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**DECLARATION**  
**COOPERATION IN THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC REGION**  
**CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IN KIRKENES, 11.1.1993**

**Introduction**

A conference on cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region took place in Kirkenes, Norway, on 11 January 1993. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs or representatives of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the Commission of the European Communities participated in the conference, which was also attended by observers from the United States of America, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

The Participants expressed their conviction that expanded cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region will contribute substantially to stability and progress in the area and in Europe as a whole, where partnership is now replacing the confrontation and division of the past. The Participants felt that such cooperation will contribute to international peace and security.

The Participants saw the Barents cooperation initiative as part of the process of evolving European cooperation and integration, which has been given a new dimension with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. They considered the establishment of a Council of the Baltic Sea States in Copenhagen in March 1992 as a further contribution to strengthening regional cooperation in Europe. They also stated their conviction that the establishment of closer cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region will be an important contribution to the new European architecture, providing closer ties between the Northern parts of Europe and the rest of the European continent.

The Participants expressed support for the ongoing process of reform in Russia which aims inter alia at strengthening democracy, market reforms, and local institutions, and which is therefore important for closer regional cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

The Participants expressed their desire to support the long-standing aspirations of the peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region for friendship and cooperation, and stressed the fundamental significance of the historical changes caused by the end of ideological and military confrontation in Europe. They welcomed the initial steps that have been taken at the local and regional level to expand cooperation, in particular, the establishment of an interregional working group by counties in Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. They expressed their appreciation for the valuable work carried out by the northernmost counties of Finland, Norway and Sweden in the "Nordkalottkomiteen" during the past two decades. They took note of the report from the Expert Conference on the Region in Kirkenes on 25-27 September, 1992. They also took note of the October 1992 International Expert Conference on the Northern Sea Route in Tromsø, Norway.

**The Barents Euro-Arctic Council and its objectives**

The Participants recognized the features characteristic of this Arctic Region, especially its harsh climate, sparse population and vast territory. They agreed therefore to examine how they can improve the conditions for local cooperation between local authorities, institutions, industry and commerce across the borders of the Region.

To this end, the Participants agreed to establish a Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, hereinafter called the Council, to provide impetus to existing cooperation and consider new initiatives and proposals. The terms of reference are set out in the annex.

The objective of the work of the Council will be to promote sustainable development in the Region, bearing in mind the principles and recommendations set out in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 of UNCED. To this end, the Council will serve as a forum for considering bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, science and technology, tourism, the environment, infrastructure, educational and cultural exchange, as well as projects particularly aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples in the North.

The Participants emphasized that the Council will not duplicate or replace ongoing work in other bilateral or multilateral fora, but will where appropriate seek to give impetus and coherence to regional cooperation and encourage new common efforts, bilateral and multilateral, to meet the challenges and opportunities facing the Region.

They welcomed the establishment of a Regional Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region which will include county officials in the area constituting the Region and representation of the indigenous peoples of the Region.

### **Participation and area of application**

The Participants emphasized that cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is open to those states that wish to take an active part.

The Participants decided that regional cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region will comprise the county of Lapland in Finland, the counties of Finnmark, Troms and Nordland in Norway, the counties of Murmansk and Archangel in Russia, and the county of Norrbotten in Sweden. They noted that the Region might be extended to include other counties in the future.

### **The environment**

The Participants recalled the Joint Declaration from the meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Nordic Countries and the Russian Federation in Kirkenes on 3 September, 1993, and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic signed on 22 September, 1992, and underlined the importance of strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation to protect the vulnerable environment of the Region.

The Participants reaffirmed their commitment to the Strategy for Protection of the Arctic Environment, adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi in 1991, and to the ongoing work in implementing that strategy, especially within the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). An action programme to assess and prevent the risk of pollution from emissions from industry, nuclear installations, and dumping of hazardous waste in the Region is urgently needed and should be prepared in due time for presentation at the next Ministerial Meeting for the Protection of the Arctic Environment on 14-16 September, 1993 at Nuuk, Greenland.

The Participants emphasized that the environmental dimension must be fully integrated into all activities in the Region, inter alia, through the establishment by the states in the Region of common ecological criteria for the exploitation of natural resources and the prevention of pollution at source and recognized that solving the existing major transboundary environmental problems will be important in realising the potential for broader cooperation in the Region.

The Participants stated that the risk of contamination of the environment of the Region by

radioactive substances is a serious problem and must be solved, inter alia, through international cooperation and the improvement of technology for the handling, storage and disposal of radioactive waste and the operational safety of nuclear facilities.

**The Participants noted the importance of international cooperation in the following areas:**

- expanded monitoring of ecology and radioactivity in the Region;
- enhanced work on the operational safety of nuclear facilities;
- rehabilitation of areas that have been polluted as a result of the operation of nuclear facilities.

The Participants emphasized that in particular instances, such as for measures to improve nuclear safety and to reduce air polluting emissions from the nickel production on the Kola Peninsula, international financial arrangements in addition to national financial contributions may be considered with a view to finding cost-effective solutions.

**Economic cooperation**

The Participants recognized the importance of increased economic cooperation in the Region in the form of trade, investment, industrial cooperation, etc. In view of the environmentally vulnerable character of the Region, they stressed the particular importance of observing the provisions of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary context (the EIA Convention), signed on 25 February, 1991, and the principles of environmental soundness and sustainability in all fields of economic cooperation.

The Participants agreed to explore ways and means to encourage trade and investment and to provide a framework conducive to broader cooperation on a commercial basis at the enterprise level.

The Participants recognized the potential for development in the Region in the field of energy on an environmentally sound basis. They underlined the importance of cooperation with regard to energy saving measures.

The Participants recognized the role of the European Energy Charter in making the fundamental link between energy, the environment and economic development.

The Participants recommended that conditions be created for enhanced cooperation in the conversion of military industries and facilities, inter alia, on a commercial basis.

The Participants agreed to cooperate in developing the efficiency of agricultural production in Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas, inter alia, in order to secure sufficient supplies of food of high quality. In view of the similar climatic conditions in the Region, the Participants underlined the importance of exchanging experience and skills within the area in fields such as reindeer husbandry and forestry.

**Scientific and technological cooperation**

The Participants recognized the importance of scientific and technological cooperation in dealing with the Region's problems, including the promotion of relevant cold climate technologies. They noted the opportunities that exist for such cooperation in fields related to geology, oceanography, atmospheric physics, ecology and environmental protection, and

technological fields such as construction, fisheries, aquaculture, forestry, mining, off-shore technology and transportation and communications applicable to the specific regional conditions.

The Participants emphasized the need to exchange relevant experience and information and encourage the transfer of technologies. They proposed that taskforce laboratories, expeditions and the like, be set up to pursue specific projects and scientific programmes. The Participants stressed the role that the International Arctic Science Committee could play in developing scientific research.

The Participants recognized the importance of cooperation in the training of personnel.

### **Regional infrastructure**

The Participants underlined the importance of improving the infrastructure for transport and communications in the Region.

The Participants noted studies and discussions already initiated at the bilateral and multilateral level regarding the transport and communications needs of the Region and possible action to meet those needs. The Participants urged that preliminary and final results from such studies and discussions should be made available as appropriate to all participating states in order to avoid duplication of effort.

The Participants decided to ask the ministers responsible for transport and communications to consider possibilities for cooperation, based, inter alia, on studies already in progress, on the transport and communications needs of the Region.

The Participants expressed recognition of the progress already achieved through bilateral cooperation in the development of telecommunications and voiced support for further efforts on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis for the continued improvement of telecommunications in the Region.

### **Indigenous peoples**

The Participants concerned reaffirmed their commitment to the rights of their indigenous peoples in the North in keeping with the objectives set out in Chapter 26 on Indigenous People of Agenda 21. They stated their commitment to strengthen the indigenous communities of the Region, and to ensure that the cooperation now being initiated will take the interests of indigenous peoples into consideration.

The Participants concerned took note of the proposed establishment of a Working Group for Indigenous Issues with representatives from the indigenous peoples and authorities and the central authorities from Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. They agreed that the Working Group might consider, also on the basis of international cultural expeditions to areas of Nenets and Sami, preparing a regional programme for the restoration and preservation of Nenets and Sami cultural monuments, the establishment on a regional basis of a Nenets cultural centre in the Nenets Autonomous Region, the establishment of a corresponding Sami centre in the town of Lovozero in the county of Murmansk, and the establishment of an appropriate regional medical foundation.

The Participants agreed to exchange information regarding existing or proposed legislation with a bearing on the position of indigenous peoples in their respective countries.

### **Human contacts and cultural relations**

The Participants stressed that wider human contacts and increased cultural cooperation in the Region should be encouraged to promote constructive cooperation and good neighborly relations.

Among the areas of cooperation which could be considered are:

- More extensive exchange of youth, students, teachers and professors from high school to university levels, also within the fields of culture and sports.
- Activities which could give women in the Region more opportunities for cooperation and exchange of experience.
- Extended facilities for education and training in the languages of the Region.
- Cultural centres such as the planned "Pomor Cultural Centre" attached to Pomor State University in Archangel.

### **Tourism**

The Participants recognized that tourism may play a more important part in the economy of the Region and agreed that the promotion of tourism across national borders will strengthen human contacts and mutually beneficial economic development with positive effects for employment and business activities. They called for steps to encourage cooperation in the field of tourism at national, regional and local levels, and for common efforts to develop tourism infrastructure and facilities. The provisions of the EIA Convention should be duly taken into account in this context.

*Kirkenes, 11 January, 1993*

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