the revision of the Strategy Document for Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption and agreed to conduct activities in these fields;

18. *encouraged* contribution to the Marrakech process by identifying special needs in the region, sharing best practices, and proposing ideas for programmes and activities to the 10 Year Framework of Programs for Sustainable Consumption and Production;

19. *called for* coordinated efforts between the Working Group on Environment and the Joint Energy Working Group on developing projects on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and cleaner production and consumption;

20. *emphasised* the importance of further co-operation to promote cleaner production practices, and sustainable consumption and production tools such as Sustainable Public Purchasing, Environmental Management Systems and Best Available Techniques (BAT), and exchange of experience in the use of eco-labelling, environmental taxes and legislation;

21. *called for* further development of cooperation with different stakeholders, including universities, in order to integrate aspects of cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption in educational curricula and business management;

22. *underlined* the need for stronger focus on behavioural changes and sustainable consumption, supported by education, economic incentives and societal planning, using the experiences from the Marrakech Task Forces.

NATURE PROTECTION

The Environment Ministers

23. *emphasised* that 2010 as the UN Year of Biodiversity should lead to increased activity in the Barents Region to implement commitments of the BEAC countries under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, and The UNESCO Convention on World Heritage Properties;

24. *acknowledged* that the global target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 most likely would not be reached and *urged* the countries to contribute to the development of post 2010 biodiversity targets at the Special Session of Biodiversity of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2010 and the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity in October 2010;

25. *noted* that climate change is a major stressor to regional biodiversity and therefore *agreed* on the importance of following-up the study on impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystems goods and services in the Barents Region and to co-operate with the Nordic Council of Minister in this regard;

26. *acknowledged* the importance of the Habitat Contact Forum held in Umeå 2008, *supported* the recommendation to preserve wetlands and forests in the Barents Region, due to their capacity of halting emissions, storing carbon and preserving natural habitats of flora and fauna, and *looked forward to* the next forum in Archangelsk in 2010, which will focus on wetland conservation, forest protection, coastal ecosystems and sacred heritage sites, inviting stakeholders from relevant sectors;

27. *urged* further steps to protect the last pristine boreal forests in the Barents Region in particular through further development of protected areas and increased focus on sustainable forestry, and *stressed* the need to improve co-operation between relevant stakeholders;

28. *underlined* the need to establish a representative and well managed network of protected areas in the Barents Region (BPAN), and in this regard *recommended* the use of models and experience from similar networks, as well as to cooperate with the Arctic Council working group on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF);

29. *stressed* the importance of developing the Green Belt of Fennoscandia-network of existing and planned protected areas from the Gulf of Finland to the Barents Sea, supporting ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable transboundary co-operation between Russia, Norway and Finland;

30. *acknowledged* the results of the project Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach to Conserve Biodiversity and Minimise Habitat Fragmentation (ECORA) and called for the dissemination of results in the Barents region;

31. *welcomed* the proposal to establish a Saami knowledge centre on the Kola Peninsula with a focus on sustainable traditional use of natural resources, to be followed up in the BEAC Working Group of Indigenous Peoples.

WATER ISSUES

The Environment Ministers

32. *emphasised* the need for improving the quality of drinking water in the Barents Region and also recognised the relation between clean water and socio-economic factors, as treated under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe/World Health Organisation (UNECE/WHO) Protocol on Water and Health;

33. *welcomed* the plans for a comprehensive water project in Archangelsk oblast, with the possibility of exchanging experience with other parts of the Barents region. The project should be developed in the subgroup on Water Issues in close cooperation with the Regional Working Group on Environment, as well as to pursue the possibility of developing the project in the framework of the UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health;

34. *welcomed* the upcoming Russian governmental programme Clean Water as well as the Norwegian initiative to create a water fund in the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development with a possible window for financing projects also in Russia, and emphasized the importance of seeking good cooperation with existing financial instruments, such as the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) Support Fund;

35. *underlined* the need for further studies on the correlation between climate change and the condition of water bodies and wetlands, and *called for* strengthened cooperation in the Barents Region on sustainable management of water resources and water use with respect to mitigation and adaptation to climate change, hereunder flood risk forecasting and flood prevention, issues concerning clean drinking water, and sewage treatment;

36. *underlined* the importance of continued co-operation on transboundary waters, for harmonising monitoring and research methods according to international standards, like EU's Water Framework Directive and *welcomed* the follow up of the work with the joint monitoring and management of the Pasvik(Paz) river basin;

37. *recognised* the close interrelationship between the marine environment of the Barents and the Baltic Sea and environment on land, and *underlined* the importance of preventing and reducing pollution of the marine environment from land based sources and of terrestrial areas from the sea.

COOPERATION WITH THE REGIONAL LEVEL AND FUTURE WORK

The Environment Ministers

38. *recognised* that participation of the regional level is a precondition for success in the Barents co-operation, *supported* close cooperation between the Regional Working Group on Environment and the Working Group on Environment, and *encouraged* further measures to promote participation of regional representatives in WGE activities;

39. *welcomed* the work done by the Regional Working Group on Environment including the preparation of an Action Programme;

40. *welcomed* regional activity in the fields of surface and drinking water protection and improvement, biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, increasing environmental knowledge and consciousness, as well as regional efforts with regard to the Barents environmental "hot spots";

41. *welcomed* the regional projects on environmentally sustainable small enterprises in the Barents Region and migration of Atlantic salmon and its adaptation to climate change;

42. *requested* the Working Group on Environment to report on its activity to the next meeting of the Barents Environment Ministers;

43. *were pleased* to accept the offer by Sweden to assume the chairmanship of the Working Group on the Environment for 2010-2011, the chairmanship will thereafter rotate from Sweden to Finland.