

**THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME
Bodø, Norway, 15 June 1994**

Ministers of Environment and Representatives of the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the Commission of the European Communities, met on 15 June 1994 in Bodø, Norway, for the First Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The Meeting was also attended by observers from the Netherlands, the United States of America, the Sami Parliament, the Barents Regional Council, the secretariats of AMAP (the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme) and CAFF (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna), UNEP and NEFCO (the Nordic Environment Financing Corporation).

The Barents Council,

Mindful of the vulnerable character of the Arctic environment and the importance of the Arctic areas to the global environment,

Affirming its commitment to protect and preserve the environment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on the basis of the principles and priorities expressed in the Declaration on the Protection of the Arctic Environment and the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy of 14 June 1991, the Joint Declaration from the Meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Nordic Countries and the Russian Federation of 3 September 1992, the Declaration on Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region of 11 January 1993 and the Nuuk Declaration on Environment and Development in the Arctic of 16 September 1993,

Underlining the importance of a sound environment for the health and living conditions for the Arctic ecosystems and human populations,

Reaffirming in particular the responsibility of each state for their indigenous peoples, and the special role of these peoples in environmental management and development in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, and the need to promote their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development,

Having agreed that improvement of the environment of the Region would be greatly facilitated by international cooperation and assistance,

Emphasizing that strengthening the environmental cooperation in the Euro-Arctic Region is an important contribution to the implementation of the AEPS (the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy),

Having agreed that bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the Barents Euro-Arctic Region should be coordinated so as to avoid duplication of work and to support the overall regional and global objectives in the field of environmental protection,

Has adopted the following Barents Region Environment Action Programme with the overall aim of protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development:

Objectives of the Barents Region Environment Action Programme.

The Action Programme will initially have the following main objectives:

– to prevent radioactive pollution and oil pollution and to strengthen preparedness against nuclear and oil pollution accidents,

- to reduce harmful emissions from existing industries and other activities which have serious regional or transboundary environmental effects,
- to prevent environmental problems in the Region by applying environmental impact assessments available to the public, both in a domestic and transboundary context,
- to maintain the biodiversity of the Region and the natural quality of the pristine areas.
- to promote the implementation in the Region of international environmental agreements and conventions.
- to assist local and regional authorities in their efforts to control the environmental problems in their parts of the Region.
- to improve environmental monitoring and availability of environmental information in the Region, i.e. as a basis for assessing the state of the environment and the effects of measures undertaken.
- to safeguard the environmental quality of areas of special importance for the indigenous peoples.

As a part of the Action Programme, the Barents Council decides to further develop selected projects in five areas covering:

- prevention of radioactive pollution and preparedness against nuclear accidents;
- environmental management and regional harmonization of environmental standards and guidelines;
- reduction of pollution from industrial activities;
- protection of natural habitats and management of flora and fauna, and
- cooperation between regional authorities.

For this purpose, a joint Task Force of experts designated by the Participants is established. The Task Force may include members representing international environmental or financing agencies.

Mandate of the Task Force

On the basis of the environmental objectives for the Barents Euro-Arctic Region stated above and the principles and priorities established in the AEPS, the Task Force shall further develop selected projects under the five areas of the Action Programme. This work should take into due account ongoing and planned activities of the Barents Regional Council and its Environmental Committee. With a view to achieving overall coordination of efforts and avoiding duplication of work, the Programme shall take into due account and, as appropriate, support existing national, bilateral and multilateral environmental projects and programmes, including AEPS.

Furthermore, the Task Force shall seek to identify projects of importance for the achievement of the objectives of the Action Programme, in areas not at present covered by cooperative activities within the Barents Region.

The Task Force is requested to present appropriate proposals to the second Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Barents Council.

THE BARENTS REGION ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME.

1. *Prevention of radioactive pollution and preparedness against nuclear accidents.*

1.1. *Safe management and storage of nuclear waste.*

Available information indicates that current levels of radionuclides in the Euro- Arctic Region are very low and do not at present pose any threat to human health and the environment. However, significant concern exists with regard to the risk of potential

releases of radionuclides from sources dumped i.a. in the Kara Sea, from inland sources like Mayak in Ural, from unsafe storages of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste, and from possible accidents at any of the numerous civil and military nuclear facilities and objects in or Dear the Barents Region.

The Task Force is requested to organize a regional programme on prevention of radioactive pollution, based, *inter alia*, on the inventory of radioactive waste in the Region drawn up by AMAP. The programme should include measures of emergency prevention, preparedness and response at all levels of Government, i.e. in connection with possible nuclear accidents, and a review of radioactive waste management practices in the Region. Recommendations on pollution prevention and abatement measures should be made on the basis of a risk assessment, .

It is noted that the G-24 Nuclear Safety Coordination in its cooperation with Russia has placed the potential risk of a nuclear accident as its most urgent priority. However, the Barents Council stresses the need to also address the issue of safe management and storage of radioactive waste as a matter of urgency, in particular in the Barents Region.

2. *Environmental management and regional harmonization of environmental standards and guidelines.*

2.1 *Environmental management.*

The Participants of the Barents Council emphasize that the environmental dimension must be fully integrated into all economic activities in the Region, including those of the indigenous peoples, *inter alia* through the establishment by states in the Region of common ecological guidelines for the effective Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and the prevention of pollution at source. To solve common environmental problems, the Council has agreed to cooperate extensively, and to render each other assistance by sharing experience and expertise in environmental legislation, by supporting participation of local inhabitants and indigenous peoples, ecological education and training in environmental management and practices.

As a means to promote regional harmonization of environmental standards and guidelines, the Task Force is requested to organize a programme for the promotion of common practices of environmental management. The programme shall include training in comprehensive physical and land use planning, the use of economic instruments in environmental policies and the use of legislation, the execution of environmental impact assessments and audits both in a domestic and transboundary context, and effective monitoring and abatement of pollution. The programme shall, i.a., aim at supporting the Participants' efforts to further develop their cooperation under international law to protect the marine environment in the Region.

3. *Reduction of pollution from industrial activities.*

3.1. *Modernization of metallurgical industries.*

The metallurgical industrial plants on the Kola Peninsula are among the major sources of air pollution within the European Arctic. For example from the nickel smelter in Pechenga alone, some 230,000 tons of sulphur dioxide and 7,000 tons of dust containing heavy metals were emitted into the atmosphere in 1993. Expert groups have been active since 1988 collecting a detailed documentation of the environmental effects of this and other major sources of air pollution in the region. The emissions should be reduced efficiently so that the critical loads of the most sensitive ecosystems are not exceeded.

As a pilot project to demonstrate the technological, economic and financial opportunities of the Regional cooperation to contribute to the upgrading of Russian industry to modern technological and environmental standards, the Barents Council includes the Pechenga nickel smelter modernization project in its Action Programme. Cooperation will in particular be directed towards the task of securing international financing and support to the project.

3.2. *Cleaner Production in the Barents Region.*

As follow up to the Ministerial Declarations on cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, the Task Force is requested to develop a regional Cleaner Production programme which aims at improving the utilization of raw materials and energy, particularly in process industry, thereby simultaneously improving the companies' economy and minimizing waste and pollution.

4. *Protection of natural habitats and conservation of flora and fauna.*

4.1 *Maintenance of the biodiversity of the Region and the natural quality of the pristine areas.*

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region comprises most of the remaining pristine wilderness areas in Europe. It has unique values of biodiversity, natural resources and high recreational qualities. The Region faces several environmental threats which, if not dealt with, can lead to serious problems for its flora and fauna and their habitats. In compliance with the objectives of existing agreements and conventions to conserve flora, fauna and protect their habitats, such as the CAFF programme, the Convention on Biodiversity, the Berne and the Bonn conventions and the Ramsar Convention, the Participants will coordinate policies and resources to ensure lasting protection of the wilderness areas of the Region, and appropriate protection of the flora and fauna in those areas subject to development and industrial pressures.

To this end, and in conjunction with existing multilateral initiatives, the Task Force is requested to organize a programme for the effective protection of natural habitats and the conservation of flora and fauna on an ecosystems basis in the Euro-Arctic Barents Region, in particular with regard to:

- collection and presentation of data and knowledge for decision makers at all levels,
- implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity in the Region,
- establishment of a representative network of terrestrial and marine protected areas,
- establishment of a cooperation on sustainable management of northern forests,
- elaboration of environmental standards for wilderness areas in the Region,
- integration of environmental considerations into natural resource management to ensure effective conservation, including sustainable utilization of living natural resources.

5. *Cooperation between local and regional authorities.*

5.1

The Barents Council regards it as important to involve the local and regional authorities in the execution of the Action Programme, in particular in the fields of:

- local and regional physical planning,
- conservation and sustainable use of living natural resources and their habitats at the local and regional level,

- ensuring favourable conditions for indigenous communities,
- effects of short term changes in urban air pollution,
- municipal engineering and maintenance of technical facilities in cold climate,
- fresh water quality, including drinking water,
- monitoring of radioactivity and heavy metals,
- protection and management of endangered species,
- planning of protected areas across borders and harmonization of guidelines for the management of such areas.
- protection of local fish populations against diseases and parasites,
- preparedness measures against nuclear accidents,
- enhancing public participation, including participation by indigenous peoples, in environmental decision making.
- development of homogenous and basical geographic and environmental databases
- cooperation to develop an organizational and technical infrastructure for the exchange and common use of environmental data within the Region.

The Barents Regional Council has established an Environmental Committee to coordinate environmental cooperation between local and regional authorities within the Barents Region. On the basis of the environmental competence and the knowledge about the area held by these authorities, the Task Force is requested, taking due account of existing multilateral initiatives, to cooperate extensively with the regional environmental Committee as to the further development of the Action Programme. Particular consideration should be given to the exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of environmental management, for example through the establishment of twin towns and municipalities.