

**THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL
FOURTH MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS
Umeå, 10-11 June 1999**

DECLARATION

Ministers of the Environment and Representatives of Governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission, met on 10 -11 June 1999 in Umeå, Sweden, for the Forth Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The meeting was also attended by observers from UNEP, The Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers, United States of America, Barents Regional Council, Barents Regional Secretariat, Environment Committee of the Barents Regional Council, Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), World Wildlife Fund and Svanhovd Environmental Centre.

The Barents Council,

Recalling the commitments stated in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Environmental Action Programme adopted in Bodö, Norway, on 15 June 1994 and the Declarations of the Second and Third Meeting of the Environment Ministers in Rovaniemi, Finland, on 14 -15 December 1995 and St. Petersburg, Russia, on 8 -9 October 1997 respectively.

Welcoming the Report by the Task Force to the Fourth Ministerial Meeting concerning environmental issues of high priority, and **expressing its appreciation** to the members of the Task Force for the successful completion of its work.

The Barents Council

note the general aims and priorities of the Environmental Action Programme for the Barents Region included in the first declaration and subsequent declarations from the Barents Council are still valid as objectives and guidelines for the environmental co-operation in the Barents Region.

also note the observable trend in the co-operation over the past five years that more emphasis is now given to the sections of the Action Programme dealing with institutional capacity building and the dissemination of professional qualifications and competence in the various sectors of environmental management. both in industry. governmental agencies and in relation to the general public should be continued.

note further that modernisation and reconstruction of major point sources of industrial pollution in the Region is a key to a satisfactory state of the environment in the Region in future. However, due account must be given to the experience gained under the co-operation that other ground work, such as the elimination of barriers to trade and financing, and the establishment of more common ecological guidelines as well as better harmonisation of legal and administrative practises among authorities, agencies and institutions in the Region, must be carried out before there are sufficiently favourable framework conditions for such a development to take place on a larger scale.

1. Reduction of pollution from industrial activities

The Environment Action Programme identified two project areas to be of particular significance for the reduction of pollution from industrial activities, namely the modernization of metallurgical industries and the introduction of Cleaner Production (CP) methodologies.

Although a reduction of emissions from the Pechenganikel Mining and Smelting Combine has followed as a result the general decline in Russian economy, and some reduction has been obtained by Cleaner Production and a partial shift in the composition of raw materials the situation is not satisfactory.

The Barents Council **agrees** to take further action to

- support the modernisation of the technology for economic as well as environmental reasons and secure financing and support for this project through i.a. international cooperation.

The implementation of the CP methodology has already proven to be both an economic and environmentally profitable strategy for participating enterprises. In addition, considerable achievements have been reached with respect to waste minimisation. However the standardised environmental management systems ISO 14000 and EMAS might also play an important role in this context generating a market driven incentive for taking action towards cleaner production.

Based on the experiences so far the Barents Council **agrees** to take further action to

- continue to support and further develop the Cleaner Production programmes in the Region as a contribution to an environmental strategy for the Russian authorities, industry and utilities, based on the implementation of projects and measures which are both environmentally and economically sound.

2. Prevention of radioactive pollution and preparedness against nuclear accidents

A number of positive steps have been taken in the field of nuclear safety, safety of spent fuel and nuclear waste management in the Russian part of the Barents Region. To reach a real break-through. the Barents Council **agrees** to take further action to

- urge the Contact Expert Group, CEG. of the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, to work out a comprehensive plan for foreign project involvement in order to speed up the implementation of high priority project on safe management, handling and storage of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste from civil and military sources in the Russian Federation.
- continue and enhance ongoing co-operation, i.a. with the Arctic Council and other organisations, as well as technical assistance for the establishment of monitoring systems and programmes on radioactivity and other hazardous pollutants in the northern marine environment
- co-ordinate efforts for the upgrading of the safety of the Kola and Leningrad nuclear power plants, in the spirit of the agreement between EBRD/NSA and the Russian Federation.
- give priority for international co-operation to build up additional industrial and related infrastructure, including safe interim radioactive waste storage, for the management of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel in the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regions.

3. Integration of environmental concerns into economic activities

Co-operation with the Economic Working Group

Due to the economic and financial crisis in Russia, the possibilities of internal and external financing of pollution abatement measures have been reduced in a short term perspective.

The Barents Council **welcomes** the active co-operation between the Environment Task Force and the Working Group on Economic Co-operation and **expresses strong support** for their conclusions concerning

- the studies and identification work being undertaken by the Economic Working Group in the field of identification of technical barriers to trade and economic co-operation, and the recommendation on their continued work
- the need to reconsider the use of scarce resources available for large industrial investment projects.

Co-operation with the Working Group on Energy

The energy resources of the Barents Region are vital to the future of the northern provinces and of great significance to the economy of the countries concerned. There is a great potential for improving energy efficiency in the Region.

The Barents Council **notes** with satisfaction the active co-operation in the field of energy, and **expresses its strong support** for the conclusions of the Energy Working Group that

- the energy resources of the Barents Region should be developed to support a sustainable economic development of the region. Opportunities for making greater use of bioenergy, hydropower, oil and gas should be utilised.
- the potential for improving energy efficiency in the Region and for reducing the environmental impact of the energy system, especially in the area of modernisation of existing heavy industries and shift to locally produced and more environmentally friendly fuels should be utilised intensively.
- greater emphasis should be put on the development of investment projects in these areas, including projects for joint implementation of CO₂ reduction.

4. Environmental management and capacity building

In the Environment Action Programme exchange of experience and expertise in environmental legislation and education and training in environmental management practices were identified as important areas of co-operation. The Barents Council **welcomes** the positive development of the co-operative efforts within the field of environmental management and capacity building, and agrees to take further action to ensure that

- the projects and programmes within the field of environmental management and capacity building have a long term perspective to be fully effective and sustainable.
- considerable efforts should be undertaken to improve access to information on environment and sustainable development in the Barents Region and to ensure harmonized and compatible systems for the compilation, management and dissemination of this information.
- efforts to strengthen the capacity of the regional environmental authorities to manage and disseminate data and information of relevance to environment and sustainable

development remain a priority within the environmental management and capacity building component of the Barents Region Environment Action Programme.

- increased co-operation/exchange of experience between the Barents and the Baltic Sea region co-operation regarding environmental information sharing and dissemination should be encouraged.

5. Protection of natural habitats and conservation of biodiversity

The Barents region possesses great natural assets and in many areas, basically untouched old growth forest land areas with a high value concerning biodiversity. It is desirable to protect and manage these areas in a sustainable way.

The Barents Council **agrees** that

- there is a need to continue the work on assessment of the needs and possibilities for biodiversity conservation and if appropriate, development of a network of protected areas. Possibilities for nature protection in promoting socio-economic development should be used whenever feasible, for example by creating infrastructure for ecological tourism.
- Biological diversity in economically exploited forests should be paid increasing attention. Capacity building and awareness raising concerning biodiversity issues in relation to the use of forestry resources is particularly important in future co-operation.
- Further co-ordination of international co-operation on nature protection in the Barents Region of Russia should be made, i.a. through the organisation of regional workshops and seminars.
- Protection of biological diversity and natural habitats should form integral part of the development of the forest co-operation in the frame of the Economic Working Group of the Barents Council.

6. Financing

In evaluating the progress in environmental project financing, it is necessary to observe the peculiarities of the investment climate in Russia in 1997 -1998. Especially problems relating to a continuing scarcity of financial resources in the operating enterprises and federal and regional budgets, a crisis in the Banking system, a fall in the Russian Rouble exchange rate and changes in efficiency of enterprise operations in various sectors has been of major importance. Under the conditions of continuing economic crisis, it is necessary to make definite corrections of methods of the work of the federal and regional authorities of the Russian Federation, as well as donor countries and international financing organisations, including NEFCO.

The Barents Council **agrees** to take further action to

- create more favourable conditions for financing of environmental projects in the Region, i.a by supporting the further development of new initiatives such as NEFCO's Revolving Facility for Cleaner Production Investments
- support implementation of the projects by calling for stronger commitment from the project "owners" and support from the local and regional Russian authorities, as well as increased flexibility from donors and financial institutions

- concentrate the scarce resources available for larger projects. A limited selection of projects should be made from the existing priority lists of environmentally sound investment projects, on which co-operation could focus with the aim of achieving concrete results within 2 to 3 years.

7. Environmental and Economic aspects of the Northern Dimension for the Policies of the European Union

Upon request of the European Council, the European Commission submitted, in December 1998, a report on a Northern Dimension for the policies of the EU. The Northern Dimension concept strongly supports further development of international and regional co-operation in northern Europe and aims at increased focus of the EU in the existing organisations. i.a., in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council.

The Barents Council notes that the Amsterdam Treaty includes sustainable development as an objective for the European Union. In the further development of the Northern Dimension for the policy of the EU, the Barents Council agrees that due account must be taken of the following prerequisites:

- that sustainable development is an overall goal and that environmental concerns must be integrated into all activities for development of the energy sector, transport infrastructure, the industrial, nuclear and social sector etc.. when concretization of the Northern Dimension for the policies of the EU in Northwest Russia is initiated;
- that as a matter of priority, it is necessary to promote engagement of all interested parties, in the improvement of the most critical facilities in the nuclear sector, rehabilitation and reclamation of polluted land areas, restoration of damaged forests, water supply and wastewater treatment etc.;
- that there is a great need to promote and ensure strict implementation of Federal Russian environmental legislative procedures, in order to guarantee environmentally acceptable and legal solutions (EIA and ecological expertise), elaboration, harmonisation and absolute execution of ecological safety requirements in connection with exploration and exploitation of natural resources, including hydrocarbon resources in the Barents Sea;
- that prompt and effective support should be given to the development, organisation and equipment of a modern, qualified and efficient environmental management structure in Northwest Russia, capable of the handling the environmental and administrative challenges.
- that taking into account the existence of bodies and mechanisms for co-operation under the framework of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, its environment body is available for use as a regional forum for discussion, further elaboration and implementation of the comprehensive Action Plan for Environment under the Northern Dimension for the policies of the EU.

8. Strengthening environmental co-operation within the Barents Region

The Barents Council agrees to contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21 in the Barents Region and support the initiative of the Regional Council to develop Local Agenda 21 Action Programme in the region. The Barents Council notes the adoption of Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region (Baltic 21) by the CBSS in June 1998. The Barents Council encourages enhanced participation by all groups in the region, particularly regional NGOs and recommends close co-operation with the indigenous peoples organisations.

The Barents Council **notes** in this context that

- the Barents Regional Working Group has elaborated recommendations for promoting co-operation between local and regional authorities. The working group prioritises projects related to health and the environment, biodiversity and environmental knowledge and awareness.
- the need for co-operation with relevant local and central organisations is essential for the initiative of the Regional Council to develop Barents Local Agenda 21 Action Programmes in the Region.
- The working group is establishing a Barents Local Agenda 21 Network consisting of dedicated local communities.

The Barents Council **further supports** the development of Agenda 21 in the Barents Region by

- inviting its members to consider the implementation of relevant Sector Action Programmes of Baltic 21 in the Barents Region where this is deemed appropriate
- inviting the agents of Local Agenda 21 initiatives to take into account the relevant Baltic 21 goals for sustainable development and its Action Programme, as appropriate

9. Future work

The Barents Council appreciates the completion of the work of the Task Force, and recognizes the need for a mechanism to follow up its results. The Barents Council proposes that a Working Group be established to advise the Council on objectives, priorities and actions for environmental co-operation in the Barents Region. The chairmanship of the Working Group shall rotate between members of the Barents Euro-Council.

The Working Group shall:

- monitor the ongoing environmental co-operation in the Region, and make proposals to improve its effectiveness, focus and priorities
- attach special importance to the co-ordination with the other Working Groups under the Barents Council and institutions as well as programmes and projects aiming at improving the environment
- establish close links to the relevant bodies for environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region and the Arctic
- co-operate closely with the Parties to the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation with a view to identifying and seeking 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 nuclear sector, the offshore and energy sector, the forestry sector and the use of other natural resources.
- identify needs and propose measures to further develop capacity building programmes and practical networks for the development of a modern, efficient and continuous environmental management system in the whole Region, to ensure, i.a, the development

of common ecological guidelines and a minimum of technical, legal and administrative compatibility among the participating countries

- report to the Barents Council on the above issues for further guidance on the activities of the Working Group and for decision on future activities.