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THE BARENTS EURO-
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WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT

Final Draft:

Report from the Subgroup on Nature Protection, NPS (2010-2011)

TROMSØ DECLARATION

Based on Tromsø Declaration the Swedish Chairmanship of Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group of Environment emphasized the following priorities for Nature Protection:

- Supporting the Habitat Contact Forum (Archangelsk, 2010) building networks for nature protection, including on sustainable forest management, and enhancing possibilities for educational projects for children and teachers;
- Supporting the development of a representative and well managed network of protected areas in the Barents region (BPAN), in cooperation with the Arctic Council, also linking it to activities that highlight the need for protected areas to conserve biodiversity threatened by climate change;
- Highlighting the results of the Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach to Conservation of Biodiversity and Minimize Habitat Fragmentation (ECORA) project, seeking cooperation with indigenous peoples;
- Giving attention to the last large boreal forests, protected areas and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Barents region as well as exploring the possibilities of creating of a Treriksrøysa trilateral park between Sweden, Finland and Norway.

The Work Programme 2010-2011 of Subgroup for Nature Protection included the following priority projects and other activities:

- * International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF) – HCF VI - Archangelsk, Russia June 2010
- * HCF/NPS project list on habitat conservation issues– updating
- * Barents Protected Areas Network (BPAN), including development
- * Climate change issues in regard to protected areas
- * Treriksrøysa – trilateral protected area (Finland, Sweden, Norway)
- * ECORA follow-up

Other possible project ideas to be developed included:

- * Protection and sustainable use of the last remaining intact forests in NW Russia

- * UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Barents Region
- * Flyways and wetland issues

Sixth International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation (HCF VI)

The Sixth International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region was successfully hosted by the Regional Administrations in Arkhangelsk June 1 – 4, 2010. The program included six sessions:

- Wetlands Protection in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region
- Barents Euro-Arctic Region Protected Areas Network (BPAN)
- Boreal Forests and Sustainable use in Barents Euro-Arctic Region
- The Basin of Pjoza River – A Perspective Object for International Cooperation in the Protection of Old Grove Forests and Nature Complexes
- Marine and Coastal Ecosystems in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region
- Synergy of Spiritual and Natural Values in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region

The resolution of HCF VI support the next HCF VII to be organized in Northern Norway, autumn 2012. The preparations have started in 2011. Priority items will comprise:

- Protection and management of marine and coastal habitats
- Further efforts to protect boreal forests in the Barents region
- Further development of the BPAN
- Follow-up on selected recommendations from CBD COP 10
- Synergies of protection of forest and wetlands with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

HCF/NPS project list – updating

The former Habitat Contact Forum (HCF) list of projects is now renamed **the NPS project list**. During 2011 updating of the list has been ongoing and a new list was adopted at the NPS meeting in St. Petersburg in November 2011 based on an updated list prepared by Finland in March 2011.

Barents Protected Areas Network (BPAN), including climate issues

The main priority of Work Programme is the Barents Protected Areas Network (BPAN). The support for BPAN and its progress is very good. All countries and regions are participating. The project was supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) in 2011. NCM noted that BPAN has a strong political support and gave maximal support. Finland prepares a new application for support next year 2012. Considerable National funding has also been provided.

The overarching aim of the BPAN project is to promote and support a representative protected area network for conservation of biodiversity and boreal-arctic nature, especially forests and wetlands. Finnish Environment Institute is leading the project work with support from national and regional specialists.

The focus of the BPAN project 2010 – 2011:

1. Regional evaluation basing to the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas.

2. Geographical Information System to analyze and present comparable maps of the Barents Region.

3. Communication in BPAN. The communication strategy has been prepared in 2011. BPAN project has been presented in many events e.g. at a side event October 27, 2010 in Nagoya at CBD - COP 10, WWF side event When Parks are not enough: Ecosystem resilience and Change in the Arctic. BPAN project participants frequently use Skype to facilitate internal communication.

During the BPAN work the possibility of including Sweden in the Greenbelt of Fennoscandia concept has been discussed. The issue will be further investigated.

The BPAN Progress Report “Promoting a Representative Protected Area Network in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region” present the results of the project’s first year in the Ministerial Meeting in November 2011.

Tretriksøysa – trilateral protected area (Finland, Sweden, Norway)

The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) will contribute to facilitate the process of a possible establishment of a trilateral cooperation in biodiversity and habitat conservation on the boarder between Finland, Sweden and Norway. The project aims at co-operation on nature protection and development of nature tourism on a regional level in the three countries. The feasibility study was conducted in 2011.

ECORA follow-up

Any follow up project of the recommendations from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) co-financed project ECORA in Nenets AO has not been possible to launch so far.

Protection and sustainable use of the last remaining intact forests in NW Russia

This is one of the main priorities for NPS. Important aspects relating to this issue were discussed at HCF VI at three of its sessions. The focus will be kept to the next forum HCF VII.

In June 2010 the Swedish team of the expedition finalized a report on results of the Pjoza Expedition August 2009, Notes from the international ecological expedition to the Pioza river basin.

The issue is also included in bilateral programs. For example the North-West Russia GAP analysis project which was recently successfully finalized. Also within the bilateral Norwegian – Russian Commission on Environmental Protection the issue of boreal forests protection has high priority.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Barents Region

No progress has been achieved on World Heritages Sites in the Barents Region in this period. A possible cooperation between Laponia and Yugid Va National Park has been considered.

At HCF VI the issue of Sacred Sites was presented and discussed. This issue is linked to IUCN-UNESCO Sacred Natural Sites – Guidelines for Protected Area

Management. The Forum expressed the need to consider cultural and spiritual values.

Flyways and wetland issues

The Conference on Wetlands and flyways in Barents Euro-Arctic Region and the Green Belt of Fennoscandia was arranged in Murmansk city 2011 September 13 – 15. The conference was organized under NPS in cooperation with the Nordic Baltic Wetlands Initiative (Ramsar) with Pasvik Zapovednik as host and technical organizer. Wetlands was a main subject at HCF VI and is still a priority NPS. Conservation of wetlands will be further looked into at for HCF VII in North Norway 2012.

Botanical Gardens of the North

The first meeting of Barents Botanical Gardens was hosted by the Komi Republic in Syktyvkar 2010. At present the Oulu University is responsible for the project implementation.

Administration of NPS

The Swedish County Administrative Board of Västerbotten chaired NPS between the ministerial meetings in Tromsø 2010 and Umeå 2011 and also HCF until June 2010. The next chair in NPS will be provided by Finland and the chair in HCF is now from Norway.

NPS has had three meetings during the Swedish Chairmanship. The meetings have been in Arkhangelsk June 2010, in Syktyvkar June 2011 and in St. Petersburg November 2011. HCF held a meeting in Umeå December 2010,