

**Minutes from the Meeting in
Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group on Environment (BEAC
WGE), 21. January 2010, Oslo, Norway**

1. Opening of the meeting, presentation of participants

WGE Chair Ms Anne Berteig, Norway, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The participants around the table presented themselves (annex 1 – List of participants).

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda for the meeting was adopted without any amendments (annex 2- Agenda).

3. Adoption of the minutes from the WGE-meeting 8-9. October 2009

The minutes were adopted without amendments.

4. Information from Barents Euro-Arctic Council's Committee of Senior Officials

Ms. Ida Reuterswärd, Sweden informed the meeting that the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had assumed the chairmanship of the Barents Council in Murmansk 14 October 2009, and handed out a brochure, informing about Sweden's main priorities for the chairmanship period. Focus area of the Swedish chairmanship is development of an eco-efficient economy – strengthening cooperation to meet the interlinked challenges of economic growth, climate change, and sustainable use of natural resources. WGE will have a special opportunity to contribute to these goals when Sweden assumes the responsibility for BEAC WGE after the Ministers' meeting 17 February 2010.

Mr. Alexander Ignatiev, The international Barents Secretariat, shared information about the first CSO-meeting in Stockholm 1-2 February, where special attention will be given to the working groups.

5. Planning of the Minister's meeting in Tromsø 17. February 2010

WGE Chair, Ms Anne Berteig, presented Norway's draft program and agenda for the Minister's meeting 17. February in Tromsø. A draft list of participants to be invited to the meeting was also presented. The proposals made by Norway were discussed.

The Barents environmental "hot spots" and climate change were proposed on the agenda as special issues of presentation and discussion. The meeting agreed to these proposals. There should be a short presentation of the Ad-Hoc Task Force concerning Barents "hot spots" at the Ministers' meeting. If time allows, it could include one or two concrete show cases. As a background for the climate change discussion, Norway proposed to work out a document on the basis of the recommendations from the conference in Vadsø. See further decisions concerning this under agenda point 6.

Mr. Jan-Petter Hubert Hansen, Norway, reminded that 2010 is the year of biodiversity, and that biodiversity thus should be discussed at the Minister's meeting. This was agreed among the participants.

The meeting discussed the possibility of combining biodiversity with climate change as one agenda point. However, it was decided to have both items on the agenda separately.

Senior Advisor Inger Johanne Wiese from the Norwegian Ministry of Environment presented the plans for a Center on Climate and Environment in Tromsø, which will be the theme for the Ministers' excursion after their meeting 17. February. The plan for the excursion was supported by the participants of the meeting, and it was proposed to emphasise the link between science and policy in the presentation of the Center. It was also added that it would be interesting for the Ministers to learn more about research on climate change. It was decided that Norway should send out a more elaborated proposal for the excursion based upon the discussion at the meeting.

It was decided that Norway should revise the agenda based upon the discussion, and send out their new proposal for agenda together with the official invitations.

6. Follow up of the recommendations from the Climate change conference in Vadsø

The participants at the meeting discussed how the recommendations from the Climate change conference in Vadsø could be operationalized in order to give added value to other work on climate changes. Sweden announced that work on climate change will be one of their top priorities when they take over the chairmanship in the BEAC WGE after the Minister's meeting. They suggested that the report should be studied further and that this together with output from the CSO-meeting and the Ministers' meeting should be used as a basis for operationalization of the conclusions in the report from the conference. This approach was supported by the participants from the other countries, and all expressed willingness to participate in the follow-up work.

It was decided that Norway together with Sweden should prepare a background paper for the Ministers' meeting on this issue to be discussed at the CSO's meeting, and that the output from the CSO's meeting should form the basis for the discussion at the Ministers' meeting. Norway will circulate a draft paper on this issue by Wednesday 27. January.

7. Barents "Hot Spots"

The Ad-hoc Task Force on the Barents "hot spots" presented their draft report. The participants at the WGE meeting congratulated the Task Force with their work, and noted that the Task Force had come a long way in defining procedures and criteria for exclusions of "hot spots" from the list and approved of the proposed approach.

There was a discussion on how to follow up the work after the ministerial meeting, whether the Task Force should continue its work or a new body should take over. There would be need for a clear mandate, and this should be mentioned in the declaration from the Ministers' meeting.

Mr. Andrey Peshkov, Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology, highlighted that there is a need for monitoring of "hot spots" after exclusion from the list, both in order to prevent deterioration, but also to make it possible to include previous "hot spots" into the list again if necessary. He also reminded that the report needs to be translated into Russian at the Ministry.

Ms. Carola Bjørklund, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that the language in the report should be improved, and that there is a need to define certain terms in the report before it is endorsed by the ministers.

Mr. Henrik G Forsström, NEFCO, raised the question concerning the adoption process of the document. After a discussion, it was decided that the Task Force should deliver a clean version of the report the day after the WGE meeting and circulate it to the Task Force members as well as the current and up-coming WGE chairs for comments, before preparing a new draft for final approval. The document will be approved of by WGE intersessionally before the ministerial meeting.

WGE chair, Ms Anne Berteig, briefly informed about the presented a draft proposal for development of the information system for the AMAP/NEFCO “hot spots” as part of the website www.beac.st, and encouraged members of the WGE to comment on the draft.

8. Discussion of the Ministers’ declaration

The draft Ministers’ declaration was thoroughly discussed and several amendments were made at the meeting. This work was not finalized during the discussion, and several paragraphs and sentences still needed to be amended when this agenda item was closed. It was decided that the BEAC member countries should share the responsibility for completing the rephrasing still needed after the meeting, and that Norway as chair nation should send out a task concerning this work to the other countries as soon as possible after the meeting. The declaration will be finalized intersessionally.

9. Discussion of WGE’s report to the Ministers 2008-2009

WGE Chair, Ms Anne Berteig, referred to the draft report to the Ministers, presented to the meeting in paper copies. As the draft report was not discussed substantially at the meeting, it was agreed that the WGE Chair should circulate the draft to the participants, and that the parties should send coordinated proposals for ready text to the WGE Chair within 26. January. The report will be finalized intersessionally.

10. WGE’s report to BEAC Committee of Senior Officials 2009

WGE Chair, Ms Anne Berteig, referred to the draft report to BEAC Committee of Senior Officials 2009, which had been submitted to CSO within the deadline 20 January. As the draft report was not discussed substantially at the meeting, it was agreed that the WGE Chair should circulate the draft to the participants, and that the parties should send coordinated proposals for ready text to the WGE Chair within 26. January, so that a final version could be submitted to CSO in reasonable time before the CSO-meeting 1 February.

11. Any other business

No other business was brought to the table. The chair thanked the most enduring participants and interpreter for their hard work until 19:00 in the evening, and wished them a safe journey home.