

# **Report from the Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation in the Barents Region meeting held in Petrozavodsk 21-22 June 2011**

## **Participants:**

1. Mr. Vladimir Svetelskiy (temporary chair), EMERCOM, Murmansk Region, The Russian Federation
2. Ms. Inna Ponomareva, EMERCOM of Russia, Moscow, The Russian Federation
3. Mr. Alexei Macaryin, Emercom of Russia, North-Western Regional Centre, St. Petersburg
4. Ms. Julia Janshina, Emercom of Russia, North-Western Regional Centre, St. Petersburg
5. Mr. Alexei Koshechkin, EMERCOM of Russia, Karelia Region, The Russian Federation
6. Mr. Vladimir Kazakov, EMERCOM of Russia, Murmansk Region, The Russian Federation
7. Ms. Bente Michaelsen, Ministry of Justice and the Police, Norway
8. Mr. Tore Drtina, Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB), Norway
9. Mr. Jukka Metso, Ministry of Interior, Finland
10. Mr. Hannu Rantanen, Emergency Services College, Finland
11. Mr. Harri Paldanius, Regional rescue department of Lapland, Finland
12. Mr. Roy Hojem, International Barents Secretariat
13. Ms. Nora Skansar, International Barents Secretariat
14. Ms. Karolina Banul, International Barents Secretariat

The meeting of the Joint Committee was held in the conference-hall of Onego Palace Hotel, Petrozavodsk on 21-22 June 2011 under the chairmanship of Mr. Vladimir Svetelsky.

## **1. Opening of the meeting**

At the beginning of the meeting a minute's silence was conducted by the participants in memory of the victims of plane crash in Petrozavodsk.

After the minute's silence all the participants gave a brief presentation of themselves.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted with some minor changes. It was agreed that some issues would not be discussed due to absence of Swedish representation related to the tragic incident with Mr. Jacob Wetterund. The copy of the agenda is attached to the report.

## **3. The Barents Agreement**

Ms. Ponomareva informed the Committee of the status of ratification. Sweden ratified on 2 February 2009, Norway on 17 March 2009 and the Russian Federation on 12 October 2009.

Mr. Metso informed that the Agreement still had to be approved by the Finnish Parliament, but he expected it to be approved during summer or autumn 2011.

#### **4. Administrative matters**

*a) Update list of members of the Joint Committee*

The list of the members of the Joint Committee was updated. The list was posted on [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st).

*b) Information from the CSO-meeting in Jokkmokk 2 – 4 February 2011*

Ms. Michaelsen informed about the CSO-meeting (Committee of Senior Officials) in Jokkmokk 2 – 4 February 2011 where she represented the Joint Committee.

During the CSO-meeting Ms. Michaelsen made a brief presentation of Barents Rescue 2011 Exercise and informed the CSO-representatives about the issues worked out during Joint Committee meetings in 2010 including communication tests, border crossing procedures and Joint Manual publishing. The feedback from the CSO-representatives was that they were pleased with the work done and were eager to see the Agreement enter into force and were looking forward for the Barents Rescue 2011 Exercise.

#### **5. Barents Rescue Exercise**

*a. Report from the Small Working group on exercises*

As a head of Small Working group on exercises Mr. Drtina presented a Report about future Barents Rescue exercises. The copy of the document is attached to this report.

As a summary of the report Mr. Drtina propose the following:

1. Focus on exercises that develop multilateral civil protection skills against well defined desirable management/operational abilities and capabilities in respective national rescue services/civil protection resources, on all levels, in the Barents region. At this, exercise size is not important rather the choice of exercise method, bringing the training audience to fulfill agreed aims and objectives.
2. Exercises overall aims and objectives should always be formulated out from well defined lack of abilities and capabilities (studies and lessons learned from reality and exercises), and as such be coherent with the defined risk and vulnerabilities for the region.
3. There must be a predictable exercise calendar, 5-10 years ahead, updated annually.
4. Increase the intervals between each full-scale exercise.
5. Use Command post exercises as a complement to full-scale exercises.
6. Maintain focus on the planning and evaluation phases of the exercises with the JC in a central role.

Mr. Rantanen added some comments and emphasized that the exercises are just means for training or building up the abilities of the rescue services in the Barents region. Mr. Rantanen was of the opinion that the exercises are just part of the whole Barents Rescue process and it is the Joint Committee that should be responsible for the whole process. He also emphasized that it is important to understand our risks and capabilities in the region, so planning process should be not just practical planning of the exercise but it needs to be more risk- and ability-based.

Mr. Macaryin gave some general comments on the presentation. He emphasized that the main goals of rescue cooperation in the Barents region are improvement of safety level for population and improvement of preparedness level for rescue forces.

Mr. Macaryin also was of the opinion that during the meetings members of the Joint Committee should not just discuss the issues of agenda but also should have a prepared draft of the Committee resolution and proposals.

Mr. Drtina agreed that the work of the Working group on exercises is not finished and will be continued. He informed that the official proposals and the draft plan of the future exercises will be presented by the Working group by the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

Mr. Macaryin again emphasized the need of making official resolutions as the results of the Joint Committee meetings. He also agreed with the importance of informing population and other interested parties about joint rescue activities through some type of Internet-site. Such site could also be used to exchange experience and information about conducted exercises between rescue services of different countries. On the topic of the evaluation process Mr. Macaryin was of the opinion that it should be determined more precisely who or which structure is finally responsible for evaluation of the Barents Rescue exercises.

Mr. Metso commented the excellent presentation by Mr. Drtina, highlighting difference between most important risks and scenarios chosen by the different countries. He mentioned that there are already a lot of bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries of the Barents region, so it could be an excellent idea to create a calendar of exercises to streamline the joint exercise process. Mr. Metso strongly agreed with the proposal to increase the interval between the exercises especially taking in consideration the costs of the full scale exercise. He also agreed that Working group on exercises should continue to work and prepare the proposals and calendar of exercises.

Mr. Drtina gave some explanation on the topic. He emphasized that the report discussed is a draft document and was prepared in accordance with the goal and mandate given during the last Committee meeting. He mentioned that the report of course did not cover all the possible topics and issues and it has a serious potential for enhancing. Mr. Drtina emphasized that the goal of the initial report was to bring the subject to attention and then determine the next steps that should be taken. He agreed that in order to define direction for improvement we should estimate and compare existing risks and our capacity to deal with them. He also agreed that evaluation process should be determined more precisely.

Mr. Metso commented that it could be a good idea to create some kind of background paper concerning security and safety policies and strategies for the whole Barents

region. He proposed that this task could also be entrusted to the Working group on exercises.

Mr. Macaryin mentioned that in Russian Federation special evaluating report is prepared annually based on the evaluation of the emergencies happened during the year and on the risk assessment on the national and regional level. He supposed that such or similar document exists in each country of the Barents region, so such documents from different countries could be compared to determine risks which are most commonly shared by all countries and should be used as a basis for the exercises.

*b. Revising the Exercise Planning Guide.*

The Committee agreed to postpone this item until later due to absence of Swedish representation.

*c. Procedures for notification and request of assistance – regularly communication exercises between the points of contact in the Barents Region. Testing of VTC-systems between the Points of Contact in the Barents Region*

Mr. Kazakov informed that communication exercises between the points of contact in the Barents Region are conducted regularly for the last two years. The main communication channels are organized via fax and e-mail, but the possibilities of communication via video teleconference systems were also tested during the 2010. From technical point of view procedures of notification via fax and e-mail channels are generally reliable and personnel got used to conduct tests routinely. Communication via VTC-systems on the other way was not so successful due to inability of some contact points to maintain VTC-connection. Actually the VTC-connection was only possible between Regional Crisis Centre of Emercom of Murmansk region and JRCC North Norway in Bodo. Mr. Kazakov expressed the opinion that contact points, which are indicated in the Joint Manual, are distinctly differ from each other not only from the point of view of their technical capabilities but more important from the point of view of their authority and responsibilities.

Mr. Kazakov emphasized that system of notification and coordination in the Barents region should be improved in order to become fully effective. He proposed to modify the list of contact points during the next update of the Joint Manual and to separate the contact points in two types: the coordination points (i.e. organizations/authorities that have a capability to make decisions and coordinate the process) and the notification points (i.e. organizations/authorities that could not make decisions by themselves, but instead could efficiently and promptly forward and distribute received information to all interested parties). Mr. Kazakov was of the opinion that at least one coordination point should be appointed per country followed by any number of notification points considered necessary. Mr. Kazakov also posed a question on the existence of established procedures and regulations for the personnel of appropriate contact points concerning receiving international emergency notifications and assistance requests.

Also Mr. Kazakov informed that regular communication tests between points of contact became too ordinary and routine procedures for the personnel and partially lost educational effect due to being organized and expected at predetermined dates and times. Mr. Kazakov proposed to create some type of “hidden” schedule of notification tests which should not be disclosed to the actual trainees in order to achieve the effect of surprise and improve the overall readiness of the personnel.

Mr. Metso commented that Emergency and alarming center of Rovaniemi which is indicated as a contact point in the Joint Manual will be moved to Oulu. He informed that this Emergency and Alarming Center has enough authority to make decisions independently but it also depends on financial issues. Mr. Metso also underlined that Ministry of Interior of Finland has personnel on duty during 24 hours a day so it could be possible to make decisions in sufficient time.

Mr. Macaryin agreed and commented that processes of notification and response actually have several levels – national, regional etc., and in some cases decision should be made really fast and on local or regional level.

Mr. Kazakov commented that the main idea of his proposal to divide contact points in two categories was not that all contact points must be able to make state-level decisions but that contact point should be able to make decisions and coordinate forces at least on the local level.

Mr. Metso agreed that contact points should be able to make decisions on the regional level. He also agreed that the system of notification and coordination in the Barents region should be tested and improved if needed.

Mr. Koshechkin informed that 16/03/2011 a manual on the notification and immediate response issues was signed between fire-fighting services of Karelia region of Russia and North Karelia region of Finland. Efficiency of this document has been already tested and approved this year. Mr. Koshechkin also informed that Karelian regional customs and border guard authorities also signed agreements with their Finnish counterparts concerning border crossing procedures for response teams.

Mr. Metso commented that cooperation on the regional level to a large degree depends on the personal contacts.

*d. Border crossing procedures for response teams*

Mr. Svetelskiy agreed with the importance of this topic but emphasized that procedures in question were described in good detail in existing agreements and are also regularly tested. For example small scale border crossing exercise is planned to be conducted in august 2011 on Russia-Finnish border followed by larger one in September which will be part of the actual Barents Rescue 2011 exercise. Mr. Svetelskiy informed that rescue and fire-fighting units of Murmansk region met little troubles during border crossing according to the previous experience and most

problems could be solved on the regional level. The main problems were always with the ambulance teams because of extensive regulations on medications.

Mr. Koshechkin informed that rescue and fire-fighting units of Karelia region also did not have any significant troubles during border crossing, but there are some problems with bringing some types of rescue equipment from Finland to Russia even temporarily.

Mr. Kazakov gave a comment concerning border crossing exercises which should be conducted before Barents Rescue 2011 exercise. He informed that in 2011 border crossing exercises should also be conducted on Russian-Norwegian border according to the decision of Russia-Norway Inter-governmental Commission on economical, industrial and scientific-technical cooperation.

Mr. Metso commented that border crossing by rescue and fire-fighting forces became quite routine matter on Russian-Finnish border but still there are some problems to solve.

Ms. Michaelsen commented that the topic with the Russian-Norwegian border crossing exercise should be later discussed in more details between two sides. Ms. Michaelsen also emphasized that, according to the Agreement, border crossing procedures for response teams should be as smooth as possible and should be exempt from all taxes and duties.

It was agreed to keep this item on the agenda for the meetings to come and follow how this develops in the future.

*e. Suspension and exemption of customs duties, other duties and taxes for rescue resources*

Regarding this agenda topic it was agreed that this was a complicated matter but it is a national responsibility to ensure the fulfillment of this obligation in the Agreement. It was agreed to keep this item on the agenda for the meetings to come and follow how this develops in the future.

## **6. Barents Joint Manual**

*a. Update needs? (contact information etc)*

It was agreed that the Joint Manual needs to be updated to be in par with recent changes.

Ms. Michaelsen posed a question concerning time by which all necessary changes will be presented by all parties.

Mr. Metso informed that due to some reorganization processes Finland could provide the final information not earlier than the end of autumn.

Mr. Kazakov proposed that list of contact points and other information that changes often could be separated from the main body of the Joint Manual and become appendixes that could be updated without the need of reprinting the whole Joint Manual.

*b. Publication*

Ms. Michaelsen asked a question if the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police should wait for the all changes to be presented by all parties before printing the updated Joint Manual or should print it after receiving the major part of the information.

Mr. Metso commented that the Norwegian side should not wait for the all information to be presented from the Finnish side due to uncertainty with dates it will be ready.

**7. Web-update ([www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st))**

Mr. Hojem informed that the web-page will be updated as soon as all necessary information will be presented to the International Barents Secretariat by the Joint Committee. Mr. Hojem also added that the web-page of the Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation is also available for publishing any other relevant information, such as annual evaluation reports (as mentioned by Mr. Macayrin in the last paragraph of agenda item 5a), or links to such reports. It is fully upon the Joint Committee to decide the contents of their own homepage.

**8. Place and date of the next meeting**

Russian side will determine the place and date of the next meeting under Russian chairmanship later in 2011.

**9. Any other business**

Nothing was discussed under this agenda item.