

Report of the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE)  
Moscow, November 9, 2007

Honorable Ministers, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

It turned out a great honor to me to report to the distinguished meeting about the activity of the Regional Working Group on Environment.

We represent 13 Nordic regions:

- Lapland, Kainuu and North Ostrobothnia (Finland)
- Norbotten and Västerbotten (Sweden)
- Norland, Troms and Finnmark (Norway)
- Republics of Komi and Karelia, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk oblast and Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Russia).

By the end of 2006, the chairmanship, transmitted once in two years from region to region, switched from Lapland (Finland) to Republic of Komi (Russia).

Thirteen above mentioned Nordic regions include huge territory, demonstrating variety of natural, ecological and cultural values. But in spite of differences, completely understanding the role, assigned to the Regional Working Group on Environment, the Group persistently and purposefully is implementing tasks, delivered by the National Working Group on Environment.

The main document for our activity is the Action Plan, approved by the National Working Group, which includes key issues of our activity, such as:

- surface and drinking water
- biodiversity
- management of natural resources
- information and building of public awareness and knowledge.

During last two years the Working Group was focused on the following:

- **Barents 2010 project**, based on the analyses of the condition of the Environment in the Barents region. The Mandate for implementation of this task was given to our Group from National Working Group and the Barents Regional Council on study water resources quality and biodiversity issues in the Barent region. Experts of our group prepared a comprehensive report on above mentioned issues and presented it to the Barents 2010 project leaders,

- **Composition of the list** of joint ecological projects, implemented in the period since 1995 till the present time. The list of projects is attached to this report. We

don't pretend to the fact, that the list represents absolutely all projects, implemented within the 12 year period of Barents cooperation. It is impossible to include all of them now, because of the lack of information and people, who initiated Barents cooperation. The main task is somehow systematize the huge block of already implemented work and analyze it.

I would like to give some examples of joint projects:

- 1) Development and Maintaining of the Environmental Laboratories in the Barents Region. The project is financed by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and is implemented by the Lapland Environmental Centre and Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Komi laboratories.
- 2) Pasvik Inari trilateral Park with participation of Finnmark, Lapland and Murmansk oblast.
- 3) Barents Geographic Information Technology, with participation of Norbotten, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Administrations.

Besides Barents 2010 and composition of the Project's list, our Working Group was seriously working on **planning of new ecological projects**, focused on improvement for the future cooperation in Barents region. The situation today differs a lot from the situation in 90-s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Economic conditions in many Russian regions are changing to better, which leads to changes of financial conditions for projects. Earlier, many projects were financed one sidedly by Finland, Sweden and Norway, now there many projects with co-financing, when Russian organizations are investing money as well.

Regional Working Group on Environment highly appreciates joint work, mutual understanding and support from the National Working Group. Such cooperation guaranties the national back-up for our work, helps to identify needs and generate smaller scale projects, which should be coordinated, promoted and screened at the national level, tackles obstacles to project implementation and has access to the knowledge and expertise of the regional level experts on local problems .

Very important, from our point of view, is the active participation of regions in the liquidation of ecological "Hot Spots". Where, as in the region itself, best of all are known ecological issues, priorities and measures on their liquidation. For successful implementation of identified measures, it is needed the establishment of strong organizational structures, including decision makers, business and NGO's, which will speed up advancement of projects, linked to the environmental "Hot Spots". Experts of our Working Group are ready to participate in such work in regions.

It is necessary to note, that the Regional Working Group on Environment is a mobile, active, knowledgeable and experienced group of regional experts, who are eager to work together and step by step with strong support from the National Working Group, try to improve the existing environmental situation in regions.

The improvement of the environmental situation in regions will last for several decades and will demand from us critical actions and overcoming of numerous obstacles. But the success of this work is in our hands.

Thank you!

Tatiana Tyupenko, Chair (Republic of Komi)  
RWGE