

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE)**

Place: Kiruna, Sweden

Time: 5 October 2005

Participants: Kari Kinnunen, Lapland, Chair  
Tatiana Tiupenko, Komi, Vice Chair  
Unto Ritvanen, Kainuu  
Tero Väisänen, North Ostrobothnia  
Eija Salmi, North Ostrobothnia  
Roar Högset, Nordland  
Bente Christiansen, Finnmark  
Amund Beitnes, Finnmark  
Toril Skoglund, Tromsø  
Gunnar Nilsson, Norrbotten  
Jari Pasanen, Lapland

### 1. Adoption of the agenda

Kari Kinnunen opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The agenda was adopted.

### 2. Environmental status of Norrbotten County

Gunnar Nilsson gave a presentation on the status of the environment in Norrbotten County. Norrbotten is the location of many nature reserves, and protected areas cover 25 % of its total area. One environmental problem in the county is old sawmill sites, some of which have polluted soils that need to be cleaned. The cleaning is carried out in a dedicated plant. The county also has a great deal of mining activity, and the mining industry there pays considerable attention to environmental issues. The storage of waste rock and tailings is a great concern and it is very important to ensure safe storage for the future after a mine has been closed. This means that there is a need for investments in environmental monitoring in the areas around mines.

### 3. Report on Work Package (WP) 4 (Barents 2010), Water Quality

Jari Pasanen told about the Work Package's second joint workshop, held in Luleå on 7 September 2005. The strategy for the Barents area was discussed in the workshop in light of Work Package 1. The following goals and priorities were highlighted:

- Economic growth
- R & D and higher education
- Ecological concerns
- Social development

Programs for strategy implementation are interlinking efforts in industrial development schemes with environmental and social considerations. Projects for future cooperation in

the Barents region were presented in mining and forestry, as well as in the social dimension. The environmental projects related to future cooperation are recorded in the strategy report of WP 4. The Barents 2010 project will end in March 2006. Comments on WP 1 strategy work will be sent during the last months of the project by WP 4.

Discussions on future work in the Barents area have begun in an ad hoc group, and the following issues are under consideration in the regional level:

- a new organizational structure for Barents cooperation
- an international secretariat / several national secretariats
- sector program responsibility for each region

The RWGE will follow this process and comment on it. The continued presence of the RWGE will be important in Barents cooperation in the future.

#### 4. Report on Work Package 4 (Barents 2010), Biodiversity

Roar Högset gave a presentation on the biodiversity issues in the 2010 project. The main strategic issues with regard to biodiversity cooperation are:

- monitoring and mapping with the aim of setting up a joint database
- GAP analysis
- a joint Red Data Book
- information exchange and networks for cooperation

The proposed actions in biodiversity cooperation include nature-based tourism, model forestry, a database for biodiversity and a forestry information system. Existing databases can be used as a basis for the information system. More information is needed on unprotected areas, which may require protective actions.

#### 5. Action program

The action program for the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE) is being drawn up and the program should be very concrete. The text will be shortened and a number of chapters will be rewritten as soon as possible in accordance with the comments received at the RWGE meeting.

- history / Bente Christiansen
- waters / Jari Pasanen
- biodiversity and forestry / Roar Högset
- oil and gas / Bente Christiansen
- mining / Gunnar Nilsson
- tourism / Kari Kinnunen

When ready, the action program will be presented to the Regional Council.

#### 6. Barents environmental ministerial meeting

The Barents environmental ministerial meeting will take place on 19 October 2005 in Rovaniemi. The declaration of the ministerial meeting was presented, and many activities to be undertaken by the RWGE are included in the document. The topics mentioned include Barents Hot Spots, a network of nature conservation areas, concern about the quality of drinking water, implementation of small-scale water projects, transboundary water cooperation and cooperation on flood protection.

The ministerial meeting will welcome the work done by the Regional Working Group on the Environment within the water and biodiversity components of the Barents 2010 project and suggest that actions be taken to support the recommendations on environmental cooperation in the Barents Region. The meeting will also encourage the development of cooperation between the central and local levels, especially with regard to capacity building for environmental administrators and environmental training for other sectors. There is also a need to develop cooperation on the use of Environmental Impact Assessment, especially in the transboundary context, and the use of environmental policy tools and economic instruments in environmental protection. The topics and recommendations highlighted in the ministerial meeting will be taken into consideration in the future work of the RWGE.

The chairs of the RWGE will give presentations at the ministerial meeting on regional environmental cooperation in the Barents region.

#### 7. Project ideas from the regions for Barents cooperation and the implementation of project ideas

Tatyana Tiupenko told about the NEFCO Hot spot meeting arranged in the Komi Republic. A second meeting on hot spots will be held in the near future. The results of the first meeting were good and implementation of the projects is underway. Two projects have been already started.

Representatives of the Geological Survey of Finland have visited the Komi Republic and projects are being prepared that deal with education on mining activities and environmental legislation.

Gunnar Nilsson delivered a project proposal to RWGE participants from the Komi Republic entitled "Let's keep water clean!". The project includes environmental education for youth that will make use of websites and run youth camps and seminars. Tatyana Tiupenko will work out the background of the project in the Komi Republic.

#### 8. Other business

The 4th meeting of the International Contact Forum on habitat conservation in the Barents region was arranged in Syktyvkar on 19-25 September 2005. Tatyana Tiupenko distributed the meeting materials and recommendations to RWGE participants.

Tero Väisänen reported that there would be a mining seminar in Apatity on 1 and 2 December 2005. Some participants in the RWGE might take part in the seminar.

#### 9. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Environment (RWGE) will be a joint meeting with the Working Group on the Environment (WGE). The date will be announced later when the date of the WGE meeting has been confirmed.

#### 10. Closing of the meeting

Kari Kinnunen closed the meeting and thanked the participants for their contributions.