

Minutes from the meeting in the Working Group on Environment, 10-11 April 2008, Tromsø

1. Opening of the meeting, presentation of participants

WGE Chair Anne Berteig, Ministry of Environment Norway welcomed the participants, with a special welcome to the newly appointed delegates.

2. Adoption of the agenda

There were no comments to the agenda. Presentation of the International Barents Secretariat was moved to agenda point 7b. The Agenda was adopted with minor changes.

3. Summing up of the 8th meeting of the Ministers of Environment in Moscow 9 November 2008. Follow up of the ministers' declaration

Anne Berteig presented the priorities for the Norwegian chairmanship. The declaration from the 8th meeting of the Ministers of Environment gives a good basis for the work. Priorities are climate change, hazardous waste and biodiversity. The chairmanship will build on the good work of the past. Policy measures of the Barents Region on climate change will be an important guiding document. Elimination of the hot spots in cooperation with NEFCO will be a priority. Cleaner production and energy efficiency should be used in the context of climate change and hot spots. Cooperation with the regional working group will be emphasized. The new subgroups would hopefully contribute to more concrete results in the WGE.

4. Information from the Ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, 14 November 2007 and the BEAC Committee of Senior Officials

Anne Berteig informed of the BEAC CSO meeting in Moscow 8-9 April under Russian chairmanship. The main issue of the meeting had been presentation of the working groups under the Barents Council. From Natalia Vavilova, Ministry of Natural Resources had reported from the Russian chairmanship 2005-2007. Anne Berteig had presented the plans for the Norwegian chairmanship 2008-2009 and called for cooperation and support from CSO and other working groups on hot spots and climate change issues.

The Working Group on Energy has been inactive lately, but there are now efforts to revitalize the group with under leadership of the Norwegian Ministry of Oil and Energy, with support from Arkhangelsk oblast and NEFCO. The mandate will be narrowed down energy efficiency and renewable energy sources issues. The Task Force on Forestry under the Working Group on Economic Cooperation is inactive, but in view of the importance of forests for the Barents region, CSO decided against abolishing it. CSO decided that representatives from the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples could participate in other working groups, and WGIP expressed interest to participate in WGE. This could be discussed under agenda point 10. The new Russian chair of ACAP had at the CSO-meeting invited WGE to cooperate on relevant issues. This initiative could be followed up at the SAO-meeting in Svolvær 23-24 April.

5. Environmental Hot Spots in the Barents Region

Henrik G. Forsström, NEFCO presented the hot spots progress report, see enclosed report. Most of the resources of the Barents Hot spot Facility are now allocated, but some reallocation would be possible. Several pre-feasibility and sector studies have been commissioned and completed. Accumulation of waste is an increasing problem. A study of the waste situation in Arkhangelsk shows that medical waste poses a significant problem. NEFCO has therefore commissioned a study on treatment of medical waste. Another

important issue is the possibility of bundling small projects together in order to use the Joint implementation mechanism. The ACAP programme related to mercury shows good progress.

Anne Berteig asked NEFCO to put special effort into launching the hot spots database.

Appointed members to the Hot Spot task force for development of elimination criteria are so far Åke Mikaelson, Sweden, Henna Haapala, Finland and Anne Grethe Kolstad, Norway.

Henna Haapala, Ministry of Environment Finland, informed that during the Finnish WGE chairmanship (2003-2005) ACAP Chair, WGE Chair and NEFCO together made a list of issues that were relevant for cooperation between the WGE and ACAP, and promised to send relevant documentation.

Report from the regional working groups on hot spots of Karelia and Komi

Oleg Telnov, Republic of Karelia, reported on the status of hot spots in Karelia. The regional working group on hot spots was set up in 2005 format the order of the Minister of Natural Resources. A list of prioritized hot spots has been worked out together with NEFCO. One goal is to cut consumption of fuel oil in Karelia by 30 %. Wastewater treatment and clean drinking water are priority targets for Russia, and federal and regional strategies will be developed. In Karelia 21 municipalities are developing business plans and feasibility studies for waste water and drinking water projects. Implementation will be planned in cooperation with NEFCO. Karelia is developing a comprehensive timber and forest use project together with partners in Västerbotten. A pilot project on solid waste has been started in Petrozavodsk. Even if housing and municipal services have environmental aspects, Mr. Telnov maintained that important issues, related to energy efficiency and renewables will not be sufficiently handled in the Barents cooperation without revitalisation of the Working Group on Energy.

Tatiana Tiupenko, Republic of Komi, reported from the working group on hot Spots and cleaner production in Komi. The group started up in February 2008, based on the experience from Karelia. It is headed by the Minister of natural resources and environment of Komi and is comprised of all relevant federal and regional authorities, the educational sector and business representatives, the energy efficiency and cleaner production centres. NEFCO, the Cleaner production centre in Moscow and chair of WGE were present at the constitutional meeting in Syktyvkar. The group started by summing up the status of the hot spots in Komi. The most urgent hot spot is the waste situation. A database on contaminated sites will be compiled and a study made in cooperation with NEFCO. The group will hold meetings 4 times a year and be a forum for exchange of views and open discussion. It will stimulate authorities and business to contribute in environment and bring environmental news to the press and the public.

The WGE acknowledged the importance of the regional groups. They will give impetus to and provide for continuity in the hot spot work. Informing the population about environmental issues is also very important. RWGE and WGE will spread experience between the regions.

6. Report from the meetings in the WGE Subgroups, 9 April 2008

Key national contacts have been appointed to all subgroups, except for a Russian member to the Subgroup for Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption, which is still pending. In the first meeting the subgroups had been asked to develop a short strategy document, as well as to propose an action plan for the period until the ministerial meeting in 2009. They were also invited to create and maintain a list of ongoing projects in their respective fields for reference and information purposes.

Subgroup for Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption.

Hanne Aronsen, Norwegian Pollution Control Authority, presented the work of the Subgroup for cleaner production and environmental sound consumption, see enclosed presentation. The subgroup has set up a time plan in order to complete a working program and a project list within the next meeting. The Policy document on a cleaner production strategy from 2003 will be updated and revised to include sustainable consumption and cooperation with other international organs.

Subgroup on Nature Protection

Jan-Petter Hubert-Hansen, Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, presented the results from the Subgroup on nature protection, see enclosed presentation. Five main areas of activity are marked out for the action plan: 1) Management of World heritage sites, conference in Syktyvkar, June 2008; 2) Network of protected areas in the Barents region, BPAN; 3) Cooperation between Norway, Sweden and Finland on protected areas "Trekksrøysa"; 4) Protection of old growth forests (follow-up of the conference in December 2007); 5) Habitat Contact Forum in Umeå, week 42. The group's strategy and action plan should be ready for adoption on the next WGE-meeting.

Jan-Petter Hubert-Hansen raised the question if Subgroup on Nature protection had a special responsibility for maintaining the project list on climate change issues. It was concluded that climate change is cross-sectorial and would be included in all subgroups.

Mats Rune Bergström, County of Västerbotten Mats Rune Bergström, County of Västerbotten, informed about a regional project related to land use, energy and climate change with a focus on Karelia and Murmansk. The project aim e.g. to decrease CO₂-emission through a modernisation in the production of district housing heating, increase production of bio fuel raw material and improve energy efficiency in the maintenance of buildings. Relevant issues of the project will be discussed in the Habitat Contact Forum meeting.

Jürgen Keinhorst, Germany, informed that there is a project on biomass production in Northern Europe which could be supportive to this work, and he suggested to exchange of expertise. Climate change would also be discussed at a biodiversity conference in Bonn in May. He stressed the need for information exchange on related projects.

Anne Berteig informed that a letter to the Habitat Contact Forum has been drafted and commented on by all parties in order to confirm the inclusion of the Habitat Contact Forum in the subgroup on Nature protection. After a discussion, the WGE concluded that to make this decision is well within the mandate of the WGE.

Subgroup on Water Issues

Bente Christiansen, County of Finnmark, presented the report from the Subgroup on water issue, see enclosed presentation. The group has come far in a short time. The mandate and strategy will be completed before the meeting in the autumn.

Demyan Smilevets, Russian Federal Agency of Water Resources, will give a presentation at the next meeting. WGE approved to look into using EU has short guides in the subgroups, among other in the field of water management. It also approved of coordination with the dialogue between EU and Russia. The subgroup considered joint participation in a seminar in St. Petersburg on cross-border water bodies.

It was decided that the minutes from the subgroups and other material should be sent to the chair in 3 weeks of the WGE meeting. The minutes will then be adopted at the next meeting.

7. Information from the meeting in the Regional Working Group on Environment

The chair of RWGE Tatiana Tiupenko, Republic of Komi, presented the report. Roald Røkeberg from the Barents Regional Committee had been present and informed RWGE about the new structure of the Regional Committee. The new organisation would strengthen the status of RWGE. A new working program for the regional cooperation is under elaboration.

RWGE had discussed the projects from the hot spots list in Karelia and Komi. It was pointed out that as soon as the regions became involved in the hot spots, progress had been made.

RWGE had discussed interaction between the Regional Working Group on Environment and the Working Group on Environment. The ministerial declaration called for close cooperation between the subgroup on water issues and the regional working group, and regional representatives would participate in other subgroups as well. RWGE suggested that the subgroup meetings should be held on the first day of meetings. Subsequently, the RWGE-meeting could be held and receive information from the subgroups on activity in the regions. Finally, the WGE meeting could take place with all participants present. RWGE also proposed to arrange the third meeting this year in Murmansk or Arkhangelsk and to include in the programme a visit one of the hot spots. This would motivate the regional representatives.

Anne Berteig expressed the view that the first subgroup meetings should be back to back with the RWGE/WGE until the subgroups are firmly established. After that it should be possible for the subgroups to have meetings on their own and report to the WGE-meetings.

Henrik Forsström proposed looking into the possibility of virtual meetings.

Ida Reutersward, Ministry of the Environment Sweden, expressed the need to have a flexible approach to enable participation in sub-groups and RWGE, and reminded that the subgroups would be evaluated.

It was decided to use the proposal from RWGE as a basis for structuring the next meeting.

7b. The International Barents Secretariat.

Anna Lund, the International Barents Secretariat, gave a presentation The International Barents Secretariat was set up after a decision at the Barents ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi 2007. Ambassador Alexander Ignatiev is head of the secretariat, Anna Lund is executive officer. A third fellow worker was already been appointed, and there would also be indigenous representative in the secretariat in the future.

The main tasks of the secretariat are to: 1) Support the CSO, Barents Council, the Regional Council and the working groups; 2) Work out a new design and maintain the internet-site www.beac.st; 3) Work as an institutional memory for the Barents cooperation; 4) Help with finding resources and financing for projects; 5) Enhance coordination and communication within the Barents cooperation.

The secretariat also will support the regional cooperation. The calendar of events taking place in the Barents cooperation and events related to the Barents will later be made available at www.beac.st. When the working groups have meetings in Kirkenes, the secretariat will try to help out with practical arrangements. However, it was not finally decided in what way the

IBS should support the working groups. WGE therefore held a brain storming on possible functions from the secretariat. Among others, the following tasks were mentioned: to collect information and produce a leaflet on project financing mechanisms, help disseminate information about the group's work through the internet, better coordination between the different working groups, produce a newsletter with information from all the different working groups, highlight prioritised issues for in the whole Barents cooperation, such as climate change.

It was decided that the chair should collect the ideas and circulate a list, where the members could add their proposals. Norway would then forward the list to the secretariat. It was also decided that the chair should collect all information, including presentations from the meetings and minutes from the subgroups, and forward the information to the secretariat.

8. Climate change

Report from the joint project with Nordic Council of Ministers on "Impacts of climate change on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Goods and Services in the Barents Region"

Roland Jansson, Umeå University, presented the project, see enclosed presentation. The focus of the project is on eco-system services and the benefit humans retain from nature. One workshop was held in January, while two other work shops were planned in June and November. The project will produce recommendations for management authorities. The preliminary conclusions are as follows: Most direct effects of climate change on ecosystem services are positive, whereas secondary, indirect effects are negative; there are big uncertainties; in many cases, detailed predictions are inherently impossible to make; societies should focus on increasing resilience and adaptive capacity; changes occurring outside the region may be of overriding importance. A first report is expected in June. Other scientist and policy makers would be invited to the following work shops. The project ends March 2009.

The following discussion touched upon questions of the possible need for new protected areas and areas where species can migrate, consequences for salmon due to increased risk of flooding and competition from warm adapted species, the inclusion of local knowledge into the project, the great geographical variety within the Barents region, the importance of climate change versus other threats to biodiversity, dissemination of the result among the stakeholders would be important, as well as links to other studies in the Arctic regions.

Galina Veselova, Ministry of Natural Resources, presented a list of Russian experts, relevant for participation in this project.

Proposal of joint WGE and RWGE Seminar on climate change in the Barents Region

Irene Bauer, Ministry of the Environment of Norway presented a proposal to organize a seminar on climate change jointly between WGE and RWGE. The conference could be a starting point for activity on climate change issues in the Barents cooperation. One option would be to arrange such a conference as a conclusion of the previously presented project and invite different stakeholders. Another option is to look at the PERUSA project, which has established that 60% of the infrastructure along the Usa and Pechora rivers is located in the high risk area, and investigate what people living there could do to adapt. The participants were invited to propose themes for such a conference.

Irene Bauer mentioned thawing of permafrost as one important issue, stated in the Policy measures of the Barents Region on climate change and in the Ministerial declaration. Finland and Komi supported taking up permafrost issues, referring to a joint project on permafrost.

Bente Christiansen proposed that increased risk of flood should be on the agenda. Bjarne Store-Jacobsen, Working Group of Indigenous Peoples, referred to a recent visit to the Pechora Delta area and supported the focus on flooding, since early flooding could be a major problem in that area.

Ida Reutersward informed about the planned Arctic Council project related to the cryosphere. The project will focus on the 1) Arctic sea ice (Norway), 2) Greenland ice sheet (Denmark), 3) permafrost and snow (Sweden) Information about this project could be sent out upon request. She also pointed to the VACCA (Progress report on Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic) project in the Sustainable Development Working Group, concerned with scoping of adaptation measures for the whole Arctic Region. She recommended that consideration should be taken to these projects when planning for activities in BEAC and expressed that Sweden would support the development of activities related to adaptation.

Hennas Haapala supported the focus on adaptation and suggested starting with networking to exchange ideas and information on climate change issues as a preparation for a conference.

The chair concluded that there was a general agreement that RWGE and WGE should cooperate to arrange a conference on climate change in the Barents region. A network should be created to gather information and discuss themes, relevant for the conference. All countries and parties were asked to investigate their resources of co-financing such an event and other sources for financing.

9: Time for the next meeting

The chair informed about the International Barents Secretariat's list of meetings in the Barents cooperation. It will be useful to avoid collisions and arrange back to back meetings with other groups in the future. The WGE-meeting in June will again collide with the CSO meeting. The chair suggested maintaining the agreed dates, and inviting the CSO-chair to the WGE-meeting in the autumn 2008. The participants agreed that week 41 would be the best alternative for the autumn meeting. The meeting will probably be held in Russia.

10. Any other business

Bjarne Store-Jacobsen informed about the decision from the CSO meeting in Moscow that the indigenous people are given the chance to voice their concerns in the WGE. A representative for the indigenous working group will therefore be appointed to the WGE early in May. This person should then be able to attend the meeting in June.

Ida Reutersward informed about the changes in the financing of projects from Sweden. Financing would no longer be channelled through the aid agency SIDA, but through the Ministry of Environment and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ministry of Environment. Funding will be available to support regional projects, cleaner production and climate change projects in 2008.

Bente Christiansen informed about the results and new development of the Pasvik programme. She also handed out a leaflet about the Pasvik-Enare Trilateral Park.

Anne Berteig thanked all the participants for their contribution and closed the meeting.