

RESOLUTION

of the Third meeting of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region

I

During the period from 3rd to 6th of November 2003 specialists from Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Denmark and Estonia met in Kuhmo, Finland, to discuss co-operation within “The International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region” (hereafter the “Contact Forum”).

II

The third meeting of the Contact Forum was held according to the recommendations made by the first meeting of the Contact Forum held in Trondheim in 1999, and the second meeting held in Petrozavodsk in 2001, chaired by Norway.

The third meeting was organised and led by Finland, the Contact Forum Chair.

The participants of the meeting (103 representatives from environmental authorities, institutes and NGOs) discussed actual nature conservation tasks; focusing on selected topics; and discussed future plans and initiatives.

III

- The participants supported the idea that relevant bodies should work out international long term ecological projects, such as Barents 2010, and “Natural Heritage in the Barents Region: Management in the Interests of Future Generations”.
- The representatives stated the importance of the Contact Forum as an arena for discussion of habitat conservation issues between the specialists, and making recommendations for decision-makers, land-use organisations, nature protection and other international institutions.
- The representatives underlined the importance of establishing and running a nature protected areas network in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on different levels and directions.
- Major challenges of habitat conservation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region are the protection of old-growth forests as well as wetland and mire ecosystems, along with coastal and marine areas, mountains and tundra.
- Priority is to be given to established network of nature protected areas.
- The meeting participants stated the importance of improving the management of nature protected areas, and, especially, improving the economic conditions of the Russian strict nature reserves and national parks. The capacity building for Russian nature protection institutions shall be an essential element of the co-operation on habitat conservation.
- The representatives understand the risk of conflicts between the habitat conservation and activities connected to development of forestry and forest industry, oil and gas fields in the Arctic, as well as transport systems. The representatives underline the importance of linking biodiversity and forestry, and water quality and mining.

- The participants of the meeting recognise the importance of traditional nature use by indigenous and local peoples, and the need to save the indigenous peoples culture. Protection of the ecosystems in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region must be balanced with these interests.
- The representatives recognise the importance of sustainable use of natural resources, for example a certification system of ecotourism in the Barents region.

In particular, the third meeting focused its interest on the following selected topics :

- International cooperation and protected areas in border regions
- Biosphere reserves
- Development of protected area networks in North-West Russia
- Biotope and biodiversity inventories, data bases
- Birds and flyways
- Mires and wetlands
- Cultural and ethnical questions and local participation

The list of development ideas on these topics, elaborated by working groups, will be reported in Annex 1.

IV

The representatives agree to publish the report after the third meeting. Finland (Finnish Environment Institute) is responsible for this. The report will be made available to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Barents Regional Council and relevant Arctic Council working bodies.

The meeting participants adopted the mandate of the Contact Forum, Annex 2.

It was considered important to further promote nature protection in the work of Barents Council and other relevant cooperation frameworks such as the European Union Northern Dimension and make full use of the present and emerging financing instruments for cross-border cooperation.

The representatives decided that Russia will be new Chair and Sweden Co-chair of the Contact Forum for the next two years. The next meeting will focus on the following thematic issues: conservation of old-growth taiga forests, nature protection areas, and water quality.

The meeting participants thanked Finland for organising the third meeting of the Contact Forum.

The next meeting of the Contact Forum should be held in the year 2005 and Republic of Komi should be responsible for organising it.

Kuhmo, 6th of November 2003

From Finland

From Norway

Tapio Lindholm

Jan-Petter Hubert Hansen

Finnish Environment Institute
Management

From Sweden

Mats-Rune Bergström
County Administration of Västerbotten

Directorate for Nature

From Russia

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Control and Perspective
Development in the Field
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ANNEX 1 to the Resolution

RESULTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

The program of the Third meeting of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF) included a session on New Directions for Nature Conservation Cooperation in Northwest Russia. The work of the session was carried out in 7 parallel Working Groups. Participants of the meeting were divided into the groups by their own desire and field of expertise.

The ideas and proposals, elaborated by the working groups and presented at the end of the Third HCF Meeting, are listed in the following:

Working Group 1

International Cooperation and Protected Areas in Border Regions

– *Lassi Karivalo (chair), Kerttu Härkönen (secretary)*

Working Group 1 recommends governments, non-government organizations, international organizations, and development agencies in Barents region to support:

- The initiative on the Fennoscandian Green Belt, and further, the initiative on the Europe-Wide Green Belt network, and recommends the governments of Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway to join the process.
- The use of the Biosphere Reserve concept and practices in the further development of the Fennoscandian Green Belt.
- The initiative of the Fennoscandian Green Belt as a World Natural Heritage Site.
- The use of the EUROPARC's criteria and indicators as a tool to develop joint activities in transfrontier cooperation in the Fennoscandian Green Belt.
- The work of the Association of Zapovedniks and National Parks of Northwest Russia, in cooperation with Metsähallitus (Finland), to disseminate best practices and know-how in the protected area management for the benefit of the whole protected areas network of Northwest Russia.
- The existing initiatives for establishment of new protected areas in the Green Belt.

Working Group 2

Biosphere Reserves

– *Timo Hokkanen (chair), Evgeny Ieshko (secretary)*

The Working Group discussed about the biosphere reserve concept:

- zones, delineation, administration, funding, information, involvement, development plan. The Group also dealt with the questions: Can Biosphere Reserve concept add something to the Barents area cooperation? What are the options for future to be presented for HCF?

The ideas and proposals of the Working Group 2 are:

- Introduction and development of the Biosphere Reserve concept under HCF (information materials, inclusion of the concept to the toolbox).
- Fennoscandian Green Belt area is most promising to start with the activities.

- A model Development Plan for an existing / planned Biosphere Reserve (a pilot project).
- Long-term management and organizing of the activities requires permanent funding: discussion on, and actions for finding the funding options is needed.

Working Group 3

Development of Protected Areas Network in Northwest Russia

– *Mats-Rune Bergström (chair), Alexei Bambulyak (secretary)*

Working Group 3 discussed the issues of international processes, HCF activities, national programs, priorities and possibilities for strengthening and developing protected areas network in Northwest Russia and Northern Europe. Participants of the group welcomed new members taking part in HCF meeting and underlined the importance of expanding HCF as in geographic as in professional aspects.

The recommendations of the Working Group 3 were combined in four sectors:

International processes relevant for activities of HCF in nature protection:

- To distribute information about international programs and processes, their plans, results and experiences that can be used for development of protected areas networks (like Europark, Barents 2010, GAP Analysis).
- To coordinate the activities with relevant programs and projects run under the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, Baltic Region, EU and bilateral agreements.

National and international plans and programs for protected areas development:

- To develop national and international priorities and programs for nature protected areas development (like “Natural Heritage in the Barents Region: Management in the Interests of Future Generations”) where “heritage” should be the key word.
- To strengthen the importance of elaborating unified priorities and recommendations for evaluation and establishment of nature protected areas on national and regional levels, which can be used for authorities and science.

Existing protected areas:

- To support and strengthen existing nature protected areas as on federal (national parks and strict nature reserves) as on regional (nature parks and objects) levels.
- To distribute information about, evaluate and apply new economic mechanisms and possibilities, as on national as on international, for proper nature protected areas management and economic welfare.

New protected areas:

- To strengthen the critical importance of protecting boreal forests in Northwest Russia as the last remaining old-growth forest in Europe.
- To complete the inventory works on the territories of Arkhangelsk region, evaluated by five international complex expeditions.
- To create a working group for elaborating the application for including the network of six territories of old-growth boreal forests in Northwest Russia into UNESCO list under nomination “The last remaining virgin boreal forests”.

- To develop recommendations, criteria and routine for establishing national parks (federal level) and nature parks (regional level) in Northwest Russia.

Working Group 4

Biotope and Biodiversity inventories, data bases

– *Jan-Petter Huberth Hansen (chair), Riitta Hemmi (secretary)*

The group emphasized the importance of biodiversity conservation, which should be in future as well the priority topic within HCF work. The group was concerned about the possibilities to protect biodiversity outside the protected areas. The efficiency of protected areas alone to take care of biodiversity conservation was questioned.

The Working Group 4 proposes:

- To establish an International Red data Book of Barents Euro-Arctic Region (step by step).
- To continue and expand the Nature Chronicle Data Base Project.
- To develop criteria for habitat classification and redlisting in Northwest Russia – priority to threatened habitat types, such as semi-natural grass lands etc.
- To continue the GAP Analysis process in Northwest Russia.
- To monitor and protect the biodiversity in areas outside protected areas, such as territories with heavy contamination, water areas etc.
- To establish an international biodiversity working group to deal with the development of red lists, data bases on biodiversity issues, etc.

Working Group 5

Birds and Flyways

– *Knut Fossum (chair), Boris Kashevarov (secretary)*

The ideas and proposals of the Working Group 5 are:

- To underline the importance of protection of essential areas along flyways for migrating birds. Such areas should be taken into account as an important matter in the work regarding habitat conservation in the Barents region.
- To propose the development of a joint system for monitoring the migration of selected species of birds and the effects of climate changes on migration. A joint system should also include the development of a website for the collection and distribution of data.
- To underline the need for capacity building, including education and training of ornithologists in Northwest Russia.

Working Group 6

Mires and Wetlands

– *Tapio Lindholm (chair), Ulla Heikkilä (secretary)*

Working Group 6 noted the scattered knowledge on mires and wetlands. There is not enough knowledge on their ecology, distribution and biodiversity values on various

levels of their structure in different regions. Lack of specialists – especially this was recognized in Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Vologda regions and Komi republic.

At present there are several threats making the future of many mires and wetlands uncertain. The threats are:

- Forestry;
- Uncontrolled construction: roads, railways, buildings, pipelines;
- Mining of geological deposits;
- Peat extraction for horticulture and fuel;
- Forest privatisation as an unpredictable threats.

Working Group 6 proposes:

- To collect the present data and knowledge as a database and to make a publication on ecology and biodiversity of mires and wetlands of Northwest Russia.
- To conduct remote sensing and field inventories for each region.
- To make a comprehensive analysis about mires and to use that data in the gap analysis of their protection.
- To strengthen education of mire specialists.

Working Group 7

Cultural and Ethnical Questions and Local Participation

– *Alexander Davydov (chair), Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen (secretary)*

Section “Cultural and ethnic problems and local participation” should be part also of the future Habitat Forum Meetings. A deeper understanding of protected areas including the cultural heritage, is an essential part of the HCF work. Cultural components should be incorporated into the work of habitat conservation, especially the ideas of people living in or near the protected areas should be seen crucial. Dialog between the local communities and scientists of protected areas should be a normal procedure.

It is important to share experiences of working with local people around protected areas and to elaborate common views on questions which should be taken into consideration when planning the work of already existing and new protected areas. The handbook for local participation made by Metsähallitus (Finland) can work as a starting point for future work.

Natural heritage is classified and determined well, but cultural heritage monuments have not been classified in relation to the environment.

Proposals of the Working Group 7 are:

- The evaluation and study of terminology and classification of cultural heritage sites should be promoted.
- The compiling the dictionary of the toponymy of the protected areas of the Barents region should be started. This could be done through common research projects concentrating on ecological and cultural questions.
- The ethic of relations with the local people should be incorporated in all of the ecological tourism projects.

- Research and promotion of sustainable way of life by understanding nature based way of living, should be recognized as a central value in the future.
- Joint seminars to discuss and exchange ideas and methods of the cultural heritage and the social and ethnic questions on the protected areas by promoting the conferences and seminars dedicated to these topics.
- To evaluate the important experiences of “Vepsskiy les” (the Vepsä Forest in the Leningrad region) as an example of the cooperation of the local people with the specialists in humanistic and natural sciences.
- To evaluate the important experiences of Voknavolok village (Vuokkiniemi) as a good example, and find finances from different sources with the help of various national and international organizations on bilateral and multilateral basis.
- To study the Kolguev and Vaigach islands and their ethno-ecological values and find finances from different sources for this work with the help of the Administration of the Nenets Autonomous Area, the County of Västerbotten (Sweden), on bilateral and multilateral international basis. The work in Kolguev island could act as an example for model territories to be carried out elsewhere.
- To include cultural and social scientists into the international environmental expeditions.

ANNEX 2 to the Resolution

The International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation Issues in the Barents Region

MANDATE

- a) The Forum is an arena for co-operation on habitat conservation issues in the Barents Region including adjacent marine areas.
- b) The Forum should work to achieve increased focus on:
 - proper management of existing protected areas
 - the need for additional protected areas
 - other measures relevant for habitat conservation.
- c) The Forum will have meetings every second year.
- d) Participation in the Forum is open to federal and regional authorities in the Barents Region, representatives from indigenous peoples organizations, and relevant and interested organizations (including NGO's) and institutions.
- e) A Chair should be elected from one of the countries within the Euro-Arctic Barents Region at the Forum meetings. The chairmanship will be rotated between the countries.
- f) Reports and recommendations from the Forum will be sent to federal and regional authorities in the Barents Region responsible for habitat conservation issues, Indigenous Peoples Organizations (RAIPON; Saami Council, etc), The Barents Council, The Barents regional Council, relevant and interested international institutions, and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations (CAFF, IUCN etc).