

**Minutes from the Meeting in
Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group on Environment
(BEAC WGE) 20 April 2010, Jukkasjärvi, Sweden**

1. Opening of the meeting, presentation of participants

The Chair of the Working Group on Environment (WGE), Mr. Jon Kahn, Sweden, who chaired the meeting online by telephone from Stockholm, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Due to the ash cloud some participants had been hindered to participate in person. Ms. Maria Dronova, Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation, participated online by telephone from Moscow. Mr. Jari Pasanen, Centre for Economical Development, Traffic and the Environment for Lapland, replaced, Mr. Marti Poutanen, Ministry of Environment, Finland. The other participants around the table in Kiruna presented themselves (annex 1 - List of participants).

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with minor changes in the order of the items.

3. Presentation of the Swedish Chairmanship programme and activities taken place in Kiruna/Jukkasjärvi 19-20 April 2010

Ms. Ida Reuterswärd, WGE Chair, presented the activities taken place in Kiruna 19-21 April 2010. Defying the flight restrictions impressively many of the participants had been able to arrive to the meetings by other means of travel. 19 April, at Folkets Hus in Kiruna, three meetings had been held; a workshop on possible cooperation in the Treriksröysa area to develop sustainable tourism and strengthen nature management, the meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE), and the meeting of the subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption (CPESC), (see below). The 20 April the seminar *Sustainability in city development and nature resource management in the Barents region* was carried out as planned in the LKAB Infomine facilities, 500 meters below the ground. The initiative of holding thematic seminars back-to-back with WGE meetings had been taken by the Swedish Chairmanship to strengthen the opportunity for the participants to exchange experiences and learn more about similarities and differences in addressing different environmental challenges in the Barents region. Presentations were held covering many topics and perspectives such as city development, energy efficiency, integrated permitting, nature protection, indigenous peoples, and water issues. Presentation were made by representatives from all Barents countries, including representatives from local and regional administrations, companies, indigenous people representatives and university. (annex 2 – Final programme). On the 21 April, in Jukkasjärvi, two meetings had taken place; the temporary subgroup on hot spot exclusion (SHE) held its first formal meeting, and additionally, a meeting discussing further work on the proposed water project in Archangelsk had been carried out.

4. Information from the Regional Working Group on Environment

Ms. Bente Christiansen, RWGE Chair, informed that regions had been well represented at the RWGE meeting, and paid special gratitude to the extraordinary efforts made by Ms. Tatjana Tiurpenko, representing the Komi Republic, who had travelled a very far distance by train and car. Additionally to the meeting held 19 April, the RWGE had also met the day after as to be able to conclude the agenda and discuss with the delegates attending from the Murmansk region. (See also separate RWGE report). The Chair informed that the RWGE at its meetings had addressed three requests; two coming from the Regional Committee (RC) (1) on the evaluation of the groups' effectiveness and challenges and (2) on the implementation of the Barents programme, and (3) one from the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) asking for contribution of information to the development of a further work on climate change in the Barents Region. The third will be done in co-operation with the WGE (see below, item 8). The RWGE had also thoroughly discussed the project *Knowledge and competence in the water management sector; the Archangelsk water project*. The discussion was based on the proposals for a project presented by Archangelsk Oblast, including information from the Dvina Pechora Basin management, as well as a presentation made by Luleå Technical University at the meeting. The RWGE had concluded on the need to narrow the scope and concentrate on educational questions, personnel exchange and exchange of best practices, as well as to see the work on the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health as its own track or own project group. The RWGE had also discussed several ongoing projects, such as the Tretriksrysa project (see below), the Park Natura, the Environmental Bus Initiative, a pre-project on environmentally sustainable small enterprises as well as a project on laboratory cooperation. At its next meeting the RWGE will give special attention to the revision of its action programme. The importance of biofuels and renewable energy will be highlighted at the next meeting.

After the report of the RWGE, Mr. Tor Mikaelson, representative from the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP), underlined the importance of sustainable forest management in the mitigation of climate change. Ms Reuterswård informed about the efforts made to revitalise the Barents Forest Sector Task Force (BFSTF), including a Swedish proposal for a project addressing forestry and climate change. Additionally, the project carried out under the lead of Umeå University, supported financially by the Nordic Council of Ministers, on the importance of protected areas in the Barents region for biodiversity and adaptation to climate change, was also mentioned as examples of ongoing initiatives, (see below, item 6).

5. Report from the subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption

Ms. Gunilla Blomquist, Chair of the CPESC subgroup, gave a short summary on the outcome of the subgroup meeting that had been held 19 April. The representatives from Russia, Norway and Finland and Sweden had been participating over the telephone. Prior to the meeting the Chair had sent out a draft work programme for discussion. At the meeting, special attention was given to the priority projects of multilateral character that the group will be working on the coming years, and responsibility was designated to subgroup members to move the priority projects further. A small project preparation group was formed under the lead of Finland to further develop the project on education/cooperation with universities within the Barents region on cleaner production and environmentally sustainable consumption. Sweden is taking lead for arranging of a number of follow-up seminars relating to the thematic issues of the Marrakesh-task forces that are planned to be carried out in the fall, possibly also including co-operation with the RWGE on sustainable tourism. The

Swedish Chairmanship has also initiated co-operation with the Nordic Council of Ministers office in St Petersburg on the holding of a seminar on instruments and voluntary tools for environmentally sustainable consumption. Norway together with Russia, will take responsibility to develop further the initiative of a co-operation project with the Arctic Council working group ACAP aiming at creating an overview of facilities for environmentally sound destruction of hazardous substances in the Barents region, which would also benefit the work on hot spots. A short presentation was made by Mr. Richard Almgren, consultant to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, on the development of Best Available Techniques and permitting procedures together with a case study on Pajala/Kolari. At a later stage, when the subgroup on hot spot exclusion has initiated activities, co-operation will be developed between the subgroups. The Chair also informed about initial contacts with the Chair of the Joint Working Group on Energy, Mr. Johan Vetlesen, Norway. Further discussions on the possibilities for developing co-operation projects, also using the Barents Window financing facility, will be made on the basis of the outcome from the report on Energy efficiency in the Barents region to be presented at the Ministerial meeting of Ministers of Competitiveness in Umeå, 18 and 19 May. Ms. Anne Berteig, the Norwegian WGE representative, informed that the CPESC will receive an invitation for participation at the next meeting of the Working Group on Energy. The Chair concluded that the subgroup will finalise its draft work programme shortly, so that it can be sent to the WGE for adoption. Additionally, the subgroup had been discussing the complementary shortlist of projects and project sheets. Mr. Jon Kahn concluded that the CPESC work programme will be finalized by the WGE by written procedure.

6. Update on the preparations for the Habitat contact Forum 1-4 June and the subgroup on Nature Protection meeting in Archangelsk

Ms. Ida Reuterswård presented the information given to her by the Chair of the subgroup on Nature Protection, Mr. Mats-Rune Bergström, who had to leave before the meeting. The subgroup had not held a formal meeting in Kiruna, however some of the subgroup participants present in Kiruna had discussed informally the further work within the subgroup. The preparations of sixth Habitat Contact Forum, to be held in Archangelsk 1-4 June, are carried out in close cooperation between the Institute for ecological problems, the Archangelsk administration and the subgroup on Nature Protection. Many participants are registered, including representatives from forestry sector and the programme is ambitious. The subgroup meeting will hold its meeting back to back with the HCF, and devote time for final discussions on the draft work programme that have been sent out by the Chair for comments by the subgroup members. The draft will thereafter be sent to WGE for adoption by written procedure. In parallel to the HCF a special meeting will also be held on the development of the project of Barents Protected Areas Network (BPAN). Subgroup members had suggested that the BPAN project should focus on a few, preferably three, objectives. Mr. Mats-Rune Bergström will send out a letter to the WGE members asking for representatives from the countries to be appointed. The development of BPAN will be linked to the ongoing project on the importance of protected areas in the Barents region for biodiversity and adaptation to climate change, which is carried out by with Umeå University as a lead and supported financially by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Mr. Mattias Lindgren, the representative from the Regional Administrative Board of Norrbotten, gave a short information on the outcome of the Tretriksrysa workshop held 19 April. A small working group will now be formed under the lead of Finland, to prepare a feasibility study for a project before summer.

7. Information from the International Barents Secretariat

Mr. Mattias Lindgren, who will make a short secondment at the International Barents Secretariat (IBS), presented the greetings from Mr. Alexander Ignatiev, Head of the International Barents Secretariat, who could not attend the meeting, and underlined the continued willingness for the IBS to contribute in the development of the information data base on hot spots (see below, item 12).

8. Update on activities relating to climate change

The recommendations from the Vadsö conference on climate change in the Barents region, arranged under the Norwegian chairmanship in WGE, underline the need for a broad sector involvement to address the issue of climate change. The Barents cooperation through its broad stakeholder network and experience of working on different thematic issues could contribute in many ways. In the Declaration of the Ninth Meeting of the BEAC Ministers of the Environment it was emphasized that climate change issues concern the whole Barents cooperation and the declaration called for co-ordinate action, involving indigenous peoples, to develop an action plan for further work on climate change in the BEAC under the lead of the Committee of Senior Officials. Against this background the Swedish Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) has initiated a discussion in the Committee of Senior Officials on how the Barents cooperation could address the issue of climate change. A request has been sent out to the chairs of the working groups of BEAC, asking for further information on current and possible activities relating to climate change that will be the basis for further discussions. Ms. Ida Reuterswärd informed that a compilation of projects and activities consisting of information on the planned conference on water and climate change, the ongoing project on biodiversity and climate change and information on other activities, for example hot spots and cleaner production and environmentally sustainable consumption also relating to climate change, will be sent submitted shortly. The compilation will be done in cooperation with the RWGE. Ms. Anne Berteig indicated that Norway is planning for a follow-up activity to the Vadsö conference, probably giving special attention to indigenous peoples and climate change.

9. Update on the Water Issues

Mr. Mattias Lindgren, chair of the subgroup on Water Issues, informed that no formal meeting of the subgroup had been held, however the members present had an informal meeting where participants had shared their initial views on the draft work programme that had been sent out earlier, and discussed the further development of the project *Knowledge and competence in the water management sector; the Archangelsk water project*. The meeting supported that the work programme will give special attention to the projects with a multilateral platform, however complementing it with a list of it with a list of other projects carried out. The Chair will send out a new draft version shortly including proposal for further work. On the further development on the water project in Archangelsk the meeting followed-up on the discussions held earlier in the RWGE. The meeting expressed their support for giving special attention to the development of multilateral small-scale educational activities, as a response to the project proposal sent by the Dvina Pechora Basin Administration sent out prior to the meeting. Ms. Carola Björklund, Norway, gave an up-date on the letter sent to the Russian Ministry of Natural resources to appoint a person that would be responsible for the work with the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health in North West Russia, and underlined the need for a contact person to be appointed. Ms. Maria Dronova informed that this request was under process at the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources. Mr. Mattias Lindgren underlined that the informal water meeting had concluded that the Archangelsk project needed a two track approach, with one track for the multilateral small-scale activities arranged by the water subgroup in cooperation with RWGE and concerned parties, and the other track

developing the Norwegian proposal to work on the UNECE protocol on water and health. The two tracks should however strive towards finding possibilities for making the activities supportive to each other.

10. Information on the Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of Competitiveness

A Ministerial meeting for Ministers of Competitiveness will be held in Umeå 18-19 May, , gathering representatives from the four Barents countries and regional representatives. The meeting "*Time to unlock the potential of the Barents Region*", will give special attention to raw materials, energy efficiency and renewable energy. Information on the meeting can be found at www.beac.st. Ms. Ida Reuterswård distributed a draft Declaration that had been negotiated in the Working Group on Economic Cooperation. The Declaration is short and operational, however highlighting the need for cooperation with other working groups. Ms. Ida Reuterswård will attend the meeting, representing the WGE, and report back.

11. Report from the temporary Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion

Mr. Åke Mikaelsson, the Swedish chair of the subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion, informed about the outcome of the first meeting of the temporary Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion. Connecting Russia and Norway over the telephone, the subgroup had thoroughly discussed the draft work programme that was sent out by prior to the meeting, and it was estimated that the work programme could be finalised for WGE consideration within a few weeks. An important issue that had been discussed was how the work of the subgroup should interact with the regional groups on hot spots. No formal decisions had been taken at the subgroup meeting, however progress has been made in order to proceed with the exclusion procedure. The draft work programme contains a detailed list of activities, with the activities of the subgroup on one side, and the possible activities of regional groups on the other. Importantly, factual meetings with the regional groups need to take place. The Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology will appoint formal groups in all federal subjects. Additionally, a special meeting had taken place with representatives from Murmansk, addressing further work on hot spots in Murmansk oblast.

12. Information on the development of a hotspot information database

Ms. Anne Berteig informed that an informal meeting had taken place in Kiruna to make progress on the development of ToR for a hot spot information data base. It had been decided that NEFCO, together with Norway, takes the responsibility of finalising the draft ToR, and a consultant to develop the concept further. The IBS and the Swedish Chairmanship will be informed on the developments. The WGE and the subgroup on hot spot exclusion will be consulted prior to appointing a consultant to develop the information database. Ms. Ida Reuterswård recalled the deadline put out in the Ministerial Declaration from Tromsø, that the hot spot information database should be developed by the end of 2010.

13. Other issues

The WGE decided that the mandates of the subgroups would be reviewed along with the development of the work programmes, however that the mandate of the WGE would be considered separately by the WGE. Ms. Maria Dronova informed that a letter had been sent by vice-minister of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Mr. Igor Maydanov. to the Russian Barents regions with the request to appoint contact persons for the subgroups, aiming at facilitating the future work of the subgroups. Ms. Ida Reuterswård informed that the next WGE meeting is likely to take place in October and a date and venue is searched for in order to be able to co-ordinate activities with the RWGE.