

BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL THIRD SESSION

OCTOBER 9-10, 1995 ROVANIEMI

J O I N T S T A T E M E N T

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden and a representative of the European Commission met in Rovaniemi on 9-10 October 1995, under the Chairmanship of Finland, for the Third Session of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The meeting was attended by observers from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as by the Regional Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, and by representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Region.

The Council reaffirmed its view that the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation will contribute, as an-important part of the regional cooperation in Europe, to peace and stability, sustainable development and prosperity in the Region and in Europe as a whole.

The Council expressed its confidence in the fact that the membership of Denmark, Finland and Sweden of the European Union enhances opportunities for cooperation in the Region.

The Council noted that the Interim Agreement and the entry into force of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Union will further facilitate the Barents cooperation. The Council welcomed the results of the recent summit meeting between the Russian Federation and the European Union as conducive also to regional cooperation. The Council stressed the importance of active participation of the European Union in the Barents cooperation.

The Council welcomed with satisfaction the progress made in negotiations between the eight Arctic Countries to establish an Arctic Council for overall Arctic cooperation.

The Council noted with satisfaction the contribution of the Nordic Council of Ministers to the Barents cooperation within the framework of its programme of cooperation with the neighbouring areas.

II. CONCLUSIONS OF THE BARENTS COUNCIL

1. The Council reaffirmed its commitment to the principles expressed in the Kirkenes Declaration and its strong intention to further develop the Barents cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, science and technology, tourism, the environment, infrastructure, educational and cultural exchange, as well as projects particularly aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples in the North.

The Council emphasized the high priority that its members give to the promotion of economic development in the Barents Region, with due regard to ecological considerations in all spheres of the economy as a condition for sustainable development.

The Council underlined the importance of improving the framework for economic cooperation in the Barents Region, with particular emphasis on identifying and removing obstacles.

The Council noted with interest the applications from the Counties of Oulu and Västerbotten for inclusion in the Barents Region and instructed the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) to explore the questions concerning enlargement of the Region.

2. The Council welcomed the work carried out by the Barents Environmental Task Force in implementing the Barents Environmental Programme, applying the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (AEPS). The Council encouraged the ongoing work of the Task Force on the Environment to further develop selected projects for regional cooperation and looked forward to receiving a comprehensive report of the Task Force to be submitted to the Ministers of the Environment in December 1995.

The Council stressed the importance of cooperation in the financing and execution of projects to prevent radioactive pollution and to promote preparedness against nuclear accidents, to promote sound environmental management and regional harmonization of standards and guidelines, reduction of pollution from industrial activities, protection of natural habitats and conservation of flora and fauna.

The Council particularly emphasized the urgent need to promote safe management and storage of radioactive waste caused by civilian and military activity in the Barents Region. The Council was encouraged by the progress of projects such as the expansion of the capacity of the processing facility for low-level liquid radioactive waste in Murmansk and the emerging international cooperation to promote the safe management of the vessel "Lepse". The Council emphasized the necessity to further expand the political, technological and financial basis for appropriate solutions.

The Council welcomed the follow-up action to the international seminar about radioactive waste in the Russian Federation, arranged under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency in May 1995.

The Council noted with satisfaction ' the ongoing international cooperation aimed at improving the safety of the Kola nuclear power plant.

The Council noted with satisfaction the positive results of the ongoing Russian-Norwegian "Cleaner production" programme, due to which reduction of industrial pollution was achieved by the participating industrial enterprises. The participation in the programme could be of interest to the members of the Council.

The Council emphasized in particular the continued need for the active participation of other countries and international organizations in solving the environmental problems of the Barents Region.

3. The Council recognized the work initiated by the Working Group on Economic Cooperation in order to identify common objectives and priorities, as well as specific areas, which can be improved by regional cooperation.

The Council welcomed the Report on Economic Cooperation, in the Barents Region, produced by the working Group, and endorsed its recommendations. The recommendations contain the following projects:

- construction of the Pechenga oil and gas harbour in Linakhamari with the development of associated infrastructure in the Pechenga area;
- reconstruction and modernization of the commercial harbours of the Cities of Murmansk and Archangel;
- construction of a ship-breaking plant and a cargo terminal on the Belokamennaya Bay;
- construction and reconstruction of railway and road connections between Kirkenes-Nikel-Murmansk;
- development of a so-called "Barents corridor" including the projects for the construction of a road and a railway between Salla and Alakurtti, and of a border-crossing station at Kellosele;
- development of the so-called "Archangel corridor" including the projects for the construction of railway between Ledmozero and Kochkoma and also between Karpogory and Vendenga taking due account of the environment of the Kenozero National Park;
- construction and development of the road between Petrozavodsk and Parikkala;
- reconstruction and modernization of the international airports of the cities of Murmansk, Archangel and Petrozavodsk;
- improvement of the flight connection Lulee-Rovaniemi-Murmansk-Archangel;
- development of energy efficiency and conservation programmes for the Murmansk and Archangel Oblasts and for the Republic of Karelia;
- development of local energy sources in the Republic of Karelia by constructing a peat power plant at Olonets and four hydropower plants;
- development of telecommunication in the Murmansk and Archangel Oblasts and in the Republic of Karelia in various joint projects between Rostelcom, local operators and western companies;
- reconstruction and modernization of the Pechenga Nickel Smelting Works;
- development and modernization of the Kandalaksha Aluminium Works;
- conversion and development of the Zvezdochka Shipyard in Severodvinsk.

The Council stressed the need to inform national and international financing institutions about these projects in order to explore possibilities, for their financing.

The Council noted with satisfaction the establishment of an Association of the Barents Cooperation in the Russian Federation with participation of the leading financial and commercial structures of the North Western Region of Russia and drew to the attention of representatives of business in the Barents Council member states and international financing institutions that the Association is ready to establish working contacts.

The Council welcomed the agreement between the Governments of Norway and the Russian Federation to modernize the Pechenga-Nikel smelting works in Nickel.

The Council also expressed its appreciation of an expert report entitled "Economic Geography and Structure of the Russian Part of the Barents Region", annexed to the report by the Working Group on Economic Cooperation, which gives a thorough description of the economy of the Barents Region, including information on its history, geography, population, administration, natural resources, infrastructure, economic structures and prospects for future development.

4. The Council stressed the major importance of improving transport and communication networks and border crossing facilities in the whole Region.

Of particular importance are infrastructure projects, which will have long term consequences for the overall development of the Region. Examples of this type of projects are those relating to road and railway connections, border-crossing facilities, the upgrading and development of ports, airports and shipyards, the adaptation of infrastructure for future offshore activities, development of modern telecommunications systems, environmental technology projects and energy and energy efficiency projects.

The Council welcomed progress made towards establishing east-west transport corridors, such as the air-route Archangel-Murmansk-Rovaniemi-Luleå possibly to be extended to Bodö, the road connections Murmansk-Kirkenes and Kandalaksha-Salla-Haparanda, the bordercrossing station at Kellosetka-Salla and the Ledmozero-Kochkoma railway.

5. The Council took note of the progress report of the Working Group on the Northern Sea Route (NSR).

6. The Council noted with satisfaction the results of the meeting of Ministers of Education and Science held in Rovaniemi on 14-15 February 1995, as an important contribution to the future development of educational exchanges and scientific cooperation in the Region" particularly in facilitating studies in regional history, economics and culture, teaching languages of the region's peoples, improvement of ecological education, as well as developing cultural contacts of the indigenous peoples in the North.

7. The Council welcomed the valuable work carried out in the fields of science and technology, tourism and health with a view to bringing about improvements in the Region and enhancing the quality of life of the people in the North.

8. Recognizing the special relationship and unique contributions to the region of the indigenous peoples, the Council emphasized the importance of further strengthening the rights of the indigenous peoples in the North and their role in the Barents cooperation. The Council underlined the special advisory role given to the Permanent Working Group on the Indigenous People in the Barents Council.

9. The Council held a joint meeting with the Regional Council and noted with satisfaction the report on its activities in 1994-95, in particular the successful implementation of the comprehensive Barents Programme.

The Council welcomed the Barents Programme for 1996 as the main instrument for multilateral cooperation at the regional level.

The Council noted that the Regional Council has prepared a document entitled "Prerequisites for development of economic activity", dealing with matters relating to the development of economic cooperation, which should be considered in the work of the working Group on Economic Cooperation.

10. The Council noted the importance of the Barents INTERREG Programme and the need for complementary financing for INTERREG projects in the Barents Region. The Council welcomed the fact that the northwestern part of Russia has been chosen to be one of the focal regions of the TACIS Programme of the European Union in 1995.

The Council noted with satisfaction that Norway is ready to participate in the Barents INTERREG programme.

11. The Council expressed satisfaction with the establishment of a Regional Venture Capital Fund by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development together with the Governments of Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Fund will provide equity capital to small and medium-sized enterprises in the northwestern part of Russia. The Fund is expected to start its operational at the end of 1995.

III. DATE AIM VENUE OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE BARENTS COUNCIL

The chairmanship of the Council was assumed by the Russian Federation. The Council accepted the invitation of the Government of Russia to host the next session of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 1996, at a date and place to be decided upon.