

CONCLUSION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM
“CULTURE OF THE BARENTS REGION”

Arkhangelsk,
16-18 June, 2008

Ministers of Culture and representatives of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) Member States met on 16-18 June 2008 in Arkhangelsk (the Russian Federation), discussed possible directions of fostering regional cultural cooperation in the Barents region and declare the following.

I. While global political and economic integration processes have become deeper, the value of regional cooperation is increasing. The Barents Euro-Arctic region (BEAR) remains one of the dynamical regions with considerable human potential, unique historical heritage and various cultural traditions.

Culture is an essential component of society's capacity to deal with social, economic, cultural and environmental challenges to the benefit of sustainable development of the Barents region. At the same time international cultural cooperation plays an important role in providing the population with access to cultural heritage of other countries, contributes to the active exchange between the Barents region peoples, provides new possibilities for cultural self-expression, preservation and development of traditions.

In this context the BEAC opens favorable opportunities for the development of the interaction in the Barents region. The activity of other northern regional organizations such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Nordic Council of Ministers and Arctic Council is of great importance in promoting of the dialogue among members of the cultural community.

The participants of the Forum express their readiness to contribute to further prosperity of the Barents region, support the efforts aimed at enhancing cultural cooperation, increasing cultural exchanges with a view of strengthening mutual understanding and good-neighbourliness, deeper knowing of the unique social and cultural environment of the Barents region.

II. Ministers of Culture, representatives from the BEAC Member States and organizations of regional co-operation:

- support the decisions of the 11th BEAC Ministerial Session in Povaniemi (Finland) and 11th session of the Barents Regional Council (November 14-15, 2007) concerning the continuing validity of the principles and aims of the Barents cooperation, reaffirming the overall objectives of the cooperation in the Barents region to promote stability, security, wellbeing and sustainable development in all its spheres,
- note the need and will strive for enhancing of interaction in the field of culture with the regional organizations of the Northern Europe,
- underline that the work at the local and regional levels is a basic part of successful co-operation between the BEAC states at the national level,
- consider the exchange of views at the Forum as a useful contribution to continuation of the fruitful co-operation among heads of institutions and specialists in the fields of culture and cultural heritage,
- emphasize the importance of the renewed Northern Dimension policy regarding the development of the Barents Region and welcome initiatives and proposals that could become an integral part of this policy,
- believe that the positive experience in the regional cooperation within the framework of the BEAC should be used when preparing the Action Plan in cultural sphere between the European Union and the Russian Federation as well as for its practical implementation,
- support further development of cultural interaction between the BEAR countries and activities of the Joint Working Group on culture according to the objectives of the new Programme of cultural co-operation “New winds in the Barents region. 2008 – 2010”;
- point to the need for closer coordination of all positions of the BEAC Member States when working out and implementing the international treaties on cultural heritage preservation within the framework of the appropriate international forums, as well as recognize the diverse roles of other organizations of importance to the northern region, in order to avoid overlapping work and facilitate beneficial development.

III. Ministers of Culture, representatives of the BEAC Member States, Barents Regional Council, organizations and institutions of regional co-operation express their cordial gratitude to the Administration of the Arkhangelsk Region for its hospitality and for hosting the Forum.