



## **Eleventh Meeting of Environment Ministers Declaration**

Inari, Finland, 4-5 December, 2013

Environment Ministers and senior representatives of Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Union met in Inari, Finland, on 4-5 December 2013 for the Eleventh Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Barents Regional Council, indigenous peoples, parliaments, regional bodies, environmental non-governmental organisations and other invited guests.

### ***The Barents Euro-Arctic Council Environment Ministers***

*noted* that the origin of the Barents environmental cooperation lies in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Environment Action Programme adopted in Bodø in 1994 and that the continuity is followed up by subsequent Environment Ministers meetings, the latest in Umeå in 2011;

*stressed* the urgency of measures to protect the unique Arctic nature and prevent environmental degradation and hazards in the face of rapid changes, and *recognized* the right of indigenous peoples to be appropriately involved in planning and decision-making on matters which affect their rights;

*noted* that climate change, pressure on natural resources, increased environmental risks, pollution of the environment, and loss of biodiversity are the major environmental challenges in the Barents Region;

*noted* the need for sustainable management and protection of marine areas bordering the Barents Euro-Arctic region.

*welcomed* the Declaration on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation adopted by the Prime Ministers on 3-4 June, 2013 and the Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BEAC, adopted in Tromsø, Norway, on 29 October 2013;

*welcomed* the contribution of the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) in strengthening the co-operation in the Barents Region, and *highlighted* the importance of active cooperation between the national and regional levels, and the involvement of indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, and youth in addressing environmental challenges and opportunities in the Barents Region;

*welcomed* the results of the Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden, in February, 2013 and the Declaration of the Arctic Council, adopted in Kiruna in May 2013;

*expressed* appreciation of the financial support for the Barents environmental cooperation from the Nordic Environment Financing Corporation, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and *welcomed* the progress of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership projects in the Barents Region.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Arctic and the Barents Region are among the areas in the world where the effects of climate change can be most clearly detected and where temperatures are projected to rise the most. These changes will have severe impacts on both societies and ecosystems. The Barents Regions can contribute to mitigation of climate change by reducing local greenhouse gases and black carbon emissions. Adaptation to climate change presents major challenges in the Barents Region, and requires cooperation at national, regional and local levels.

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*expressed* commitment to work together with other countries to conclude a binding global climate change agreement under the UNFCCC no later than 2015, and to contribute to the efforts to meet the long-term goal of limiting the increase in global average temperature to below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;

*called for* further efforts for mitigation and adaptation to climate change in the Arctic including efforts to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, and *encouraged* coordination with the Arctic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers on these issues;

*adopted* the Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents cooperation, which was endorsed at the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the BEAC, 29 October 2013, and *underlined the importance* of the follow-up to and implementation of this plan by the BEAC Working Groups under the active leadership of the Committee of Senior Officials;

*encouraged* the WGE, its Subgroups and the RWGE to enhance their efforts in mitigation, adaptation, research and outreach as outlined in the Action Plan.

## **THE BARENTS ENVIRONMENTAL “HOT SPOTS”**

The Assessment of the Hot Spot Report presented to the BEAC Environment Ministers concluded that the target agreed ten years ago to launch environmental measures at all of the Barents environmental “hot spots” by 2013 has been reached. At the same time, these measures are very different in character, stage of implementation and scale, and a lot of work still remains before the main environmental issues connected to the “hot spots” are solved. The need to integrate environmental considerations into all economic and industrial activities is therefore more topical than ever.

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*noted* with appreciation the results reached in ten years of cooperation on “hot spots”, and *acknowledged* increased regional engagement and the work done in the Russian parts of the Barents Region, as well as the progress at many of the “hot spots”;

*Assented* to the exclusion of the following Barents environmental "hot spots" from the list: Arkhangelsk heat and power plant (Arkhangelsk-A2), Handling of mercury-containing wastes (Nenets-N4), and Gas emissions from Kondopoga pulp and paper combined mill (Karelia-K1); and *encouraged* further application of the Hot Spots Exclusion Procedure approved at the ministerial meeting in Tromsø in 2010 at the remaining 36 "hot spots" and continued implementation of abatement measures at these "hot spots";.

*encouraged* the WGE to consider the need to update the existing "hot spots" list in order to focus abatement measures on solving the most acute environmental problems; to complement the work on "hot spots" a sectoral approach should be developed;

*welcomed* the contribution of NEFCO and its Barents Hot Spots Facility and the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership in the work aimed at "hot spots" exclusion, and *encouraged* implementation of relevant environmental investment projects and further exploration of possibilities for synergies within the framework of the BEAC WGE and the Arctic Council, including its Project Support Instrument, and other sources of financing;

*encouraged* the SHE to enhance information and dissemination of the results of the work with the "hot spots".

## **CLEANER PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND CONSUMPTION**

The exploitation and use of natural resources in the Barents Region is increasing. An important challenge for the prosperity of the region is to develop a green economy and attract responsible, sustainable and environmentally sound economic activities to the area, while considering sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services.

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*acknowledged* the Conference on Best Environmental Practices in the Mining Sector in the Barents Region, held in April 2013 in Rovaniemi and *encouraged* further strengthening of environmental cooperation in the mining sector;

*called for* further work to disseminate knowledge and enhance capacity on Cleaner Production, Best Available Technologies (BAT) and Best Environmental Practices (BEP) in all economic sectors in order to improve environmental performance and resource efficiency in the Barents Region including the Barents "hot spots";

*acknowledged* the work on the education project in cooperation with the BEAC Joint Working Group on Education and Research.

## **NATURE PROTECTION**

In the Barents Region there is still a unique possibility of reaching the global goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity to secure a broad, representative and effectively managed network of protected areas. Such areas are a mainstay of biodiversity conservation, while also contributing to people's livelihoods and ecosystem services, particularly at the regional and local level.

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*welcomed* the progress in establishing new protected areas and *stressed* the need for prompt implementation of planned protected areas as an important measure for achieving the Aichi biodiversity targets

*encouraged* enhanced cooperation with the Arctic Council, the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

*Noted with appreciation* the results and recommendations of the Barents Protected Areas Network project, and *encouraged* further development of the second phase of the project and dissemination of its results, as well as to consider inclusion of terrestrial habitats that are underrepresented in the network and compilation and map presentation of coastal areas.

*called for* finalization of a strategy to protect the last pristine boreal forests in the Barents Region and *underlined* the need for continued co-operation on wetland conservation according to the Ramsar Convention objectives;

*acknowledged* the work of the Habitat Contact Forum (HCF) as a platform for co-operation on habitat issues, and looked forward to the next HCF meeting in 2015 in Russia;

*called for* further follow-up on the Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF) initiative, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was signed in 2010 and *welcomed* further implementation and enhancement of the GBF project.

### **WATER COOPERATION**

Increasing pressure on water resources and changes in aquatic ecosystems are expected in the Barents Region because of the climate change and economic activities in the region. In many places of the Barents Region poor drinking water quality is still a major health problem for the local people.

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*encouraged* continued co-operation on transboundary waters and river basin systems to enhance the sustainable use and protection of the water resources from onshore and offshore pollution, and *stressed the need* for improving the quality of drinking water in the Barents Region;

*stressed the need* for facilitating investments and capacity building in order to improve water quality in the Barents Region and to harmonise monitoring methods according to international and national standards, such as the EU's Water Framework Directive and Russian legislation;

*highlighted* the exchange of information and experiences on water issues between countries and regions in the Barents Region;

*underlined the need* for further studies on the correlation between climate change and the state of water bodies with respect to mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including

issues such as flood prevention, water regulation, drinking water and sewage treatment facilities and infrastructure.

## **REGIONAL LEVEL COOPERATION**

The Regional Working Group on Environment promotes local and regional competence to engage in environmental work on the international level and to improve the exchange of information and know-how between the different regions through project implementation.

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*gave recognition* to the work of the Regional Working Group on Environment including the preparation of an Action Programme and *welcomed* regional activity in such fields as surface and drinking water protection and improvement, environmental monitoring, biodiversity conservation, minerals and mining and increasing environmental knowledge, as well as regional efforts with regard to the Barents environmental “hot spots”;

*welcomed* the regional activities on Atlantic salmon (such as “Kolarctic Salmon” project) in the Barents Region, aiming at merging modern science with traditional knowledge in order to improve the future management of Atlantic salmon in the Barents Region;

*stressed* the great importance of further development and implementation of harmonised and standardised monitoring methods to handle jointly cross-border environmental challenges such as those addressed in the project “Trilateral Cooperation on Environmental Challenges in the Pasvik Area”.

## **FUTURE WORK**

### ***The Environment Ministers***

*endorsed* the Report of the BEAC Working Group on Environment and the Subgroups on the activities in 2012-2013;

*welcomed* the Communication Strategy for the Working Group on Environment and its subgroups and *recognised* the importance of the communication as an instrument in attaining the objectives laid out in the BEAC-WGE framework;

*expressed appreciation* of the work carried out in the BEAC Working Group, the Subgroups, and the Regional Working Group on Environment, and *recognised* that the participation of the regional level is a unique quality of the Barents cooperation and *encouraged* further measures to promote the participation of regional representatives in WGE activities;

*encouraged* the Working Group on Environment to continue its efforts in the fields of climate change, the green economy, mitigating environmental pollution and hot spots, nature protection, and water issues, and *requested* the WGE to consider the most appropriate structure of Subgroups needed for this work;

*supported* close cooperation between the WGE and the Regional Working Group on Environment, as well as with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples, and *encouraged* cooperation with other working groups under the BEAC;

*acknowledged* the Barents environmental cooperation aimed at meeting regional environmental challenges and at connecting the global environmental agenda to regional level cooperation;

*encouraged* the Working Group on Environment to enhance cooperation and coordination with the regional organizations in the North (Arctic Council, Council of Baltic Sea States, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Nordic Council of Ministers, NEFCO, Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership), as well as with the relevant connections to global environmental processes (climate, biodiversity, chemicals, Rio+20 and the UNEP International Resource Panel);

*expressed gratitude* to the outgoing Finnish Chairmanship of the BEAC Working Group on Environment and to all participants for their excellent work, and *were pleased* to accept the offer by Russia to assume the chairmanship of the Working Group on Environment for 2014-2015.