

MINUTES

The Regional Working Group on Environment of The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (RWGE)

Place: St-Peterburg, Russia

Dates: 14-15 of October 2002

Note: Joint meeting with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group on Environment (BEAC WGE)

Participants:

Mats-Rune Bergström	Chairman, Västerbotten, Sweden
Alexei Bambulyak	Assistant, Västerbotten, Sweden
Roar Høgsæt	Nordland, Norway
Asbjørn Fyhn	Troms, Norway
Bente Christiansen	Finnmark, Norway
Heikki Aronpää	Kainuu, Finland
Unto Ritvanen	Kainuu, Finland
Eija Salmi	Norra Österbotten, Finland
Mauno Rönkkömäki	Norra Österbotten, Finland
Jari Pasanen	Lapland, Finland
Viktor Kuznetsov	Arkhangelsk oblast, Russia
Tatiana Tiupenko	The Republic of Komi, Russia

1. Opening the joint meeting

Jon Kahn, Chairman of BEAC WGE, Ministry of Environment, Sweden opened the joint meeting of national and regional Working Groups on Environment of The Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

Nikolai Ivanov, The Department of Nature Resources for Northwest Region, Ministry of Nature Resources, Russia welcomed the meeting participants to St-Petersburg. Participants had short presentation of themselves.

BEAC WGE and RWGE had separate meetings.

2. RWGE meeting

Opening

Mats-Rune Bergström, Chairman of RWGE opened the meeting, announced the agenda, and presented the minutes from the first meeting in Umeå, Sweden in December 2002.

Preparatory group

Mats-Rune Bergström proposed to create smaller Preparatory group of 1 representative from each country to work closer elaborating the project proposals and working with practical matters of RWGE. Participants supported the proposal and agreed to suggest the representatives to the Preparatory group in the nearest future.

Interreg IIB project proposal

Mats-Rune Bergström informed RWGE about the application for the project, called “Barents 2010” prepared by The Regional Committee of BEAR to EU programme Interreg IIB, described the role of RWGE in implementing their part of the “Barents 2010”, gave practical information about the budget and terms of the project. All participants supported the idea and application, underlined that RWGE needs finances for work coordination and concrete actions.

Participants discussed the main topics to focus on for further concrete actions. Bente Christiansen proposed water quality, Eija Salmi proposed biodiversity topics, Mats-Rune Bergström proposed regional development and eco-tourism. Participants agreed to give the task to define the topics to focus to the Preparatory group.

Up-date of Action Programme

Mats-Rune Bergström informed that the idea to up-date the Action Programme was to make a document to be presented for 10-years Anniversary of the Barents Co-operation in the beginning of January. Participants discussed the goal, basis, focus and terms of the Action Programme. Participants agreed to up-date the Action Programme based on the BEAC WGE programme and main directions.

10-years Anniversary of BEAR

RWGE participants discussed the concrete activities to be linked to and reports to be delivered for 10-years Anniversary of BEAR.

Mats-Rune Bergström informed about two reports prepared by Sweden – brochure about the Barents Co-operation, and report about eco-tourism based on the results of UN conference in Hemavann, and proposed to run a pilot-project to study possibilities for certification of eco-tourism in BEAR based on “Nature’s Best”.

Bente Christiansen informed about “Barents LA21 network” and suggested to arrange a seminar on LA21 and eco-tourism in BEAR. It was proposed to have LA21 and eco-tourism seminar at Svanhovd Environmental Centre, Norway in the late spring 2003.

Other questions

Viktor Kuznetsov informed about the results and resolution of the international workshop “Sustainable Use of Taiga Resources in The Barents Region” held in Arkhangelsk from 8th to 12th of October 2002. One of the main goals of the workshop was to establish a dialogue between forest industry and environmental protection institutions. The report from the workshop will be published and distributed.

Mats-Rune Bergström informed about established co-operation between BEAC Working Groups on Environment and on Forestry.

Roar Høgsæt presented information about National Parks centre and Internet based site on eco-tourism developed in Nordland. Bente Christiansen gave information about proposal to establish Friendship Park - three-lateral Norwegian-Finnish-Russian national park.

Place and time of the next RWGE meeting

The next RWGE meeting will be linked to LA21 and eco-tourism seminar and held at Svanhovd Environmental Centre, Norway in spring 2003. The exact dates will be defined later.

3. Concluding the joint meeting

Jon Kahn and Mats-Rune Bergström presented information about the main results of the meetings in BEAC WGE and RWGE.

Mats-Rune Bergström pointed out the main topics of the meeting, as: “Barents 2010” project with RWGE part focused on water quality and biodiversity linked to sustainable development; up-date of the Action Programme based on programme and directions of BEAC WGE; special activities linked to 10-years Anniversary of BEAR, in particular, LA21 and eco-tourism seminar.

Viktor Kuznetsov presented brief information about five international expeditions held in 1996-2002 years to perspective nature protected areas with old growth forest, and proposed to arrange the international seminar evaluating the results of the expeditions and discussing the perspectives for conservation of old growth forest in the Arkhangelsk region. The proposal was supported.

Participants of the meeting underlined the importance of close links between national and regional Working Groups on Environment of BEAR.

Mats-Rune Bergström underlined that RWGE interested to take part in preparation of the draft of environmental input to Declaration of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council to be taken at 10-years Anniversary of BEAR meeting in Kirkenes in January 2003. Jon Kahn promised to make the proposal and circulate it by e-mail, and informed that CSO will make a decision of what should be included.

Jon Kahn thanked the participants and closed the joint meeting of BEAC WGE and RWGE.