



Ympäristöministeriö
Miljöministeriet
Ministry of the Environment

BEAC, WGE

6. - 7.2. 2012 Helsinki

Meeting report

Final 22.5.2012

1. Opening

The WGE meeting was opened by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment, Ms. Hannele Pokka. In her opening statement she emphasized the active role and contribution of the WGE to the BEAC work. She posed some main landmarks of the history within BEAC and highlighted the importance of good WGE contributions for the 20-year anniversary of the Barents cooperation in 2013. Furthermore, she drew attention to the hot spot list and underlined the necessity of implementing appropriate environmental activities in order to further facilitate the exclusion of the hot spots. Also according to her the impact of climate change to the Barents region needs to be concretized. She also emphasized close cooperation with the indigenous people in the Barents region.

2. The WGE followed the Opening event of the Sami National Day in Helsinki organized by the Finnish City-Sámit.

3. Chairmanship of Finland

Finland presented its WGE chairmanship program. The program was positively received and the Finnish proposals were supported. Among the Finnish priorities discussed at the WGE are: to launch best environmental practices in mining, to emphasize forest and nature protection, a possible update and revision of the Barents hot spot list to lay more emphasis on green economy etc.

4. Plans for climate activities

The WGE Chair together with Norway presented the plans for BEAC climate activities in 2012-2013. The Norwegian BEAC chairmanship has ranked the elaboration of an Action Plan on Climate Change as one of its top priorities. A kick-off workshop is scheduled for 20-21 March in Oslo. The final goal is to prepare a draft Action Plan to be presented to CSO (Committee of Senior Officials) in October 2012. All relevant BEAC working groups and other central stakeholders, such as NEFCO, the International Barents Secretariat and Roshydromet, will be invited to the workshop. The main focus will be to build on previous recommendations and to identify a limited and selected number of concrete projects proposals from all relevant BEAC working groups.

Mr. Tero Väisänen presented a plan for an analysis of the regional climate strategies that will be carried out in spring 2012. The analysis will be based on the regional climate strategies done in Northern Finland in 2010-2011.

Finland and Norway together with the sub groups will draft a plan on how the WGE will enhance its work on climate change. Continuous cooperation to enhance synergies with relevant global and regional processes, such as Barents Regional Council and Arctic Council, is regarded as important. Furthermore, to capture synergies, a regional perspective with local and traditional knowledge was emphasized and in addition to regional climate strategies, lessons learnt of national and municipal climate strategies should be taken account as well. It was also discussed to highlight climate change linked to projects. WGE sub groups were asked to provide input on their activities during February. The WGE Chair will send more detailed guidelines of this to the sub groups.

5. Reports of the Swedish Chairmanship

The WGE and sub-groups reports 2010-2011 of the Swedish Chairmanship were thoroughly discussed. The last versions of the reports were delivered to the participants at the meeting and therefore it was agreed that the WGE members can comment the reports by the 17 February.

6. The work programs of the sub groups

The draft work programs of each sub groups were presented and asked to be commented by Friday 17th, Feb to the Finnish Chair Ms. Henna Haapala. The work programs will be finalized and adopted by the WGE intersessionally by e-mail after the meeting. The question regarding how to handle possible new observers in the subgroups, including NGOs, was raised, and it was suggested to introduce a common policy for all sub groups.. It was further suggested that new observers should be approved by all member countries and that observers' participation should be connected and targeted to the main goals of the sub groups. It was decided that there is a need for further elaboration of this matter before a decision is made by the WGE. The chair stressed the need to look into a broader range of administrative issues, and that the Finnish chair would like to address these matters collectively at a future meeting.

During the discussion of the working program for the Subgroup on Hotspots Exclusion (SHE), a possible update and revision of the Barents hot spot list was discussed. The importance of ensuring a common understanding of what an updating and revision of the hot spot list means before this is decided upon was emphasized. SHE was given the task to prepare a discussion paper on this topic with the aim to make a decision in the next WGE-meeting.

7. Any other business

The Chair briefly presented a proposal of the publication "Northern light" provided by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) for further consideration of the WGE. In connection to the preparations to the Rio+20 Conference, the CBSS proposes a joint publication and a joint side-event of the four regional councils of the north (BEAC, CBSS, Arctic Council (AC), Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM)). It was noted that the WGE doesn't have a possibility to launch a process to agree on any goals or policy recommendations that need to be negotiated within this time frame (before Rio +20). The

WGE is interested to contribute with good examples or other such kind of material. It was agreed that the WGE Chair will continue the dialogue with the CBSS secretariat concerning a possible contribution from the WGE to the publication. Also the question of participation to the side event was left for the WGE Chair to decide depending on the availability of the Minister from the WGE Chair country.

Next WGE meeting will be scheduled in autumn 2012 in Kainuu region. A need for a meeting during the spring limited to only WGE national representatives and possibly the sub group chairs was discussed. The administrative issues would be one topic at such a meeting. The WGE Chair will send a proposal.