

**THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL
THIRD MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS
St. Petersburg, 8-9 October 1997**

DECLARATION

Ministers of the Environment and Representatives of the Government of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, The Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission, met on 8-9 October 1997 in St. Petersburg, Russia, for the Third Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The Meeting was also attended by observers from United States of America, Poland, Japan, Barents Regional Council, Barents Regional Secretariats, Environment Committee of the Barents Regional Council, Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) and Svanhovd Environmental Centre.

The Barents Council,

- **Emphasizing** the importance of sustainable development and the prevention of environmental degradation by pollution or the loss of biodiversity, which affects the environment, the health and the living conditions of all people living in the Region and especially the indigenous peoples;
- **Recalling** the commitments stated in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Environmental Action Programme adopted in Bodö, Norway, 15 June 1994, and the Declaration of the Second Meeting of the Environment Ministers in Rovaniemi, Finland, 14-15 December 1995;
- **Welcoming** the progress of the numerous projects under development or already under implementation, and **reiterating** the need to carry out multilateral and bilateral environmental projects for the protection of the environment;
- **Recognizing** that the work will require wider cooperation in regard to the involvement of local and regional representatives and greater public participation;
- **Noting** the importance of common objectives, cooperation and coordination with the Arctic Council, the Baltic Sea Council and other relevant fora. **Reaffirming** the support of our countries for the principles of the Alta Declaration on the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS, 1997), which all have relevance in the Barents Region;
- **Acknowledging** that the Report of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) on Arctic Pollution Issues is a significant source of information, **noting** that many of the most severe pollution sources within the Arctic area are located in the Barents Region, and **urging** all parties to include these recommendations in their national action programmes on pollution control, and **emphasizing** the importance of research on and monitoring of human health related to environmental degradation;
- **Taking into account** the important work to elaborate Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region, particularly within the energy, forestry, industry, transport and tourism sectors;
- **Underlining** that the issues of the Environmental Programme for the Barents

Euro-Arctic Region are important and should be put on the Agenda of the Environment for Europe Process;

– **Welcoming** with appreciation the Report by the Task Force to the Third Ministerial Meeting concerning environmental issues of high priority;

– **Reaffirming** the need for common actions to implement the identified projects concerning the serious environmental problems in the Barents Region, which are causing severe environmental harm and have adverse transboundary effects.

The Barents Council agrees that the following recommendations of the Task Force shall form basis of bilateral and multilateral environmental cooperation in the Barents Region.

1. Reconstruction of industry

The Barents Council endorses the continuation of the selected NEFCO/AMAP pilot projects as listed in the Report of the Task Force, which concern mainly improvements to water supply and sewage treatment, reconstruction and modernization of industry and waste management and have environmental and ecological significance.

The Barents Council reaffirms appreciation for the plan to modernize the Pechenganikel Mining and Smelting Combine prepared by Russian concern Norilsk Nickel in cooperation with Norwegian and Swedish industrial companies, and **urges** the new proprietors of Norilsk Nickel to start the implementation of this important project without further delay, thus contributing to the improvement of the environment and to the strengthening of an even broader cooperation in the Barents Region. **The Barents Council underlines** the importance of engaging also new owners of polluting industrial companies in the Region in environmentally sound modernization projects.

2. Prevention of radioactive pollution and preparedness against nuclear accidents

The Barents Council emphasizes the need for the widest possible cooperation with issues related to the safety of nuclear installations and safe handling and storage of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. **The Barents Council calls for** full implementation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Convention on Nuclear Safety and the IAEA Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, and the application of the current IMO Irradiated Nuclear Fuel Code. In addition, **The Barents Council emphasizes** the importance of the ongoing work on early completion of the facilities needed for the implementation of the ban on dumping of radioactive waste at sea adopted in the London Convention of 1972.

The Barents Council endorses the need for the implementation of the high priority projects identified by the Contact Expert Group (CEG), under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and NEFCO/AMAP, concerning the handling of spent nuclear fuel from nuclear submarines, which are permanently taken out of use, safety problems related to waste management and regional storage, and nuclear safety at the nuclear power reactors located in the Barents Region.

The Barents Council underlines that in order to ensure effective joint project

implementation, rules, regulations and practices concerning liability for nuclear damage must be adapted, as appropriate, to facilitate international cooperation.

The Barents Council urges the continuation of the international cooperation to find a complete and environmentally satisfactory solution to all the problems concerning the radioactive waste storage vessel "Lepse", the safe handling and storage of 10w-level radioactive waste (NURES) in Murmansk, and the improvements in the safety of the Kola Nuclear Power Plant. **The Barents Council welcomes** the Declaration on Arctic Military Cooperation (AMEC) signed by Norway, Russia and the United States in September 1996 in Norway and the possibility it creates to broaden the international cooperation on this issue. **The Barents Council also welcomes** the effort by Russia and Norway to broaden international technical and financial participation in priority projects, in particular on environmental aspects of nuclear submarine dismantling.

3. Integration of environmental concerns into economic activities

The Barents Council underlines the need for further integration of environmental considerations into all economic activities and **stresses** the importance of applying EIA to economic activities in the Region. In this respect, **the Barents Council notes with satisfaction** the active cooperation between the Environment Task Force and the Working Group on Economic Cooperation. **The Barents Council emphasizes** the positive effects of an early implementation of jointly selected projects, which bring both environmental and economic benefits by improving the health and social conditions of all people living in the region and reduce the consumption of natural resources, and thus promote sustainable development. Because of the importance of this issue, **the Barents Council emphasizes** the need to promote this activity further in the forthcoming meetings of the Task Force.

The Barents Council welcomes the active cooperation in the field of energy among the members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and the integration of environmental issues into the energy sector. **The Barents Council emphasizes** the positive effects of improvements in energy efficiency and reductions in the use of energy, both for the economy and the environment.

4. Capacity building

The Barents Council welcomes the Report from the Task Force on the development of the Environmental Management Programme for the Murmansk Region, EMP-Murmansk, proposed by the Barents Council at the meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, in December 1995. **The Barents Council appreciates** the contribution of the Svanhovd Environmental Center to the Programme. **The Barents Council requests** the Svanhovd Environmental Center and Murmansk State Committee on Environmental Protection to serve as coordinating bodies of the Programme. **The Barents Council appreciates** the positive response and **supports** this initiative, which has been received from the regional and central authorities in Russia, and **emphasizes** the importance of substantial and continued contributions from all parties to this programme.

The Barents Council underlines the importance of environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the development projects, **supports** the application of the "Guidelines for Environmental impact Assessment" developed under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), and **looks forward** to a pilot project to be carried out in cooperation with the countries in the Barents Region.

The Barents Council underlines the importance of further development of the Cleaner Production Programme, which has as its objectives the dissemination of methods and the development of concrete projects on industrial waste minimization, and is coordinated by the Russian-Norwegian Cleaner Production Centre and the regional authorities in Northwest Russia. **The Barents Council welcomes** the intention of the Russian State Committee on Environmental Protection to work for the dissemination of the positive results of the Cleaner Production Programme to other Regions of the Russian Federation.

The Barents Council welcomes the contributions in the area of emergency prevention, preparedness and response to safe and clear industrial development and looks forward to future United Nation's Environment Programme Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level Programme (UNEP APELL) workshops in the Barents Region.

The Barents Council welcomes the active participation and input of the local inhabitants and indigenous peoples in the work on the environmental projects, and encourages strengthening the cooperation between the regional and central levels.

The Barents Council supports the Regional Council's Action Plan on the Environment and the Regional Environmental Committee's priorities on health, biodiversity and environmental awareness issues to the year 2000. **The Barents Council recognizes** the realisation of the Action Plan as necessary also to fulfil the Barents Environment Action Programme.

5. Protection of natural habitats and conservation of biodiversity

The Barents Council welcomes the information that has been collected and made available by the Environment Task Force on nature protection in the Barents Region, especially the document "Nature Conservation, Cultural Heritage and Ecological Tourism - Elements for a Strategy for the Barents Region". **The Council appreciates** the approach in the document to discuss nature protection in a wide context, and supports in general the conclusions and the recommendations presented.

The Barents Council notes with satisfaction the ongoing international cooperation in the establishment of new nature conservation areas, especially those concerning the border regions between Finland and Russia, the recently established working group on biological diversity between Norway and Russia, as well as the foreseen establishment of the Onezhkoe Pomorie and the Belomorsko-Kuloisky Plateau National Parks in the Archangelsk Region.

The Barents Council supports the strengthening of international cooperation in the field of conservation of biological diversity with an aim of creating an overall strategy for the Barents Region in Russia. This strategy should encompass the establishment of nature conservation areas and conservation of biological diversity in areas under economic exploitation or with rich or vulnerable biodiversity. The work should also be coordinated with the programme for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) under the Arctic Council, as well as with the projects of international financial institutions, especially those of the World Bank.

6. Financing

The Barents Council reaffirms the national commitment to domestic financing as a

priority in the implementation of the environmental projects.

The Barents Council emphasizes the need to further develop financial mechanisms that allow the supply of capital goods for environmental investments and the need to improve the availability of soft loans for projects beneficial to the environment. NEFCO and the Russian National Pollution Abatement Facility, being such kinds of mechanisms, are playing an important role in leveraging of private and other investments in the region. The TACIS financing programme of European Union can play an important role as a catalyst for project financing.

The Barents Council underlines that in order to ensure effective financing and joint project implementation, rules, regulations and practices concerning customs duties and taxation must be adapted, as appropriate, to facilitate international cooperation.

The Barents Council welcomes the initiative of NEFCO in cooperation with Norway to create mechanism for financing of cleaner production projects and the willingness of Russian authorities to support this initiative both institutionally and financially.

The Barents Council highlights the significance of the Project Preparation Committee of the Environment for Europe Process, which is an important instrument for promoting co-financing and implementation of the environmental projects in the Barents Region, and notes with satisfaction the recent sub-regional PPC meeting for North-West Russia, held in St.-Petersburg (30 September -2 October, 1997).

7. Strengthening environmental cooperation within the Barents Region

The Barents Council agrees to intensify cooperation between the central and regional level and reinforce the implementation of the Barents Environmental Action Programme. **The Barents Council emphasizes** the need to intensify the work on increasing public participation and access to environmental information in the Barents Region, as appropriate. In this context, **the Barents Council encourages** the cooperation among non-governmental organizations across the borders in the Region.

Environmentally sustainable development must be the overriding objective of all actions in the Barents Region. Therefore, **the Barents Council requires** that all interest groups can participate in and get information about sectoral projects planned in the Barents Region, and that the environmental concerns are respected already during the planning phase.

The Barents Council underlines the need for the continuation of the Environment Task Force of the Barents Council and **requests** the Task Force to:

- continue to initiate, oversee and encourage the development of projects within the five areas of the Barents Environmental Action Programme, including the investment projects identified in the NEFCO/AMAP report. This work should take into due account ongoing and planned activities of the Barents Regional Council and its Environmental Committee;
- attach special importance to promoting the coordination between different institutions and encourage the development of feasible projects to mobilize international financing, inter alia, in the context of the PPC and other such programmes and projects that endeavour to improve the environment in the Region;

- identify and seek the means to promote the integration of environmental considerations into all economic activities that may have a significant impact on the environment in the Barents Region, such as infrastructure development, the energy sector and the use of natural resources, including the sustainable utilization of living marine resources and forests;
- cooperate and participate actively with other working bodies of the Barents Council;
- report to the Fourth Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Barents Council on the above issues for guidance and decisions on future activities.