



Umeå 2-3 October 2003

9TH SESSION OF THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL (BEAC)

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) convened its Ninth Session in Umeå on 2-3 October 2003, under the chairmanship of Sweden.

Ministers and senior representatives from the Member States (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden) participated in the Session, which was also attended by the EU Presidency (Italy) and a senior representative of the European Commission together with:

- senior representatives from Observer States (Canada, Italy, Japan, Poland and the United States of America),
- governors, political leaders and other representatives of the Barents Regional Council and the indigenous peoples of the Region,
- invited representatives of regional bodies, parliaments, international financial institutions, EU bodies, United Nations organs, churches and other invited guests.

Referring to the Declaration from the Barents Euro-Arctic Summit Meeting of Prime Ministers that was held on 11 January 2003, in Kirkenes to mark the 10 Year Anniversary of Barents Co-operation, the Council:

1. *Welcomed* the invited parliamentary representatives that were present for the first time at a BEAC Session.

2. *Took note* of the “Statement” presented by the Barents Regional Council (BEARC) and *expressed its satisfaction* with the close co-operation between the BEAC and the BEARC.
3. *Commended* efforts made to expand participation of elected representatives and widen the democratic foundation of the multilateral Barents co-operation by stimulating co-operation among local governments and municipalities. The Council *called for* further efforts to promote Local Agenda 21 objectives.
4. *Welcomed* the steps taken to strengthen the involvement of indigenous peoples in the Barents co-operation and *instructed* the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) to continue its dialogue and regular meetings with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples.
5. *Urged* the CSO to consider ways to expand co-operation among customs, police, border and immigration authorities in order to make border-crossings smoother and to combat crime, including drug trafficking and money laundering.
6. *Welcomed* the newly established Barents Youth Co-operation Office (BYCO) in Murmansk, Russia, and looked forward to the survey of existing research on living conditions of youth in the Region. The Council *considered* the Plan of Action, adopted by the Ministers responsible for Youth at their Conference in May, 2001, together with the Youth Programme, adopted by the BEARC in January, 2003, to be important instruments for promoting youth co-operation and involving young men and women in the development of the Region. The Council *encouraged* the BEAC and BEARC working groups on youth policy to co-operate closely in the implementation of those programmes.
7. *Welcomed* the increasing co-operation between educational and research institutions in the Barents Region. Russia’s participation in the Bologna process will facilitate joint study programs and increase the interest in student and academic staff exchanges between higher education institutions. The Council *encouraged* universities in the Barents Region to expand student mobility by mutual recognition of degrees and exams according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the UNESCO/Council of Europe Convention on Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Convention), and by the use of Diploma Supplements as well as by increasing the number of courses offered in foreign languages.
8. *Commended* the cultural co-operation in the Barents Region and *welcomed* the Communiqué adopted by the Ministers of Culture at their Conference in September 2002. The Council *recognised* the need for support at national and regional levels for joint cultural initiatives in the Region and *expressed its support* for the implementation of the Action Plan “*Voices in the Barents Region*”, adopted by the BEARC in October, 2002.

9. *Considered* that the history of the Barents Region should be further documented, analysed and presented to wider audiences. The Council *asked* the CSO to promote and monitor the process launched to shed new light on the history of this Region.

10. *Commended* the expanded co-operation among emergency and rescue services in the Barents Region and *agreed* to make every effort to facilitate participation of relevant personnel and equipment in "*Barents Rescue 2005*", the second international large-scale live exercise under civilian command in the Barents Region, to be held in Finnmark county in northern Norway. The Council took note of the initiative of the Russian Federation on the "Arctic Rescue" project.

11. *Highlighted* the great potential for economic development inherent in the large reserves of mineral and energy resources in the Region. The Council *encouraged* economic operators to take advantage of increasing business opportunities in the Barents Region and to use sustainable production and distribution methods for goods and services. The Council *noted* that accession of Russia to the World Trade Organisation will improve mutual access to markets and facilitate trade and economic co-operation also in the Barents Region. The Council *underlined* the need to stimulate investments, access to new equity capital and technical know-how to assist in particular small and medium sized enterprises to restructure, modernise and expand their operations. The Council also *emphasised* the need to take into consideration the interests of the indigenous peoples in relation to economic activities in the Region.

12. *Emphasised* that the exploitation of the huge oil and gas deposits in the Region demands the highest international standard of safety, security and environmental considerations in production, transportation and distribution. The Council *encouraged* increased capacity building on environmental management, environmental impact assessments and strengthened co-operation to meet necessary requirements for safe transportation of oil and gas as well as other hazardous substances to ensure effective protection of the inland, coastal and marine environment.

13. *Underlined* that the work within the Barents Region on forestry issues needs to include the economic, social, institutional and environmental dimensions, taking into account the biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use of the forests and the important work on model forests. The Council *welcomed* the "*Common Approach to Strengthen Environmental Considerations in the Forestry Co-operation in the Barents Region*", developed by the Working Group on Environment and the Forest Sector Task Force and adopted by the BEAC Ministers of Environment in August, 2003.

14. *Welcomed* the extensive work under way on framework conditions for land, sea and air transport, i.a. planning and investment in infrastructure, in particular as regards the Barents Euro-Arctic Pan-European Transport Area (BEATA), the Northern Sea Route, the Northern Maritime Corridor and the Northern eDimension to facilitate trade and mobility over long distances in east-west directions. The

Council *welcomed* the start of the three year project "*Sustainable Transports in the Barents Region*" and *highlighted* the need for additional funding to fully include the whole of the Russian part of the Barents Region in that work.

15. *Welcomed* the inauguration of the new facilities at the Salla and Borisoglebsk/Storskog border crossing points in September 2002, and January 2003, respectively. The Council *considered* that all border crossing points in the Barents Region should be able to fulfil the objective that goods should pass in no more than two hours and *stressed* that every effort should be made to facilitate the practical and logistical aspects of crossing the borders between the EU/EEA and Russia. The Council *expressed* support for the continuation of the important work of Task Force II on customs co-operation to achieve those goals.

16. *Welcomed* the Declaration adopted by the BEAC Ministers of Environment in August 2003, and *recalled* that full respect of internationally agreed principles for sustainable development is the responsibility of all actors. The Council *underlined* that sustainable development requires particular attention to the sensitive arctic and sub-arctic environment and its vulnerable ecosystems, on land as well as in the seas.

17. *Expressed concern* that contamination and pollution continue to pose serious threats to the environment and health in the Barents Region. The Council welcomed the recommendations in the updated NEFCO¹/AMAP² "*Environmental "Hot Spots" List in the Russian Part of the Barents Region*", endorsed by the BEAC Ministers of Environment in August, 2003, and *encouraged* speedy implementation of the action plan on "*Cleaner Production in a Life Cycle Perspective*", adopted at the same meeting. The Council *called for* actions to eliminate the "hot spots" within 10 years. The Council also *underlined* the importance of continued NEFCO financing of investments in cleaner production and energy efficiency projects in north-west Russia.

18. *Highlighted* the importance of the signing of the MNEPR³ Agreement and its associated Protocol in May 2003, as a major step towards improving nuclear safety. The Council *urged* the early implementation of projects and *requested* regular reporting through the CSO on progress made. *Considered* that the NDEP⁴ and its Support Fund will be a useful mechanism for securing required financing.

19. *Noted* that climate change will have profound ecological consequences in this Region, with effects on human health, biota, infrastructure and economic activities like sea and land transport, forestry, fisheries, hunting and reindeer husbandry. The Council *requested* the CSO to elaborate specific policy measures relevant for the Barents Region on the basis of the report from the "*Arctic Climate Impact*

¹ Nordic Environment Finance Corporation

² Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

³ Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation

⁴ Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership

Assessment (ACIA)”, that will be presented to the Arctic Council in September, 2004.

20. *Stated* that the decision to establish the Baltic Sea Region as a testing ground for international co-operation to promote the use of the flexible mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol paves the way for Joint Implementation projects also in the Barents Region, when the protocol has entered into force. The Council *called for* more use of renewable energy sources in the Barents Region, such as bioenergy, and more measures to increase energy efficiency and fuel substitution.

21. *Welcomed* the "*Proposal for Information and Training Package on Ecotourism in the Barents Region*" developed by the BEARC Working Group on Environment and *encouraged* the actors concerned to co-operate to implement it.

22. *Expressed satisfaction* with the good results achieved through the Barents Health Programme 1999-2003 and the work of the Task Force on Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region. The Council *adopted* a new comprehensive programme to address health and social problems and to counteract the rise in lifestyle related diseases, the "*Co-operation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2004-2007*", elaborated by an ad hoc Working Group on Health and Social Issues.

23. *Commended* the co-operation against trafficking in human beings in the Barents Region that has begun between law enforcement authorities and authorities responsible for administration of justice.

24. *Noted* the proposal by Norway to enhance existing co-operation among correctional services in the Barents Region.

25. *Called for* special efforts in close co-operation with the BEARC to safeguard gender equality and develop women's, including indigenous women's, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and representation in political fora.

26. *Welcomed* the work undertaken to develop the "*2004-2006 Second Action Plan for the Northern Dimension in the external and cross border policies of the European Union*". The Council also *welcomed* the successful work to establish a "*Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing*" that is closely co-ordinated with the Barents Health Programme.

27. The Council *expressed the hope* that increased EU support for cross border and regional/trans-national co-operation through harmonised INTERREG and TACIS programmes in the Barents Region is developed.

28. *Welcomed* the improved co-ordination and co-operation between the BEAC and other intergovernmental regional bodies, such as the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers with the aim to maximise the effectiveness of efforts in different areas.

29. *Noted* that administrative matters within the BEAC have been streamlined and an administrative manual has been agreed within the CSO to facilitate work.

30. *Acknowledged* the establishment of a new permanent website that presents the BEAC and its work, www.beac.st.

31. *Thanked* the outgoing Chair, Sweden, for its excellent work and welcomed the incoming Chair, Norway. The Council *noted* the proposed Norwegian priorities and *accepted* the kind invitation of the Government of Norway to host the next Session of the BEAC in 2005, at a time and venue to be decided upon.