

Report from the 5th Interim Joint Committee-meeting held on MS Trollfjord 17-20 November 2008

Participants:

1. Ms. Bente Michaelsen (chair), The Ministry of Justice and the Police, Norway
2. Ms. May-Kristin Ensrud, The Ministry of Justice and the Police, Norway
3. Mr. Kjell Johansen, The Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre Northern Norway, Norway
4. Mr. Harri Paldanius, Regional Rescue Department of Lapland, Finland
5. Mr. Timo Viitanen, Ministry of Interior, Finland
6. Mr. Vladimir Kakusha, EMERCOM, The Russian Federation
7. Ms. Inna Ponomareva, EMERCOM, The Russian Federation
8. Mr. Konstantin Sebrennikov, EMERCOM, The Russian Federation
9. Mr. Jan Nyquist, The Rescue Services Agency, Sweden
10. Ms. Julia Fredriksson, The Rescue Services Agency, Sweden
11. Mr. Berth Widmark, The Swedish Rescue Services of Eastern Norbotten
12. Ms. Sasha Borko, The European Commission, DG Environment

The fifth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee was held on MS Trollfjord (from Bodø to Kirkenes, Norway) on the 17th to the 20th of November 2008 under the chairmanship of Ms. Bente Michaelsen.

As an introduction, all the participants gave a brief presentation of themselves. A list of participants with contact information is attached to the report.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Status of the EPPR-Agreement

The negotiations in relation to the above-mentioned Agreement was finalized in Kirkenes in April this year. It has been the expressed wish of the Committee to sign the Agreement during 2008, preferably in the Russian Federation as they holds the BEAC chair.

Mr. Kakusha informed the Committee that the Russian Federation would like to invite Finland, Norway and Sweden to a signing ceremony to be held in Moscow on 11 December 2008. European Commission would be invited as observer.

The Committee was grateful for this information and promised to do its utmost to be able to complete all the necessary national procedures before the signing ceremony.

The Committee had a short discussion on the application of the Agreement to sea territories. The Committee agreed that the Agreement had a focus on the landside, but that the sea area was not explicitly excluded. In the preamble, the Agreement states that there are other mechanisms in force for maritime and aeronautical accidents. In conclusion, the Agreement can be applicable to at least the territorial waters of the Parties (in the Barents Region).

3. Status of the planning process of the exercise Barents Rescue 2009

Mr. Kakusha gave a status report of the planning process of the exercise Barents Rescue 2009. He presented the scenarios, as decided at the Initial Planning Conference;

- Radioactive accident
- Traffic accident
- Forest fire
- Search and rescue at sea
- Terrorist attack at oiltanker Belakomenka

The Committee thanked the Russian Federation for an excellent Initial Planning Conference in Murmansk.

The Russian Federation confirmed there will be a LEMA/OSOCC at the Barents Rescue-exercise and underlined the need for a liaison office.

Further details and development of exercise will be discussed at the Main Planning Conference to be held in Murmansk in March 2009.

4. The role of the Interim Joint Committee under the planning process and the exercise Barents Rescue 2009

The Committee recalled earlier discussions on the above-mentioned subject. It is the wish of the Committee to be involved in the planning and execution of the Barents Rescue-exercises. The Committee could serve as an institutional memory and in future exercises advise the host country what elements should be exercised.

The Committee agreed that we have not yet reached the goal of being an active contributor to the exercise planning phase. However, it was important to let the idea develop. It is also possible to act through the national delegations participating at the planning conferences.

The Russian Federation raised the question of the level of participants of the Joint Committee. In their view, the Committee should develop policy, and it was maybe needed to be represented by members of higher level. A high level Committee could then have a working body as a subsidiary body.

The Committee agreed to keep this item on its agenda and reminded its members to influence the exercise by their national participation in the planning process. The Committee, as such, will in the future try to be an active participant in relation to the exercises Barents Rescue.

5. Status of the project Enhancing the Emergency Preparedness in the Barents Region

The Committee recalled the presentation and discussion at the last meeting in Kirkenes. After the meeting in Kirkenes, Ms. Tanja Risikko, Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences, had presented a project by e-mail to the countries participating the Committee. The Committee questioned the status of the planned project.

Mr. Viitanen informed the Committee that the planned project was a little behind the original schedule. An application for finances would be sent by the first half year of 2009. The project period would then be for 2009-2011.

Local partners in Sweden and Norway have been contacted and were eager to start the work of the project. However, they are awaiting an initiative from Finland as lead country and are expecting a meeting in the near future.

The Russian Federation informed the Committee that the EMERCOM in Murmansk had been informed of the project, and that they wanted to participate. The representatives of the Russian Federation promised to check the status and to inform the Committee. The Committee underlined the importance of the participation of the Russian Federation in this project, as one of the conditions of the KOLARCTIC Programme, is the participation of the Russian Federation.

The Swedish delegation underlined the necessity of the participation of all the Barents countries, as this project is dealing with the Committees work.

Finland informed that the first steering meeting was held today (19 November 2008) at a national level. Mr. Paldanius is a member of the steering group and promised to convey the wish of the Barents countries to start the project work as soon as possible. Finland also informed that an international meeting was going to be arranged soon in 2009. Mr. Paldanius, as a member of the steering group, promised to keep the Committee informed of the ongoing work in Finland.

Sweden raised the question of the KOLARCTIC programme being approved or not. The representative of the European Commission, Ms. Borko, offered the possibility to check with relevant Commission services whether such project could be financed under ENPI and would inform the Committee by email.

6. Mandate of the Joint Committee

Mr. Nyquist informed of the process of making the mandate of the Committee. He suggested to use the term "Terms of Reference" instead of "Mandate". After the last meeting in Kirkenes, he had distributed the draft Terms of Reference to the Committee and had only received some comments from Finland.

Some changes were made to the Terms of Reference at this session. The Chair promised to submit the new version to all the members of the Interim Joint Committee with a timelimit for comments and then post it on the BEAC web-site.

7. The Joint Manual/Handbook

The Committee made some changes to the Joint Manual. The Manual may be developed and improved in the future. But it is important to finalize and distribute a version at this stage as the Agreement is soon to enter into force. The Manual contains inter alia the contact points to which address requests of assistance.

It is important that all the Barents countries check their contact points and inform the Committee if there are any changes.

The Manual needs a linguistic check, as well as the references to the various Articles in the Agreement. Regarding the final lay-out/design, it would be preferably to leave this to professionals.

The Manual, as is after this session, will be submitted to the members of the Interim Joint Committee for comments by a fixed deadline. If no comments are received, the Manual will be distributed to the rescue coordination centres and various other interested partners.

8. Procedures when requesting assistance

The Committee has for several meetings been working on a fax sheet regarding early warning and request of assistance. The Committee agreed to the layout and the content of the fax sheet as it now stands.

The aim is to use the fax sheet during the next exercise, e.g. Exercise Barents Rescue 2009.

9. Electronic maps

Mr Widmark, had produced draft paper maps with the information of relevant rescue resources in the Barents region. The Committee agreed that this was a good starting point for further development of such maps.

Mr. Widmark will submit the draft maps to members of the Committee for comments and possible updates and then make new versions.

The Committee discussed the possibilities of having such maps on the BEAC website www.beac.st. Some representatives were of the opinion that such maps with information of rescue resources could be a potential for misuse by f. ex. terrorists. The EC informed that the EU MIC (Monitoring and Information Centre) would not place this type of information on the web. The Committee did not conclude.

To be able to refine the maps, financial support would be necessary. Hopefully, the development of the maps could be a part of the new project “Enhancing the emergency preparedness in the Barents Region” (see item 5 above).

10. European Community civil protection mechanism

Ms. Borko from the European Commission presented the European Community civil protection mechanism. The presentation is attached to the report.

11. Change of chair from 2009

Ms. Michaelsen informed the Committee that she would prefer a change of the chair of the Committee from 1 Januar 2009. She had now been the chair for almost three years, and it is important to share the responsibilities between all the Barents countries. The EPPR-Agreement contains an article stipulating the annual change of chairmanship.

Mr. Viitanen informed the Committee that Finland would be ready to chair the Committee, as from 1 Januar 2009. Finland had not internally decided who would be the new chairperson, but Mr. Viitanen would be the contact persons until otherwise decided.

The Committee wished the new chair good luck with the endeavours of 2009. As the Agreement most probably enters into force in the near future, the chair should rotate on an annual basis. The next country to chair the Committee would then be Norway for 2010, The Russian Federation for 2011 and Sweden for 2012.

12. www.beac.st - need for update?

The Committee agreed to update the text regarding the rescue cooperation in the Barents Region, as well as the list of contact persons.

The chair will submit new text and information to the International Barents Secretariat.

13. Any other business

Ms. Borko made a few comments regarding civil protection in the upcoming European Commission's Arctic Strategy.

The Arctic Strategy contains EU policy in the area and represents the basis for further discussions. The Strategy supports the conclusion of the EPPR-Agreement.