



**Meeting report on Barents Joint Committee Meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland
6 – 8 October, 2009**

1. Participants

Mr. Timo Viitanen (chair), the Ministry of the Interior, Finland
Mr. Jari Aalto, Provincial State Office of Lapland, Finland
Ms. Julia Fredriksson, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, Sweden
Mr. Alexander Ignatiev, the International Barents Secretariat, Kirkenes, Norway
Mr. Kjell Johansen, The Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre Northern Norway, Norway
Mr. Olle Jonsson, Ministry of Defence, Sweden
Ms. Marjatta Kihniä, Provincial State Office of Lapland, Finland
Ms. Bente Michaelsen, The Ministry of Justice and the Police, Norway
Mr. Viktor Minailov, Emercom of Russia, Murmansk
Mr. Harri Paldanius, Regional Rescue Department of Lapland, Finland
Ms. Inna Ponomareva, Emercom of Russia, Moscow
Mr. Martti Soudunsaari, Regional Rescue Department of Lapland, Finland

Representatives of Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences /FinnBarents participated in the meeting for shorter periods.

The Committee was addressed by the Governor for the Province of Lapland and had the pleasure of being invited to his residence for a reception.

As an introduction, all the participants gave a brief presentation of themselves. A list of participants with contact information is attached to the report.

2. Opening of the meeting; welcoming remarks

The chair welcomed participants and thanked Norway for presiding the Joint Committee in its interim formula for several years until the Agreement on Rescue Services in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region was signed on 11 December 2008 in Moscow. The Committee agreed in its previous meeting to move into the circulating chairmanship provided by the agreement. As a consequence of this the chairmanship was taken over by Finland for the year 2009.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted after agenda item nro 8, Project updates, was moved to be dealt with as the first item in Wednesday morning.

4. Chair's and Secretariat's report on general development and Barents Euro-Arctic Council activities

The chair briefed the committee shortly on the different regional councils that have a role in the development process mentioning also the bi- and multilateral agreements that apply to the relationships of the respective Barents countries in the field of rescue services. BEAC has an essential regional role in the Northern hemisphere for then development of different

sectors of society. Rescue services were attached to the mandate of BEAC thanks to the activity of the local and regional authorities and their traditional transboundary cooperation.

The EU has also turned its interest in Arctic topics and to the North in general and, being a full member of the Barents Council, directed its interest in the work of the Committee.

A discussion was followed pointing out the importance of the cooperation in this field for all participating states. The head of the International Barents Secretariat, Mr. Ignatiev addressed the meeting with valuable points about the role of the BEAC.

5. Project Updates

Cold condition management in emergency situations in the Barents region

Mr. Arturs Dutka of FinnBarents briefed the Committee on the current status of the project "Enhancing the Emergency Preparedness in the Barents Region". Remarkable background work has been carried out since the cold protection survey in 2006 proving of the limited amount of material and respective logistics as well as expertise in this field. Development needs calling for increased capacity and competence have been analysed for a structured and coordinated approach to this matter. Further planning is necessary for the financial application of about 1,2 mill euros, hopefully possible in the frames of the European ENPI /Kolarctic program later this year.

Norway raised the issue of an international steering group which also earlier had been communicated to FinnBarents at a meeting in May held in Tromsø, Norway. Norway was still of the opinion that an international steering group where all the participating countries are represented was needed. The aim of such a steering group would be to agree on the aims of the project and also on content of the project. In the opinion of Norway, for the time being, the aims of the project are not clear enough. Such a steering group needs to be established already in the planning process and to act through out the project period. Ms. Marjatta Kihniä promised to invite representatives from each of the planned partner countries to a meeting in the near future.

The next steps would be to revise project results, agree on responsibilities and resources to be invested as well as division of work between states and partners. This should be agreed on in concurrence with the drafting of a partnership agreement. An international steering group with two members from each participating country should be established to be a point of contact during the preparation of project application and then continue work in the project Steering Group. Participation of different partners might be necessary to coordinate in each country by national arrangements.

The Committee thanked for the preparations and recommended to invite a meeting of participating states at latest when there is an agreement on ENPI program. Especially the administration of the project needs to be agreed on trying to avoid heavy and complicated models. The Provincial State Office of Lapland might consider taking leadership in the project.

Possible new projects

No new projects were proposed.

Web update

Mr. Ignatiev described the services provided by the International Barents Secretariat. The Committee is expected to send reports, project plans, and agreements etc. to the secretariat

that places documents to the web. The Committee should keep the Secretariat informed on current contact information on the participants to update the web accordingly.

The Committee invited representatives of participating states to check the information and advise the Secretariat on changes when necessary.

6. Barents Rescue Agreement – status of implementation

Sweden reported that two signatories of the agreement, Norway and Sweden, have deposited the notification on completing national implementation measures to the Department for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden as provided by the agreement.

For Finland and Russia the national measures are underway to be obviously completed by the end of the year 2009. The agreement is important to Norway that doesn't have any bilateral agreement with Russia on cooperation in case of land based emergencies.

7. Joint Committee

Mandate

As defined in the Barents agreement on emergency prevention, preparedness and response, article 4, the role of the Joint Committee is more or less to follow and evaluate the application of the agreement, and put forward proposals when deemed appropriate. In so doing the Committee inter alia plans and coordinates measures related to the collaboration and has a role in organising Barents exercises and exchange of experts. The Committee is not in a position to take final binding decisions on behalf of the participating states, but can agree on proposing common implementing measures to the competent authorities in their respective countries.

Terms of reference

Draft Terms of Reference were discussed in the previous meeting and circulated for further considerations in participating states.

The Committee agreed on adding a general explanation about its back ground and purpose in the beginning. The tasks of the Committee should be described more in line with its general role as expressed in the Agreement. Decisions shall be made unanimously. It is more the Joint Secretariats than the Committee's role to serve as an institutional memory for the cooperation. Also the tasks of the Chair should be expressed in a more general way. Some further points to elaborate the draft terms came from the complementary discussion about the relationship to CSOs and the Council.

The Committee tasked the chair to further develop the terms according to the discussion to be accepted in its next meeting.

Relationship to BEAC and CSO

Mr. Ignatiev expressed as his opinion that the Joint Committee should in relationship to BEAC be as any of the national or regional working groups acting under the umbrella of BEAC. This would provide an administrative position and support to the activities. Another choice might be to separate similarly to the Ignituous Peoples WG, which is attached loosely to BEAC, but as an independent entity.

A working group's position would mean providing information to CSOs and the Council, but not necessarily a responsibility to follow their orders. The decisions of the JC would not

need any acceptance of the CSO-meeting or the Council. The Joint Committee does not cover all parties to the BEAC, but this shouldn't be a problem. Normally WGs participate and report on their activities in the first CSO meeting of the year (in February), but this year WGs were not represented.

The Committee stated this question being dependant on its own decision, and agreed on coming to a solution in its next meeting. Discussions at national with the ministries and CSOs especially might bring valuable points and perhaps an acceptance from their side too. Anyway information to CSOs was seen important before the final decision of the Committee.

Relationship to the EU and other participants to the BEAC

The Committee, listening first to Mr. Ignatiev, agreed that it is free to invite any parties to join its meetings when cooperation seems reasonable or additional expertise is needed. Especially the EU has proved serious interest and should be invited in the meetings. Concerning Denmark and Iceland, the Joint Committee should address the CSO-representatives of these countries to clarify if they are interested to participate in the Joint Committee meetings. Anyway measures of the Committee should be decided by the four members only.

8. Barents Joint Rescue Manual – contents and update

Procedures for Requesting Assistance

Points of contact

Training

Electronic maps – location of rescue resources in the region

Barents Rescue Planning Guide

Joint Rescue Manual was in great deal finalised in the previous Interim Joint Committee meeting. What may need complementary dealing is the training program. The Committee especially discussed about the National Points of Contact. At national level participating states have principal contact points, often situated in the capitals, for international alerts and information flow. For the needs of Barents cooperation immediate contacts over the borders have traditionally a strong importance. This presupposes using primarily the regional contact points for Barents cooperation, backed up by the national contact points.

The Committee agreed on finalising the manual as soon as possible which is possible after getting the regional points of contact accepted as the primary ones for Barents cooperation, hopefully by the next meeting of the Committee. The points of contact should be determined by the respective participating states' authorities.

The Committee accepted with pleasure Mr. Kjell Johansen's offer to take on the responsibility to collect comments to the Joint Manual and to make a proposal to establish communication test between the Points of Contact.

The Committee discussed briefly the need of electronic maps indicating the location of rescue resources in the region. This had been an ongoing discussion and agenda item at every meeting of the Committee. It was concluded that the production of such a map was costly and would require quite a lot of resources to keep updated. A national Rescue Coordination Centre is supposed to have a full overview of the rescue resources available in its own country/region. The Committee therefore decided not to pursue this issue any further.

9. Barents Rescue Exercise 2009

Russia gave an initial briefing on the experiences of the exercise. The evaluation process is underway supported by other Barents countries. There will be an evaluation conference in Murmansk on 25 November 2009. Invitations will be sent shortly.

Barents countries expressed their satisfaction about the exercise. Norway highlighted the phase 2 of the exercise (SAR at sea) as very well functioning, but expressed the view that the alarm phase (phase 1) was not in accordance with agreed procedures (notification and request for assistance and use of fax sheet developed by the Joint Committee for that purpose). Finland had some problems with the customs procedures. The exercise proved that there is a need to further develop joint operations. Videoconference possibility provides great added value on providing situation reports, but the initial alert and information on an emergency might need a traditional first phase contact by phone or by fax.

10. Way ahead

The next Ministerial Meeting takes place in Murmansk in the next week. Sweden will take over the presidency of the BEAC. At the same time the presidency of the regional council will be moved from Finland /Oulu to Norway /Troms. The ministerial declaration is expected to include points about the activities in the field of rescue services and the Joint Committee.

Next Joint Committee meeting

The Committee agreed, since there were several items expecting fast solutions to underpin the future work, to have one short meeting yet during the Finnish chairmanship. This was agreed to take place in Helsinki on 17 December 2009. The chair will circulate the invitation in due course. It was underlined that the purpose of such a meeting would be to prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement on 1 January 2010. The meeting would then finalize the Joint Manual so that it can serve as a working tool for the rescue coordination centres when the Agreement is operational. The meeting would also aim to finalize the terms of reference of the Joint Committee.

Next chairmanship for the Joint Committee

Norway was ready to take over the chairmanship as of the beginning of the year 2010 following the rules of a rotating chairmanship determined by the Barents agreement.

11. Any other business

No other items were proposed for dealing.

12. Closure of the meeting

The chair thanked representatives of participating states for active participation and smooth proceeding of the agenda.