



Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Working Group on Environment

Helsinki, March 30, 2004

Action Programme for the Finnish Chairmanship 2003-2005

1. Background

The Barents environmental cooperation started on 15 June 1994 in Bodø, Norway, at the First Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. At the meeting, the Ministers adopted the Barents Region Environment Action Programme. The year 2004 will be the 10th anniversary of the environmental cooperation in the Barents Region.

At the **Sixth Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)** in Luleå, Sweden, on 28 August 2003, the Declaration was adopted, the report from the BEAC Working Group on Environment (WGE) was endorsed and a renewed mandate to the WGE was given. During its chairmanship in 2001-2003, Sweden produced a "Report on Ministerial exchange of views on the future of the Barents Euro-Arctic region". These documents and the previous Action Programme of the Swedish chairmanship will guide the work of the WGE during the next period. The Joint Communiqué adopted by the Foreign Ministers at the 9th Session of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Declaration of the Barents Euro-Arctic 10 Year Anniversary adopted by the Prime Ministers are also taken into account.

This **Action Programme** introduces the priority actions and other continuing fields of action to be taken during the Finnish chairmanship of the WGE. Additionally, the Programme outlines cooperation with the Regional WGE, with other bodies of the BEAC and with other regional fora. Attention is also paid to cooperation with the European Union. Project and activity proposals can be added to the Action Programme in order to be discussed by the WGE and forwarded to implementers and financiers.

Questions regarding **nuclear safety** are handled within the Multilateral Nuclear and Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation (MNEPR), which was signed in May 2003. Significant financial resources will be directed to nuclear safety and waste-handling projects, in accordance with the Nuclear Window of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) Support Fund. However, the WGE could also discuss, at some point, relevant aspects of nuclear waste and safety.

2. Priority Actions

The Cleaner Production Task Force was established in 2002 to prepare a "Policy Document including Action Plan on Cleaner Production in a Life Cycle Perspective", which was adopted at the Luleå Environment Ministers' meeting. Cooperation on Cleaner Production in the Barents Region contributes to the Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development concerning issues on changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

At the Luleå meeting the Ministers endorsed the "Updated NEFCO/AMAP Environmental Hot Spots list in the Russian Part of the Barents Region". This report consists of 42 "hot spots", and

proposals for 52 investment projects aimed at the mitigation of environmental impacts from these "hot spots" in the Russian part of the Barents Region.

Additionally, the Ministers adopted the recommendations of a "Common approach to strengthen environmental considerations in forestry co-operation in the Barents Region", developed jointly by the WGE and the WGEC's Forest Sector Task Force (FSTF).

On the basis of these documents and the future work of the WGE as requested by the Ministers in the Declaration of the Sixth Meeting of Environment Ministers, the following priority actions are identified.

2.1. Cleaner production

The Ministers requested the WGE to promote effectively the implementation of the Barents Region Cleaner Production Strategy and the prepared Action Plan with an aim to also improving chemicals management.

Activities:

- Each participating country will provide more concrete national plans. On the basis of these national plans, the Cleaner Production Task Force (CPTF) will further enhance the cooperation in this field, develop the element of sustainable production and consumption, and divide responsibilities for implementation of the Action Plan.
- The Task Force will encourage all actors to make use of, and if required consider contributing to existing funding sources for financing cleaner production investments and facilities. Special attention should be paid to the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), the Nordic Council of Ministers, the EU's financial instruments and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- The WGE and CPTF will further promote cooperation with Cleaner Production Centres and Barents Euro-Arctic Energy Efficiency Centres and between the Nordic and European working groups, and will seek means to cooperate with the Working Group on Economic Co-operation (WGEC).
- The WGE will consider developing a handbook on IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control, which will include chemical management) and related recommendation handbooks (BREF Documents) for Russian counterparts (in one pilot region). This work will look into experiences of the evaluation in harmonising Russian and EU legislation to facilitate and strengthen the linkages between the reforms of individual environmental policy instruments.
- The WGE will follow, and for its part contribute to, the organisation of the International Conference "Cleaner Production as a Contribution to Sustainable Development", to be held in Moscow in December 2004. In connection to this, the WGE and the CPTF will produce a report/booklet with analysis of experiences in implementing Cleaner Production in Russia and the Nordic countries.
- The WGE and the CPTF will follow and take into account the work done under the Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP).

Actors (lead country): Cleaner Production Task Force (Chair: Finland), Russian-Norwegian Cleaner Production Centre and Regional Cleaner Production Centres and other institutions involved in Cleaner Production activities

2.2. NEFCO/AMAP hot spots report

The Ministers requested the WGE to a continuing process in implementation of NEFCO/AMAP Hot Spot list, lead by the WGE, in collaboration with NEFCO and relevant federal, regional and local partners, in order to develop actions within ten years aimed at eliminating these Hot Spots.

Activities:

- The progress in eliminating the hot spots depends on the project-owning entities, the investors and Russian national resources. The WGE will seek means to enhance the public-private partnership in this work.
- When needed, the WGE will contribute to consolidating national priorities and (bilateral) resources for this work. Special emphasis is given to promoting donor financing, especially combining different means of financing, such as NEFCO and other Nordic instruments, the EU's financing instruments (especially TACIS and the Neighbourhood Programmes), and ways to involve other financiers in the work, such as the NDEP and GEF.
- When applicable, the WGE will contribute to the further assessment of appropriate enterprises and seek to arrange funding for prefeasibility studies in order to identify the projects eligible for financing in the initial phase. In this connection, the Cleaner Production implementation will be taken into account.
- The WGE will start cooperation with the ACAP programme to identify the potential joint projects. The WGE will also identify other actors, resources and instruments to be used for this work and will coordinate with other programmes aimed at mitigating the negative environmental impacts in the Barents Region.

Actors (lead country): Finland as the chair of the BEAC WGE together with all WGE members and the BEAC's Committee of Senior Officials in close collaboration with NEFCO

2.3. Conservation of biological diversity and sustainable forestry

The Ministers requested the WGE to further strengthen the cooperation in the field of sustainable forestry with the WGE Forest Sector Task Force, including protected areas and conservation of biodiversity, taking into account the work of the International Contact Forum for Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region and the Barents Regional WGE.

Activities:

- Nature protection and preservation of the cultural heritage:

- The WGE will promote the work of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region. The recommendations of the 3rd Meeting of the International Contact Forum, held in Kuhmo in November 2003, will be supported. The 4th Meeting of the International Contact Forum is proposed to be held in 2005 in Komi.
- The project "Gap analysis – a comprehensive assessment of the representativeness of and gaps in the protected areas network in Northwest Russia" will be started in cooperation with the participating Barents countries (contact: the Finnish Environment Institute). The WGE will support the preparation of a report on the current state of nature conservation in Northwest Russia and the need for further development. This work will also contribute to the Russian initiative "Natural heritage of the Barents Region: Management in the interests of future generations". The work done under the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) programme: "Gap analysis in support of CPAN: the Russian Arctic" will be taken into account.
- The WGE will support the development of the Fennoscandian Green Belt concept. The Green Belt incorporates the current and planned protected areas on both sides of the border.
- The WGE will contribute to the Circumpolar Protected Area Network (CPAN) process of CAFF and will produce data on the management of recently established protected areas and on legislative initiatives in the Russian part of the Barents Region.
- The WGE will follow the cooperation on the protection of cultural monuments and nature conservation in the Kenozero National Park and the cooperation in Terski Rayon on the traditional cultural heritage.

- Cooperation with the Forest Sector Task Force (FSTF)

- The WGE will contribute in appropriate ways to the model forest process, and will promote developing an approach of culturally, ecologically, economically and socially sustainable forest management in the Barents Region. In this connection, it is important to develop interlinkages with the work on sustainable forest management and renewable biofuels.
- A joint meeting with the FSTF will be arranged to discuss and develop a mutual view on how environmental issues should be dealt with in relation to forests in the Barents Region. The WGE will take into account the work done under the project "Sustainable Development in the Northern Timberline Forests", which has been implemented by the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG).

Actors (lead country): Nature conservation: Finland; Sustainable forestry: Sweden

3. Other continuing fields of activity:

In addition to the above-mentioned three priority actions, the WGE will continue other activities and will identify future needs and approaches for working on the issues requested in the Declaration of the Sixth Meeting of Environment Ministers, such as water issues, Petchenga Nickel and follow up to the environmental impacts of the oil and gas sector development. The water projects in the Barents Region of Russia, for their part, provide a response to achieving the goals of the Strategic Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development/EU Water Initiative.

3.1. Cooperation on improvements in water supply, water quality and sanitation

The Ministers requested the WGE to seek means to strengthening the co-operation in the field of water supply and water quality.

- The main activity of the WGE in this field is to support the implementation of the hot spot list, described in section 2.2.
- The WGE will follow and support other regional projects and initiatives, such as the Kola Water Quality Project (contact: the North Ostrobothnia Regional Environment Centre), Development of the intercomparability and joint utilisation of the results of environmental monitoring activities in Finland and North-West Russia (led by the Lapland Regional Environment Centre) and the Kola River Environmental Project (contact: the County Administration of Norrbotten).
- The WGE will seek ways to coordinate activities with the projects funded by international financial institutions, especially the NDEP's municipal services improvement projects in Arkhangelsk and Komi. Moreover, as appropriate, the WGE will promote practical possibilities for applying the Cleaner Production Programme to the Arkhangelsk municipal services (this CP Programme starts in Arkhangelsk in January 2004).

3.2. Follow-up to and monitoring of the environmental impacts of the modernisation of Pechenga Nickel Smelting Combine

The Ministers welcomed the positive examples of environmental investments in the Barents Region, such as modernisation of the Pechenga Nickel Smelting Combine and emphasise the need for a continued follow-up and monitoring of the environmental impacts.

- The WGE will follow up the INTERREG III A Kolarctic project "Development and implementation of an environmental monitoring and assessment programme in the joint Finnish, Norwegian and Russian border area", conducted by the Lapland Regional Environment Centre

3.3. Cooperation in reducing the risks of oil and gas production and transportation, and in developing the use of environmental impact assessment (EIA) as an environmental policy tool

The Ministers welcomed capacity building in environmental management and strengthened international cooperation to meet the necessary requirements for safe transportation at land as well as at sea in order to ensure effective protection of the inland, coastal and marine environment.

- The WGE will follow, and seek means to strengthen coordination with, related issues and processes in the Baltic Sea and other multilateral and bilateral initiatives, especially in the field of oil and gas production and transport in northern and Arctic conditions.
- The WGE will follow the processes of the Arctic Council in this field, such as the preparation of "Assessment of petroleum hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the Arctic" by AMAP (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme), "Arctic Marine Strategic Plan" by PAME (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment), and the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA).
- The WGE will, in cooperation with the RWGE, promote the use and recognition of the Arctic guidelines at the national and regional level, such as Guidelines for Environment Impact Assessment in the Arctic (1997), Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines (PAME 2002), Field Guide For Oil Spill Response In Arctic Waters: Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR 1998), and Circumpolar Map of Resources at Risk from Oil Spills in the Arctic (EPPR 2002).
- The WGE will support the project "Development of a training course in tools to deal with development projects threatening Indigenous Territory and development", conducted by the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), the Saami Council and UNEP/GRID-Arendal.
- The WGE takes note of the Russian-Norwegian work on cooperation in the field of marine management related to petroleum activities in the North Barents Sea, especially future cooperation on EIAs.

4. Cooperation with the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE) and local actions

The main activity of the RWGE in the coming years will be the Interreg IIIB Barents 2010 project. The environmental components of the Barents 2010 programme are water quality and biodiversity, which will be followed and supported by the WGE according to the main fields of activities of this Action Programme. On this basis, the cooperation with the RWGE can be further enhanced on a concrete level. In addition to the Barents 2010 programme, the cooperation on Local Agenda 21 and ecotourism are the main fields of cooperation at the local level. The WGE will also contribute on its part to the implementation of the Action Programme and Work Plan of the RWGE.

5. Cooperation with other BEAC working groups and regional fora

The WGE will follow the discussions on the working structure of the Barents cooperation, started by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). As described in this Action Programme, the WGE will enhance cooperation with other BEAC working groups, especially with the WGEC on cleaner production and with the FSTS on sustainable forestry. The mandate of the Energy Working Group (EWG) will be revised this year. The WGE will continue to seek means to work closely with the EWG in the fields of joint implementation, the use of renewable energy (such as bio-energy) and energy savings. The WGE will also follow other processes and activities within the BEAC and its working groups which are connected to environmental and sustainable development issues.

The WGE will identify areas for cooperation and will seek out ways to enhance cooperation and synergy with other regional fora, especially with the Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Russia will hold the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2004-2006. Additionally, in 2005 Russia will take over the chairmanship of the WGE from Finland. This Action Programme places special emphasis on identifying areas of cooperation and seeking out synergies with the relevant programmes and projects of the Arctic Council. In add-

tion to the focal points of this Action Programme, the WGE will identify areas for cooperation, such as chemicals and environmental health, with the Nordic Council of Ministers. The WGE will follow the issues connected to work on bioenergy and energy savings of the Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC), and the progress of the Testing Ground for Flexible Mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol in the Baltic Sea Region. Another CBSS activity which is of interest to Barents environmental cooperation is the Baltic 21 process.

6. Cooperation with the European Union, especially within the framework of the Northern Dimension policies of the EU, the EU's financing instruments and the NDEP

The European Union adopted the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, 2004-2006, in October 2003. The WGE took an active role in the preparation of this document. Environmental questions are one of the five priority sectors: "the environment, nuclear safety and natural resources". In addition, environmental issues are included in other priority sectors. In accordance with the list of Northern Dimension activities for 2004-2006, by priority objective, there are several issues that are included in the Barents environmental cooperation and that should be promoted further to be implemented and financed through multilateral cooperation and within the EU.

The European Commission has adopted a communication on "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours" and a communication on "Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument". In accordance with these documents, preparations are ongoing to create Neighbourhood Programmes 2004-2006 supporting cross-border cooperation along the external borders of the Union. The aim is to take a two-step approach to changing from the existing financial instruments (e.g. TACIS Cross-Border Cooperation, INTERREG) to a new legal instrument - New Neighbourhood Instrument - that addresses the common challenges identified in the Wider Europe Communication.

- The WGE will follow and contribute to the implementation of the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan 2004-2006.
- The WGE will promote the NDEP process, especially its "environmental window" and investigate the synergies with the NEFCO/AMAP hot spots report.
- The WGE will seek means to take full advantage and find possible sources of co-financing with the EU's financial instruments aimed at supporting cross-border activities, especially the Neighbourhood Programmes.

7. Information and follow-up

Finland will prepare and maintain web pages for the use of the WGE. The purpose is to enhance information exchanges between the WGE members and to inform the wider public about WGE's work. The web pages will include information on WGE work activities and meetings, such as upcoming meetings, and meeting minutes. Furthermore, it is planned that WGE members will have access through a password to a restricted area for internal communication with other members. Additionally, it will be possible to include other environment matters affecting the Barents Region on the web pages. The web pages and e-mail will be the main channels for information exchange between WGE members.

- The web pages will be opened in January-February 2004.
- The progress of the three priority actions will be followed-up at each WGE meeting.
- The WGE will report to the Seventh Meeting of the BEAC Environment Ministers on the issues of this Action Programme.