

**Minutes from the
Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Working Group on Environment (BEAC WGE)
Meeting June 18th, Svanhovd, Kirkenes**

1. Opening of the meeting

WGE chair Ms. Anne Berteig, Norway, opened the meeting by thanking the participants in the previous day's meetings for their efforts and welcomed the newly arrived delegates. The delegates presented themselves. Ms. Ingvild Wartainen, director of Svanhovd, made a presentation of Bioforsk Soil and Environment Svanhovd.

2. Agenda

Agenda point 6 and 7 were switched. The agenda was adopted with this change.

3. The minutes from the meeting of BEAC WGE 10-11 April 2008.

The enclosed draft minutes from the BEAC WGE meeting 10-11 April were adopted with a change under agenda point 9, proposed by Ms. Natalia Vavilova, Russia.

4. Information from BEAC Committee of Senior Officials (CSO).

The BEAC CSO holds a meeting in Naryan Mar at the same dates as the present WGE-meeting. In the future such collisions can be avoided, thanks to the list of meeting dates in the Barents cooperation, which will be sent out regularly by the International Barents Secretariat. It is desired to have participation from the Russian CSO-presidency and the IBS at least in some WGE meetings.

Since last WGE-meeting the Norwegian Presidency had submitted two documents to the CSO-meeting (annex1) - a list of proposed tasks for the IBS, worked out in cooperation with all the participants in WGE, and a first draft proposal for the agreed seminar on climate change. Hopefully, CSO would take proposals into consideration and discuss them at the meeting under miscellaneous. The Presidency had also submitted information to the International Barents Secretariat to be presented on the internet site of the BEAC www.beac.st.

The Chair informed that the BEAC Working Group on Energy will be revitalized under shared chairmanship of the Norwegian Ministry of Oil and Energy and Arkhangelsk oblast. In the previous CSO-meeting it was decided that the Indigenous Peoples Working Group could have representatives in any other working groups under BEAC. IPWG has expressed having a member in WGE, but so far not representative had been appointed.

5. Information from RWGE

The vice chair of the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE) Ms. Bente Christiansen, County of Finnmark, presented information from the RWGE-meeting 17 June 2008 (annex2). There had not been any regional representatives from Russia and Sweden present. The group will ask the WGE for help so that all the counties will be able to attend next time. Ms Anne Berteig, Norway, referred to the problem of lack of finance of regional participation in the Barents cooperation. Some funding from the Norwegian side could be used to generate project proposals for the new ENPI financing instrument. Ms Henna Haapala, Finland, proposed that the ENPI funding possibilities and programmes could be discussed more in detail in the next meeting. The Chair asked the regional group to set up a list of projects they want to prioritize, so that they can be

considered for financing. Ms. Christiansen also informed that RWGE also has discussed to apply to the Nordic Council of Ministers for funding.

6. Report from the meetings in the WGE subgroups June 17th.

In the meetings 17 June, the subgroups had worked on the action plans 2008-2009, a short list of prioritized projects, and long lists for reference and information of projects conducted in the Barents Region in the subgroups' respective fields.

The chair of the Subgroup on Water Issues Ms. Bente Christiansen, Norway, presented the report from the subgroup (annex2). The group hopes to be able to adopt the action plan at the meeting in October. The subgroup has also made a list of finished water projects under the Barents cooperation, and a list of new water projects. There are plans for a seminar on mining and water in the autumn. The group discussed the possibility of making this into a Barents seminar, or alternatively it could be the start of a bigger seminar later. At the moment there are planned or ongoing mining activities in all the counties in the region.

The subgroup also discussed joint projects between the subgroups, and Ms. Christiansen proposed this as a theme for the next WGE meeting. It was agreed that a list of completed projects should be made, this will among other things help with dissemination of results. Ms. Ida Reuterswård, Sweden, informed the Habitat contact forum meeting in October will have wetlands on the agenda (www.wc.lst.se/en/). Ms Christiansen stressed that adoption to climate change must also be taken into our plans.

The chair of the Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption Ms. Hanne Aronsen, Norway, presented the report from the subgroup. There had been representatives from all the countries, as well as from NEFCO and the Cleaner Production and Sustainable Development Centre at the meeting. The main task had been to finalize the groups working programme. Revision of the strategy document had been postponed to a later meeting. There was general agreement concerning the content on the short list of prioritized projects. WGE decided to adopt the working program with some final corrections, made by the end of the WGE-meeting (annex3). Ms. Ida Reuterswård, Sweden, stressed the importance of starting projects this year, since Sweden's project funding for 2008 must be paid out before the end of the year.

The chair of the Subgroup on Nature Protection Mr. Jan-Petter Hubert-Hansen, Norway, presented the report from the subgroup. All countries were represented in the subgroup. A nearly complete strategy and working plan was presented to WGE. The meeting of the Habitat Conservation Forum in October is one of the main activities for the subgroup in 2008. Mr. Hubert-Hansen informed about some selected projects from the group's priority list. It was also agreed to distribute the list of projects to all participants. WGE adopted the working plan of the Subgroup on Nature Protection, taking into account that it will be to some extent a dynamic document (annex4 – to be forwarded later).

It was agreed that the subgroups should present their prioritized projects in a common template, which should be worked out and agreed upon by e-mail. It was also decided that these project descriptions should be attached to the subgroups' working plans as annexes.

7. Environmental Hot Spots

Mr. Henrik Forsström, NEFCO, presented the progress on the work with Barents Hot Spots Facility (annex5) and from the meeting 12 June in the Steering Group for Barents Hot Spots Facility. Most of the funding from BHSF is now allocated. Waste issues have come increasingly into focus, including medical waste. A report on this would be ready soon.

Ms Henna Haapala, Finland, reported and presented photos from the Finnish-Russian hot spots project on elimination of obsolete pesticides in Karelia. The pesticides had been transported to Finland for destruction. She proposed that on next meeting to have a more presentations on what has been done in the hot spots projects.

The Chair informed that there had been some initial talks between the Norwegian government, NEFCO, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Cleaner Production Centre, as well as in the Subgroup on CPESC, on arranging seminars in the Russian regions to promote the work on hot spots and cleaner production. There is good experience from Komi and Karelia with their forming of regional groups on hot spots. It was agreed to try to arrange such seminars in Archangelsk, Murmansk and Nenets AO. Ms. Natalia Vavilova, Russia, pointed out that this issue should be brought up with the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology. It was decided that the WGE should send a letter to the Russian ministry about this issue and propose an initial meeting.

Cooperation between the Arctic Council Working Group ACAP and Barents WGE on hot spots, had been initiated under the Finnish WGE chairmanship 2003-2005. At the Arctic Council meeting in Svolvær in April 2008 the newly appointed chair of ACAP, Mr. Andrey Peshkov, had expressed his readiness to take up cooperation with WGE. The chair invited the participants to discuss on how to proceed in reviving the cooperation.

Ms. Hanne Aronsen, Norway, gave an account of the major projects, conducted by ACAP on environmental pollutants, like mercury, dioxin, pesticides, PCB etc. ACAP has lately experienced difficulties to proceed due to lack of destruction facilities in Russia. It was hoped that the strategy of for hazardous waste in Russia, under development, would help to solve the situation. Mr. Jan Tsygankov, Cleaner Production and Sustainable Development Centre, informed about the work conducted in the projects that had been part of the earlier cooperation between ACAP and WGE.

The chair proposed that WGE make a tentative updated list of the work conducted in this cooperation, based on Mr. Tsygankov's account and input from WGE members. WGE decided to write a letter to the ACAP chair with proposals for further cooperation, enclosing the updated project list. This letter should be worked out in cooperation between the parties and sent in time to be discussed at the next ACAP meeting, preferably before 1 September. Ms. Ann-Sofi Israelson, Sweden, proposed to have cooperation with ACAP as a regular agenda point in WGE meetings and to encourage participation of the WGE chair in ACAP meetings and vice versa.

8. Climate change network

The chair pointed to the agreement from the last WGE meeting to hold a joint seminar with RWGE on climate change in the Barents Region. Since adaptation to climate change is a cross-sectorial issue, the whole Barents cooperation should be involved. The chair had therefore written a draft proposal for such a seminar and submitted it to the CSO-meeting,

with the aim to involve the International Barents Secretariat and the other working groups in the conference.

Ms. Ida Reuterswård, Sweden, informed about the governmental report: “Sweden Facing Climate Change” on climate change and adaptation measures, and presented the book to the chair. She stressed the importance of long term planning when working on climate change/adaptation issues in WGE, and suggested that the present seminar could be a platform for information sharing between the BEAC countries on national adaptation strategies as well as regional initiatives, like the initiative taken in Murmansk. The seminar could additionally focus on certain thematic issues, like water and biodiversity, since activities within these fields are already going on and would be timely presented. Other themes could then be treated in follow-up seminars under the Swedish chairmanship.

Ms. Henna Haapala, Finland, also suggested comparing the Barents country’s ongoing work on adaptation strategies. She also presented and handed over the Finnish adaptation strategy to climate change.

Mr. Jan-Petter Hubert Hansen, Norway, informed about two reports from the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management on effects of climate change on ecosystems and adaptation measures for environmental management.

Mr. Jari Pasanen, County of Lapland, pointed to the issues of flood and monitoring, and comparison of measurements and methods as a topics of interest.

Ms. Galina Veselova, Russia, informed about an international conference “Role of Forests in Climate Management: Research – Innovations – Investments – Capacity Building”, planned to take place in St. Petersburg 4-7th of October 2008.
<http://www.rosleshoz.gov.ru/english/media/news/27>

Ms. Natalia Vavilova, Russia, informed that she had information on a recent conference in Murmansk concerning adaptation that she will forward to the group and the secretariat.

Ms. Asbjørg Fyhn, County of Troms, suggested that a presentation of what is going on at the regional level could be useful in the run-up to the seminar. She also stressed the importance of energy as a key factor in the climate change discourse and the possibility to look at consequences on biodiversity when it comes to increasing activity in forestry. Renewable energy might also be a central issue on the planned conference.

The Chair thanked the participant for support for the seminar. She proposed to appoint a contact person in each of the Barents countries and the regions to constitute the core of the organizational committee. All participants should collect relevant material and start making a list of possible themes. She also asked all the participants who had information, relevant to the seminar, to send it to the secretariat. The secretariat will inform about the reaction of the letter received at the CSO meeting.

WGE had been given the responsibility to follow up the Barents policy measures on climate change. The Chair pointed to the impossibility to follow it up within the WGE, because climate change involves all sectors of society, and there is no forum for communication between the different working groups in the Barents cooperation. The

follow up must therefore be on a higher level. The invitation to participate in the conference, sent to CSO, was a small attempt to involve the other groups. It was agreed to send a letter from WGE, requesting CSO to follow up. The WGE can take responsibility for the parts in the document that is within the group's mandate, and challenge the CSO to challenge the other working groups to follow up on their aspects. The secretariat will draft an analyses of the policy document with respect to areas of responsibility, as well as a letter to CSO, and send it out for comments.

9. Meeting plan for the Barents WGE 2008-2009

It was decided to hold the next WGE meeting 8-10th of October.

Ms. Natalia Vavilova, Russia, referred to the proposal of holding the third WGE meeting of 2008 in Murmansk. Since this is an official meeting, WGE chaired by Norway should formally approach the regional authorities in Murmansk County about hold the meeting in the region.

It was agreed to hold two meetings in 2009 before the ministerial meeting, in the first half of March and in the second or third week of September. The exact dates will be decided by e-mail. Possible date of the ministerial meeting was discussed, but no conclusion was reached. The Chair requested the subgroups to make a calendar of events for the subgroup projects, and submit this to the secretariat.

10. Any other business

Ms Henna Haapala, Finland, informed about a seminar: "The Quest of being in God's World" on environmental, social and diaconal responsibility, organised by the churches in the Barents Region, to be held in Oulu 28-30.10.08. www.quest-of-being.info

The chair thanked all participants, interpreters and invited parties for a constructive meeting.