



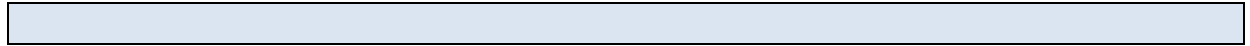
7-8 October 2020
virtual meeting

Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Working Group on Environment
57th meeting

MINUTES

Day 1. 7 October 2020

1. Welcome and introductions



The *WGE Chair Henna Haapala* welcomed participants to the second virtual WGE meeting of the Finnish Chairmanship. Ms Haapala will be chairing the WGE until July 2021, while Saija Vuola is on study-leave. The meeting was arranged by Zoom, enabling simultaneous interpretation.

After the introductory round, the Chair welcomed the newly appointed representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russia Tamara Dalgatova, who will be a contact person for the Barents cooperation and a SHE co-Chair. The Norwegian WGE member Ingrid Lillehagen noted that she would be replaced by her colleague Anne Berteig due to taking over a new assignment. The participants of the two-day meeting are listed in paragraph 13.

[Minutes](#) of the WGE#56 virtual meeting (June 2020) were adopted without changes.

2. Update from the International Barents Secretariat



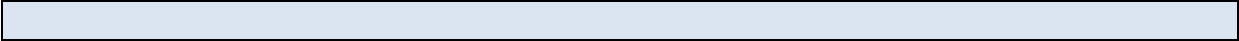
Tomas Hallberg, *Head of the Secretariat*, talked about upcoming online events on the agenda of the Barents cooperation. Barents Governors are gathering online for the second time on 14 October to discuss the situation with the corona virus in the region. Barents High Level Meeting led by the BEAC Chair Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway Ine Eriksen Søreide and the BRC Chair Helene Hellmark Knutsson will take place on 26 October and will be streamed online ([see the recording](#) on the Barents YouTube channel).

Several working groups are planning to have virtual meetings, webinars and conferences during the autumn; CSO and BRC follow their regular routine online. To enable simultaneous interpretation at the Barents events, IBS has purchased Business Edition of Zoom for use of all BEAC working groups (in addition to Go to Meeting).

Mr Hallberg's contract as the Head of the IBS is ending in January 2021, and the Norwegian MFA (Chair of the BEAC in 2019-21) leads the process of hiring a new Head.



3. Implication of COVID-19 for the working group



The WGE Chair gave an introduction regarding the implications of COVID-19 for the WGE. Travel restrictions impose some challenges to the regular activities of the WGE and Sub-groups. Meetings and projects' events can be arranged virtually. Luckily, such practice has been used already by the WGE and Sub-groups, and this transition has gone smoothly. Virtual format also has certain benefits, being time- and cost-effective and allowing wider participation than the physical meetings. However, there are some activities, which require in person attendance and these activities WGE will organize as physical meetings, when possible. Until that, all exchange and meetings will be arranged by virtual means.

4. Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation



The Finnish WGE representative **Aino Lipsanen** presented ideas on the update of the Action Plan on Climate Change, which is to be developed in close cooperation with the Norwegian Chairmanship of the BEAC and all Barents working groups. CSO will lead the process. Its second edition was adopted in 2017 and foresaw activities to be implemented by the end of 2020. The Barents Environment Ministers called for further strengthening of climate action in their Declaration from the 14th meeting. The ambition is to focus on stronger involvement of the working groups, BEAC and BRC, practical activities, which support transition to low-carbon economy, and enhancing adaptation capacity. The updated Action Plan should be adopted at the BEAC Ministerial Meeting in October 2021, and Climate Smart Barents Region conference will be one of the milestones, catalyzing cross-sectoral planning of activities. A concept note has been sent to the WGE for comments and suggestions.

Chair concluded that the proposal on how to proceed with the update was welcomed. A wish for better coordinated joint action and strengthening of cross-sectoral cooperation between the working groups was emphasized. The WGE members will send their comments to the Background paper on Climate action and the Action Plan on Climate Change.

Update from the BEAC CSO Chair (8 October): the ideas on how to proceed with the Action Plan update will be presented at the next CSO meeting on 9 December 2020. Chairs of all Barents working groups will be invited to take part in the meeting to receive information.

Read more in the [Update of the Action Plan presentation](#).

5. Key findings from the Barents 2050 report



Anne Berteig from the *Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway* continued the climate topic telling about the outputs of the Barents 2050 report. The Barents 2050 study was conducted during the Norwegian Chairmanship of the WGE by the Finnish Research Institute [VTI](#). The mandate of the study was to assess how economic activities in the Barents Region could be affected by emission pathways consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement. Main results of the study include sector specific opportunities to contribute to climate change mitigation and policy recommendations to the national, regional and municipal authorities.



Heat and power sector and transport have been pointed out as sectors that have biggest potential to decarbonize. Studying emission reduction measures and implementing them, strengthening long term climate and energy policy framework and boosting clean-tech innovations should become further steps to be taken by the Barents Region.

Chair concluded that the outputs of the study should be disseminated further, and that Conference on Climate Smart Barents Region will be a good step forward to implementing some of the given recommendations.

Read more in the [Barents 2050 presentation](#).

6. Conference on Climate Smart Barents Region

[Climate Smart Barents Region presentation](#)

The Norwegian WGE representative Ingrid Lillehagen presented the concept of the Climate Smart Barents Region conference, scheduled for March 2021. The conference will be organised as part of the priority area of knowledge under the Norwegian Chairmanship of the BEAC. The main topic to be discussed at the conference will be how to make investments in infrastructure and energy for a climate smart Barents Region without harming the natural environment and traditional land use. The outcomes and recommendations of the Barents 2050 study will be an important backdrop for the conference. A consultant will be hired to arrange the event online. The concept note was sent out to the WGE members along with the draft agenda for comments by 15 October. In addition, the WGE members were asked to suggest speakers for the Conference.

Read more in the presentation of the [Climate Smart Barents Region conference](#).

7. Adaptation of Saami people to Climate Change (the SAAMI-project)

Presentation by [Prof. Jouni Jaakkola](#) and [Dr. Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi](#), University of Oulu

Prof. Jouni Jaakkola and **Dr. Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi** from the University of Oulu updated the group on the recent research from the SAAMI-project (March 2019-March 2020, funded by the Finnish Government). The aim of the SAAMI-project is to study the holistic effects of climate change on the Saami and assess how the Saami culture can adapt to climate change. Saami reindeer herders were the target population in ethnographic fieldwork. Climate change causes widespread changes in the culture and society of indigenous peoples in the Arctic, which can be detrimental to small, already vulnerable indigenous communities. Climate change and its effects (such as changes in vegetation, length of seasons, precipitation and ice conditions) have a negative economic, social and health impacts, including on traditional livelihoods, diets and knowledge. Adaptation to climate change is therefore crucial to ensure cultural continuity.

The presentations got positive feedback from the WGE members. The outcomes of the project should be distributed among the relevant BEAC working groups, to start with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples. WGIP representative in the WGE Daria Shvetsova, who could be of help in spreading the information further, was unfortunately not present at the meeting. Synergy between the project and the activities of the Arctic Council should be considered.



Day 2. 8 October 2020

8. Report from the Subgroup on Nature and Water

[SNW presentation](#)

The *SNW Chair* **Anna Kuhmonen**, who has replaced Henna Haapala, presented conclusions of the second SNW meeting of the Finnish Chairmanship, held in September.

In connection with the XIth Habitat Contact Forum (planned for 2021 in Norrbotten, Sweden), SNW will undertake evaluation of the HCF's outcomes since 1999. In addition to virtual meetings, the Subgroup will arrange webinars to exchange information about the current initiatives. The first webinar, scheduled for 25 November 2020, will be devoted to sustainable nature tourism and is planned to attract experts from the Joint Working Group on Tourism. Besides, the SNW members are preparing a project proposal on high conservation value forests (Forest biodiversity protection in the Barents Region in 2020 and beyond: assessing the status and paving the way for mainstreaming biodiversity into forestry) as a follow-up of BPAN and other forest activities of the subgroup and to strengthen dialogue with the forest sector. Among other updates, discussed by the Subgroup, are biodiversity in changing climate (BARIMS project), conservation of Atlantic Salmon ([CoASal](#)) and cooperation on aquatic system restoration. All SNW projects are listed in the [Work Programme](#).

Finalizing the topic, **Mats-Rune Bergström**, representing County Administrative Board of Västerbotten, mentioned a proposal of the Barents Forest Sector Network to cooperate within the frames of the [UNESCO Biosphere Reserves](#) by launching a pilot study. One Finnish, one Swedish and four Russian nature reserves participate in this worldwide network, and it could become a model area for cross-sectoral activities of several Barents working groups. Being the BRC Chair, Västerbotten is responsible for this pilot initiative; its report will be presented on 20 January 2021.

The Chair thanked the SNW for their work and informed about her aim to contact the BFSN Chair to discuss about the activities of joint interest, including the forest biodiversity project. **Norway** will consider participation in the forest cooperation project after receiving more information from the SNW Chair. The WGE Chair concluded that activities of the Arctic Council (such as the Arctic Wetlands by CAFF, [ACAP ARCRISK project](#) on mercury contamination of four Arctic rivers or the [CAFF initiative Salmon Peoples of Arctic Rivers](#)) will be kept in mind for a possible synergy.

Read more in the [SNW presentation](#).

9. Biodiversity commitment from the Barents Region

[Biodiversity commitment presentation](#)

Aino Lipsanen presented draft proposal of the joint voluntary commitment to the [UN Convention on Biological Diversity](#) from the Barents Region tentatively to be declared at the [COP 15](#) (China, May 2021). The idea was originally expressed by Sweden during their Presidency of the WGE. Voluntary commitments are part of the Action Agenda for Nature and People and the format of commitments is quite flexible. Thematic focus of the proposed commitment is freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity with a special emphasis on migratory fishes and the catchment areas of the rivers crossing international or regional administrative borders. The goal would be to showcase existing work and to inspire new activities, as well as



promote different funding mechanisms available in the region. One idea could be to collect all initiatives in the Barents region together, including from civil society and other actors. The indicative period for the commitment could be 2021-2023.

The proposal received a positive feedback when previously discussed in the SNW, as it corresponds with the Subgroups current projects and can promote funding opportunities for new initiatives.

The proposal was welcomed by the member countries with some remarks and several questions: the Concept Note needs clarification. **Elin Kronqvist** noted that the proposal on cooperation on invasive alien species is still relevant as a possible voluntary commitment. The project on data sources will be finalized by the end of 2020. She stressed the need for Russian participation and will bring up the issue bilaterally with Ms Dalgatova. **Ingrid Lillehagen** underlined that since the commitment wasn't mentioned in the Ministerial Declaration, and therefore it needs to be clarified, how this commitment will be anchored on the political level of the member states.

Summarizing the discussion, **the Chair** underlined, that commitment is seen as an umbrella for ongoing and future initiatives, which could be collected and sent to the CBD on behalf of the BEAC or the Barents Region (not by individual countries or actors). The second version of the Concept Note, considering comments from the WGE members, will be shortly distributed for further discussion with the UN CBD focal points in each Barents country. Two options of [stakeholders' involvement](#) will be proposed for consideration. The Chair asked the WGE members to send their comments and suggestions for relevant projects, and preliminary information on national and international financing sources.

Read more in the [presentation of the Biodiversity commitment from the Barents Region](#).

10. Report from the Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion Terms of Reference on Evaluation of Hot Spots Exclusion

[SHE presentation](#)

*The SHE co-Chair **Helena Dahlbo** welcomed the newly appointed SHE co-Chair from the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia Ms Tamara Dalgatova and talked about the first results of the SHE work under the Finnish Chairmanship. SHE has had five meeting (including one per capsulum) since March 2020, Task Forces on eight different sectors have also met several times during this period. Series of webinars on contaminated sites and on mining and metallurgy as well as permit granting are planned for the relevant hot spots' owners (determined by SHE as Supporting Activity #2); the first one is to be arranged by the Russian BAT-Bureau and TF on Contaminated Sites in November 2020. Hot spot M5 Kovdorkiy GOK (producing apatite concentrate) will go through the full-track exclusion procedure aiming at both exclusion from the Barents List and obtaining an Integrated Environmental Permit as one of the 300 pilot enterprisers of the RF with significant impact on the environment. Refinement of Screening and Analyzes Reports (SA #6) are planned for several other hot spots (including four HS in the Murmansk Region).*

Following the agenda, Ms Dahlbo presented draft Terms of Reference on Evaluation of Hot Spots Exclusion, requested by the Barents Environment Ministers at the 14th meeting in February 2020. Previous evaluation was carried out in 2013; the discussed one should be



finalized by November 2021. Objectives of the present evaluation are to assess hot spots' environmental status, work practices around HS exclusion process and the Barents Hot Spots Facility administered by NEFCO. There are several candidates for carrying out the evaluation: Kola Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Akvaplan-niva from Tromsø, LTU Business from Luleå etc. Draft ToR is sent out to the WGE for comments by the end of October to be finalized and adopted by the WGE in November 2020.

The Chair of the WGE thanked the SHE for their work and efforts to draft the ToR for Evaluation of Hot Spots Exclusion. Appointment of a new Russian co-Chair was noted with appreciation by Norway and Sweden. **Ingrid Lillehagen** proposed Norwegian [Sigra Group](#) as a candidate for the evaluator and suggested to assess how efficient original measures on promotion of environmental investments at Hot Spots were. **Henrik G Forsström** added that NEFCO would welcome more proposals on evaluators, including from Russia; the shortlisted candidates (individual consultants or companies/organizations) would not necessarily have to qualify all listed requirements, as there would be an option for them to form consortia between themselves during the tender process. The WGE members were invited to send comments to the evaluation ToR.

Read more in the [SHE presentation](#).

11. Conclusions, next meeting

Concluding the meeting, the Chair summarized list of the tasks for the WGE members: comments to Action Plan on Climate Change and Climate Smart Barents Region conference by **15 October**; comments to the ToR on Hots Spots Evaluation, Commitment on Biodiversity and suggestions for planned webinars on sustainable nature tourism and carbon-neutrality/circular economy by **28 October**.

The next WGE virtual meeting will be held on **25-26 January or 2-3 February 2021**. The meeting in **Joensuu, North Karelia**, which has been postpone since June 2020, is **now scheduled for June 2021** (if the situation with the pandemic allows).

In addition to the meetings, WGE Subgroup on Nature and Water is planning to hold a Webinar on sustainable nature tourism on **25 November 2020** in cooperation with the Joint Working Group on Tourism.

12. List of participants

1. Henna Haapala, WGE Chair, Ministry of the Environment (FI)
2. Aino Lipsanen, Ministry of the Environment (FI)
3. Anna Kuhmonen, SNW Chair, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
4. Helena Dahlbo, SHE co-Chair, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
5. Emmi Vähä, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
6. Tapio Lindholm, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)



7. Jari Pasanen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Lapland (FI)
8. Vilma Lehtovaara, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of North Karelia (FI)
9. Jukka Nykänen, Regional Council of North Karelia (FI)
10. Kimmo Aronsuu, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of North Ostrobothnia (FI)
11. Tatu Turunen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Kainuu (FI)
12. Katja Sukuvaara, Regional Council of Kainuu (FI)
13. Ingrid Lillehagen, WGE member, Ministry of Climate and Environment (NO)
14. Anne Berteig, Ministry of Climate and Environment (NO)
15. Kerry Maria Agustsson, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
16. Olaug Bjertnaes, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
17. Lisa B. Helgason, County Governor of Troms and Finnmark (NO)
18. Tiia Kalske, County Governor of Troms and Finnmark County Governor (NO)
19. Elin Kronqvist, WGE member, Ministry of the Environment (SE)
20. Åke Mikaelsson, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
21. Rickard Nätjehall, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
22. Yvonne Lundell, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
23. Mats-Rune Bergström, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (SE)
24. Ellinor Bomark, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (SE)
25. Magnus Johansson, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (SE)
26. Tamara Dalgatova, SHE co-Chair, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (RU)
27. Ruslan Butovsky, VNII Ecology (RU)
28. Tatiana Guseva, Environmental Industrial Policy Centre (RU)
29. Anna Bagrova, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Murmansk Region (RU)
30. Yana Vojcehovskaya, Department of Natural Resources, Environment and Agro-Industrial Complex of the Nenets Autonomous Region (RU)
31. Henrik G Forsström, NEFCO
32. Vitaly Artyushchenko, NEFCO
33. Tomas Hallberg, IBS
34. Maria Dianova, IBS
35. Ella Wahlbeck, IBS
36. Elena Alexandrova, Interpreter
37. Maria Petrova, Interpreter
38. Boris Kochetkov, Interpreter