

**JOINT STATEMENT  
OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL  
OF THE BARENTS EURO-ARTIC REGION**

**5-6 November 1996 Petrozavodsk**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. On the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark as well as the representative of the European Commission met in Petrozavodsk, the Russian Federation, on 5-6 November 1996 for the Fourth Session of the Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. The Session was attended by observers from Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, as well as by representatives of the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council, the indigenous peoples of the region and of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

1.2. The Council noted with satisfaction that cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is developing consistently and fruitfully thus making an active contribution to the strengthening of peace and security in Europe, for the benefit of the peoples of the Barents Region, and setting a good example of effective regional cooperation on the European scale.

1.3. The Council emphasized the importance of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the European Union on the basis of agreements, both in force and pending ratification. The Council expressed its hope that the programmes for Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) for 1996-1999, as well as various INTERREG-BARENTS programmes, will be implemented in the interests of the peoples of the Barents Region.

1.4. The Council welcomed the establishment of the Arctic Council by the eight Arctic countries, designed for circumpolar cooperation in the Arctic, and recommended cooperation and coordination of work in relevant areas, especially in the field of the environment, as identified by the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS).

1.5. The Council recognized the importance for the Barents Region of the results of the meeting of the Heads of Governments of the Council of the Baltic Sea States which took place in Visby (Visby Summit) in May 1996.

1.6. The Council noted with satisfaction the contribution of the Nordic Council of Ministers to cooperation in the Barents Region in the framework of the Nordic programme for areas adjacent to the Nordic region.

**II. EVALUATION OF REPORTS**

2.1. The Council appreciated the results of the ministerial meeting of the CBER on economy, finance, trade, industry and development (Murmansk, 31 May 1996). The Council noted that the participants expressed their readiness to improve the conditions for multilateral economic cooperation in the region. In this context the Council positively evaluated the International conferences on investments, held in Murmansk in November 1995 and October 1996.

2.2. The Council took note of the report on economic cooperation in the Barents Region prepared by the Working Group on Economic Cooperation of the CBER and approved its conclusions concerning preliminary results of the work on priority projects identified in the joint statement of the Third Session of the Council in Rovaniemi in 1995.

2.3. The Council appreciated the results of the meeting of the Ministers of Transport, held in Arkhangelsk on 10 September 1996, aimed at facilitating the improvements of the transport networks in the Barents Region in a pan-European perspective, eg. implementation of infrastructure projects, in particular sea and airport facilities, border crossings and road and railway links.

2.4. Council appreciated the results of the Second meeting of Ministers of Environment held in Rovaniemi on 15 December 1995.

2.5. The Council considered and approved the report on the work carried out by, the CBER Working Group on the Northern Sea Route.

2.6. The Council noted with satisfaction that the Venture Fund of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has started its activities in the northwestern part of the Russian Federation.

2.7. The Council welcomed the Sophia Declaration of Ministers of Environment of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (October 1995), in particular the chapter concerning dissemination of methods of Industrial waste minimisation in Europe on the basis of cleaner production principles.

2.8. The Council appreciates the activities reported by the Regional Council and the development of contacts and achievements on the regional, provincial and municipal levels for the purpose of improving the living conditions of the population of the region.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL**

3.1. Affirming its commitment to the aims and principles of cooperation in the Barents Region recorded in the Kirkenes Declaration, the Council intends to actively promote further development of cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, science and technology, to the environment, Infrastructure educational and cultural exchange, health as well as projects particularly aimed at improving the situation of Indigenous peoples of the North. The Council welcomed the decision of the Regional Council about the full representation of the Nenets autonomous area in the Regional Council.

The Council welcomed the decision of the Regional Council to give the county of Oulu in Finland and the county of Västernorrland in Sweden status as observers in the Barents Regional Council for one year. The Council expects the necessary modalities to be finalized by its next session in order to take a decision on the question of the extension of the Region to include these two counties.

3.2. The Council underlined the priority of promoting trade and economic cooperation in the Barents Region. At the same time difficulties constraining the realization of large-scale projects on the territory of the Russian Federation were pointed out. The Council appreciated the intention of the participating sides to eliminate as soon as possible obstacles to trade and business emerging in the development of regional cooperation.

The Council noted that one of the key problems hampering the implementation of these projects is the lack of financial support. In this connection the Council appeals to participating states as well as other interested countries and international organisations

to mobilise financial and technological resources and assistance to the most advanced projects, as defined in the decisions of the Third Session of the Council in Rovaniemi.

3.3. The Council noted with satisfaction that all participants in Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation are aware of the importance of environmental protection in the framework of Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation in solving the problems hampering sustainable development in the region, as reflected In the Declaration of the Second Meeting of Environment Ministers in Royaniemi in December 1995.

3.4. The Council emphasized the importance of the reports by, NEFCO/AMAP on investment projects vital for the environment and welcomed the detailed list of information on ongoing environment projects in the Barents Region.

3.5. The Council emphasized the importance of cooperation between the Environmental Task Force and the Working Group on Economic Cooperation in the identification and implementation of projects pertaining to both spheres of activity.

3.6. The Council called for participation in the implementation of projects proposed by the IAEA Contact Expert Group on the management and storage of radioactive waste and spent fuel in northwestern Russia.

3.7. The Council emphasized the importance of the international cooperation on the "Lepse" project and the initiatives to increase the capacity for low-level liquid radioactive waste treatment in Murmansk. The Council noted that measures to improve the safety of the Kola nuclear power plant have been successfully implemented. The Council noted that Russia has initiated cooperation with Norway and the United States on nuclear and radiation safety aspects of the demolition of decommissioned Russian nuclear submarines and emphasized the need to broaden International cooperation concerning this important environmental challenge.

3.8. The Council welcomes the dissemination of methods of industrial waste minimisation in Europe on the basis of cleaner production principles and the participation of Russian enterprises in this undertaking. The Council positively notes that Russia, Norway and now Finland are actively involved in the "Cleaner production' programme. The Council appeals to other CBER states to assist in the promotion Of Cleaner production" and to participate in the implementation of the projects within this programme.

3.9. The Council acknowledges the progress achieved and the work underway to support the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992 and to establish cooperation on sustainable management of northern forests, especially in northwestern Russia.

3.10. The Council emphasized the importance of improving the conditions for trade and investment in the Region and instructed the Working Group on Economic Cooperation to aim Its efforts at resolving problems, inter alia, in customs and transit procedures at border crossings, banking operations, ownership of real estate, etc.

3.11. The Council emphasized the importance of improving the energy sector in the Region and requested a report on means of efficient production and distribution of energy, possibilities of energy conservation and related areas in the Region which could be improved by regional cooperation. The report should be prepared for the next meeting of the Council.

3.12. The Council confirmed the importance of the work being done by the CBER Working Group on the Northern Sea Route, recognizing that this is a Priority project, inter alia within the International Northern Sea Route Programme (INSROP) and calls

on the interested financial institutions to make the fullest possible contribution to the implementation of this project with due regard to the environmental impact of developing this route.

3.13. The Council noted with satisfaction the contribution made by indigenous peoples of the region to the development of regional cooperation. The Council intends to continue to attach importance to their specific role in promoting sustainable development and preserving traditional ways of life.

3.14. The Council welcomed the structure and the strategy of the Barents programme 1997-1999 and will investigate the possibilities for allocating regional funds for implementing the programme.

3.15. The Council observes with satisfaction the increased number of participants and development programmes operating in the region. The Council recommends that the Regional Council assist in monitoring major activities in the region.

#### **IV. DATE AND VENUE OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL**

The Council expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Russian Federation for its constructive efforts in carrying out the functions of the Chairman of the Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region in 1995-1996.

The functions of the Chairman of the Council for the next year of its activity have been assumed by Sweden.

The Council has accepted the invitation of the Swedish Government to hold the Fifth Session of the CBER in Sweden, date and venue to be decided.