



**Barents Euro-Arctic Council**  
*11<sup>th</sup> Session*  
*Rovaniemi, Finland*  
*14 -15 November 2007*

**Joint Communiqué**

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) convened its Eleventh Session in Rovaniemi on 14 – 15 November 2007, under the chairmanship of Finland.

Ministers and high representatives of members (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission) participated in the Session, which was also attended by representatives of the Barents Regional Council, representatives of the indigenous peoples, parliaments, regional bodies, observer states, and other invited guests.

**Introduction**

1. The Council affirms the continuing validity of the principles and aims of the Barents co-operation, reaffirming the overall objectives of the cooperation in the Barents region to promote stability, security, wellbeing and sustainable development in all its aspects including economic, environmental and social fields.
2. The Council underlines that the work at the local and regional levels is fundamental to the success of the Barents cooperation, emphasising the key role played by the Barents Regional Council, expressing its satisfaction with the increasing cooperation between the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council and taking note of its Statement at this session.
3. The Council welcomes the establishment of the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) in Kirkenes (Norway), convinced that the establishment of the Secretariat will make the Barents cooperation more coherent and efficient.
4. The Council welcomes the renewed Northern Dimension policy as a common policy between the EU, the Russian Federation, Norway and Iceland, adopted at the Northern Dimension Summit in Helsinki on 24 November 2006, and its enhanced content, particularly the inclusion of the Barents region as a priority area.

## **Economic development**

5. The Council calls for further expanded cross-border cooperation between the different actors in the Barents region, aiming at sustainable use of the region's natural resources and at favourable economic development, bringing economic growth and increased trade flows and general wellbeing to the region. The improvement of Barents business opportunities has been promoted by using the *Barents Industrial Partnership* meetings as a tool to enhance interaction between authorities, business and other parties and by improving the information on business environment, financing and investment possibilities, especially for small and medium sized enterprises.
6. The Council emphasises the importance of Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation and welcomes the progress towards this goal as it will broaden the prospects for trade and economic cooperation through harmonisation of economic framework conditions and promote free trade and economic integration.
7. The Council welcomes the active role of the regional business community and particularly the Barents Business Advisory Group in improving business opportunities, especially for the small and medium sized enterprises.
8. The Council underlines the economic, environmental and social importance of forests and forest industries in the Barents region, and welcomes the efforts by the Barents Forest Sector Task Force to promote development of the forest sector in the region. Its contribution has included keeping preconditions for forest sector investments in the Northern Europe in the discussion, as well as efforts to develop and promote model forest and other co-operation projects.
9. The Council considers an efficient transport and logistics infrastructure vital for the development of cross-border economic cooperation and trade in the Barents region and in connecting the region to wider global networks of economic cooperation. The cooperation in the BEATA (Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area) Working Group has contributed to the improvement of east-west transport infrastructure, notably in the form of projects to make the Northern Transport Corridor a viable and well-functioning transport corridor.
10. The Council supports the multimodal Northern East-West Transport Corridor (N.E.W.), including the Barents Link railway concept, and other potential transport connections in the Barents region, to improve cross-border trade and the linking of the region to wider global transport and logistics networks. The Council reiterates its support to the considerations of the Northern Dimension partners to establish a Partnership on Transport and Logistics.
11. The Council urges special attention to be paid to the facilitation of border crossing, simplified procedures, improved border management and removal of trade barriers through the cooperation between the customs and other relevant authorities in the Barents region.

## Environment

12. The Council acknowledges the results of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of Barents Environment Ministers held in Moscow on 9 November 2007 and the work of the Working Group on Environment during the Russian Chairmanship.
13. The Council considers climate change as a major concern. It should be an enhanced priority in the Barents cooperation. The estimates of the impact of climate change, including its threat to the traditional livelihood of indigenous peoples as well as its economic costs, have shown that urgent action is necessary. The Council recognizes the challenges of maintaining high ambitions on climate change issues and at the same time managing natural resources in a sustainable manner. Within this context the Council confirms its commitment to the work of the United Nations on a new global agreement on climate change.
14. The Council reaffirms the recommendations of the document *Arctic climate change: Policy measures relevant for the Barents Region*, adopted at the 10th BEAC Ministerial Session in Harstad that forms the basis for priority actions in the Barents region for the period 2006-2010.
15. The Council welcomes the pilot project between the BEAC and the Nordic Council of Ministers on climate change and biodiversity as an important action to implement the recommendations. Synergies are also achieved in the cooperation with the Arctic Council.
16. The Council stresses the importance of eliminating the environmental "hot spots" in the Barents region and welcomes the progress made by the Nordic Environmental Financing Corporation (NEFCO) in preparing feasibility studies, financed through the Barents Hot Spot Facility and acknowledges the contribution of NEFCO to the implementation of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) objectives.
17. The Council welcomes the measures already taken to make the production processes more environmentally friendly, including more energy efficient, and - stresses the importance of further efforts to promote cleaner production and energy saving as important instruments to promote economic and environmental efficiency in industry.
18. The Council emphasises the need and importance of reliable information on the status of the environment and potential impacts of planned projects in order for governments and other actors to base their decisions and measures relating to environmental protection on long-term high-quality data.
19. The Council notes the successful international cooperation taking place in Northwest Russia, substantially improving nuclear and radiological safety in the region.
20. The Council notes the successful role of the NDEP and expresses support for the continuation of its projects in the field of environment and nuclear safety.

## Human and Social development

21. The Council emphasizes the importance of the Cooperation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues for 2004-2007 aiming at meeting special needs of the Barents region and welcomes the new Programme for 2008-2011. Priority areas of cooperation include the prevention of communicable diseases like HIV/Aids and gaining full control of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, prevention of lifestyle related health and social problems and promotion of healthier lifestyles as well as development of primary health care and social services. More attention will be devoted to the social sector, where the Framework Programme for Children and Youth at Risk continues as a priority. Close coordination with the ND Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing should be continued.
22. The Council calls for further strengthening of cooperation between higher education and research institutions, and welcomes steps already taken in order to make the region more attractive for students and researchers from members and other countries.
23. The Council calls for additional efforts to promote exchanges, joint educational and research programmes and other steps to attain the targets of the Bologna Process, and encourages regular Barents Forums on Education and Research. These Forums should be platforms for education and research connected to other Barents activities and issues, e.g. health and social issues, culture, youth, gender issues and indigenous peoples.
24. The Council welcomes the establishment of the Joint Working Group on Culture and the drafting in it of a Barents Cultural Programme for 2008-2010 with the aim of further developing multilateral and bilateral cultural cooperation and networks in the Barents region as well as to develop Barents cultural cooperation as a part of the implementation of the Northern Dimension Policy.
25. The Council welcomes the cooperation on youth issues on all levels including the work of the Barents Regional Youth Council and the Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO) in Murmansk, jointly financed by Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. A new Barents Regional Youth Programme for 2007-2010 has been adopted. Further development of the youth dimension continues to be one of the vital elements to ensure the region's economic and social viability, and the facilitation of youth mobility, exchanges of education, services and youth employment opportunities in the regional context.
26. The Council highlights the importance of gender equality in the Barents Region and the strengthening of women's, including indigenous women's, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and public representation.
27. The Council notes the ongoing work on the implementation of the Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples, including the role of the Barents Indigenous Peoples Office.
28. The Council welcomes the pilot project between the BEAC and the Nordic Council of Ministers on entrepreneurship related to traditional indigenous means of livelihood, like reindeer herding and crafts, in the Murmansk region.

29. The Council commends the enhanced cooperation among emergency and rescue services in the Barents region, notes that the Barents Rescue 2007 Exercise has been successfully held in Saariselkä, Inari in October 2007, and the plan by Russia to host the Barents Rescue Exercise in 2009. The Council welcomes the work aimed at concluding the Agreement between the Governments in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on Cooperation within the Field of Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response.
30. The Council commends the ongoing cooperation among relevant authorities in the region to combat crime as well as maintain a high level of preparedness against terrorist activities, organised crime and other public order challenges, including trafficking in human beings.
31. The Council reiterates the objective to facilitate trade and travel in the Barents region and welcomes the progress in EU-Russia and Norway-Russia visa practises.

### **Renewed Mechanisms of Co-operation**

32. The Council underlines that the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) should be utilized to improve the coherence, efficiency and the continuity of the BEAC and BRC cooperation and strengthen the effectiveness of their sectoral and intersectoral work.
33. The Council stresses the importance of the renewed Northern Dimension policy regarding the development of the Barents Region and welcomes proposals to implement and influence that policy.
34. The Council reiterates its commitment to continue cooperation and coordination between the Northern Regional Councils in order to improve synergies.
35. The Council welcomes the enhanced cooperation on projects between the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers and invites its further development.
36. The Council urges increased effort to be put on multilateral financing of programmes and activities, joint preparation and monitoring. The Council particularly welcomes the EU's new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) as a significant source for joint financing in the Barents cooperation.
37. The Council expresses its satisfaction at the holding of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Parliamentary Barents Conference in Rovaniemi in June 2007 and underlines the importance of contact, cooperation and support by the national parliaments and the regional assemblies in matters regarding the Barents region.
38. Welcomes the International Polar Year 2007-2008, as a unique opportunity to stimulate cooperation and coordination of Arctic research and increase awareness of the importance of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

39. The Council emphasises the role of the non-governmental sector in the Barents Region and urges further expansion of cross border exchanges, people-to-people contacts and cooperation among the representatives of mass media. These are essential for fostering regional identity, strengthened transparency, democratic decision-making and good governance.
40. The Council calls for enhanced twin-city and municipal cooperation.

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41. The Council expresses its appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Finland, and the Chairs and participants of the Working Groups and Task Forces for their excellent work and welcomes the incoming Chair, the Russian Federation. The Council welcomes the Russian Chairmanship priorities for 2007-2009 and accepts the kind invitation of the Russian Federation to host the next Session of the Council in 2009, at a time and venue to be determined.
42. The Council also thanks the outgoing Chair of the Regional Council, the Republic of Karelia, and the Chairs and participants of the regional Working Groups and the Ad Hoc Group on organisational issues for their excellent work and welcomes the incoming Chair, the Oulu Region, and is looking forward to a fruitful cooperation.