

The Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the Members
of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council
(Archangelsk, September 10, 1996)

STATEMENT

1. At the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation the Ministers of Transport of Iceland and Norway, senior officials from the transport ministries Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Representative of the European Commission met in Archangelsk on the 10th of September, 1996.

2. The Meeting was attended by Observers from Germany, Japan and Poland.

3. The Participants were guided by the Declaration of the first Meeting of Ministers of Transport of the Barents Region in Alta on September 8, 1993 and the Joint Statement adopted by the Third Session of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region Council held on October 9-10, 1995 in Rovaniemi.

The Participants noted that transport plays an important role in the economic and social development and that the national transport strategies of the BEAC countries should be worked out with due regard to their impact on the safety and the environment.

4. The Participants acknowledged that there is a common interest of the BEAC countries towards the integration and the creation of an efficient transport system that will contribute to the development of business and commercial ties, tourism and economy of the Region.

5. The Participants recognized that there is a common interest for creating a high efficient transport system in the Barents/Euro-Arctic Region and called for enhancing of efforts in this direction in the context of the development of Pan-European cooperation in the field of transport.

6. The Participants confirmed their wish to focus their efforts on working out a concept for the development of the transport system in accordance with the concept of the "Sustainable Development", adopted by the World Forum in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as a long term goal in the Region.

7. The Participants discussed the present situation and ways of development of the transport in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration of the II Pan-European Conference on Transport and the resolutions of the Session of the European Conference of the Ministers of Transport (ECMT) held in May, 1996 and confirmed their adherence to the following principles:

- the process of opening gradually the access to the national transport markets will be developed on a reciprocal and mutually beneficial basis,
- the transport should be developed in accordance with national interests and the principles of the market economy;
- the gradual optimization of the border crossing procedure for the passengers and cargoes.

8. The Participants noted that the BEAC countries should use as much as possible the existing international agreements, standards and provisions elaborated within the framework of organizations and treaties currently in force.

9. The Participants confirmed their readiness to take an active part in the process of developing different projects of the transport system in the BEAC Region with the aim of greater integration into the Pan-European transport system.

10. The Participants took note of the fact that the membership of Denmark, Finland and Sweden in the European Union and the strengthening the relations

between Russia and the EU open new possibilities for raising the efficiency of their cooperation in the field of transport in the Northern Europe and for using the potential of the EU programmes and its financial instruments for dealing with urgent transport problems in the Region.

11. The Participants welcomed the important work made by the WG on Economic Cooperation of the BEAC, the Barents Regional Council and the Regional Committee on Transport and Communication in the field of research and selection of the priority projects as well as practical activities of the local transport organizations in realization of the mentioned projects.

12. The Participants recognized that the development of the Arctic transport network must be intensified under one global arrangement, the Euro-Arctic Transport network, which comprises concrete regional transport projects complementing each other and integrating with Crete corridors. The Participants in particular pointed at the following as priority transport projects:

- reconstruction and modernization of the Murmansk commercial sea port, the Archangelsk commercial sea and river ports.
- reconstruction and modernization of international airports of Murmansk, Archangelsk and Petrozavodsk;
- construction of the aircraft service and maintenance base in the Archangelsk Airport;
- improvement of the facilities supporting the flight connection Lulea-Rovaniemi-Murmansk-Archangelsk;
- construction and reconstruction of the road connections Kirkenes - Nikel - Murmansk;
- completion of the construction of the railway Ledmozero - Kochkoma;
- development of the border-crossing stations of Vartsila/Niirala, Kivijarvi/Vartius, Kelloselka/Salla and Borisoglebsk/Storskog.

The Participants recommended to combine efforts among interested countries for the realization of these projects.

The Participants welcomed the practical steps made by the Russian side for realization of some priority transport projects on its territory.

13. The Participants stressed that the efficiency of the work of border-crossing and customs points is vital for the improvement of the regional transportation system.

14. The Participants noted with satisfaction the fact that within framework of the "North-West Transport Corridor" project financed through TACIS programme a comprehensive analysis of the traffic in the region will be carried out. Having this in mind the Participants expressed the view that in the context of this project elaboration of recommendations on feasibility will be highly desirable for the following specific projects:

- development of the road between Salla and Alakurtti;
- the project for construction of the railway between Karpogory and Vendenga;
- construction and development of the road between Petrozavodsk and Parikkala;
- construction and reconstruction of the railway Kirkenes - Nikel - Murmansk;

as well as consideration of questions of coordination of the BEAC transport system with the other regions of Europe and Asia.

15. The Participants called on the interested international financial and transport institutions to render their assistance with regard to reassessment of the abovementioned projects, bearing in mind that economic criteria (such as a minimum return of investment) will be decisive for such financing.

16. The Participants welcomed the Nenets Autonomous region as a full member in the Barents Regional Council and supported its initiative to consider at the expert level the following projects:

- reconstruction and modernization of the Naryan-Mar commercial port;
- reconstruction of the Naryan-Mar airport for landing of heavy aircraft;
- construction and reconstruction of the road between Naryan-Mar and Usinsk;

- construction of terminal on Barents Sea coast (Varandeya area) for storing and shipping of oil and gas from fields of the Northern part of Timano-Pechera province and shelf area of the Barents Sea.

17. The participants noted the activity by the Barents Regional Secretariat in preparing the study on the transport aspects in the Region and are looking forward for its results.

18. The Participants expressed their satisfaction with the information that all-year round navigation in the Northern Sea Route is effective in the Western part of the Russian Arctic, for which purpose there are arctic ships of reinforced ice-breaking type, as well as appropriate ice-breaking and navigational facilities.

The Participants recognized the importance of the work made by the BEAC Working Group on the Northern Sea Route (NSR), recognizing it as a priority project as well as in the framework of the «International Northern Sea Route Programme» (INSROP) and call for the interested financial institutions to render support to the realization of the project.

19. The Participants agreed to support fully the planned the III Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki on June 23-25, 1997, and the following high level meeting in St. Petersburg on June 26-28, 1997, and exchanged views on the draft agenda as proposed by the Steering Committee for the above mentioned Conference.

20. In accordance with the recommendations approved by the Meeting of the BEAC Transport Ministers held in Alta, Norway in 1993, and with reference to the meeting of senior officials in Rovaniemi in September 1995, the Participants called for high-level officials from transport authorities to hold meetings on an «ad-hoc» basis. The main object of such meetings should be mutual information on project status and analyses on important projects of common interest in the Barents Region. A meeting on an «ad-hoc» basis could, if necessary, be organized in March-April, 1997 with the aim to prepare concrete materials for the III Pan European Conference.

21. The Participants authorized the Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation Mr.N.Tsakh to inform the III Pan-European conference (June, 1997) about the results of this Meeting.

22. The date and venue of the next meeting of the Transport Ministers of the Member States of the BEAC will be determined at a later time.