



Final English version

RESOLUTION

ON THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONTACT FORUM ON HABITAT CONSERVATION IN THE BARENTS REGION (HCF VII)

The seventh Meeting of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, further HCF VII, was organized on 11-13 of June in 2013, in Bodø, Norway.

HCF VII, organized under the chairmanship of Norway (2010-2013), was held according to the recommendations of previous forum meetings; Trondheim 1999, Petrozavodsk 2001, Kuhmo 2003, Syktyvkar 2005, Umeå 2008 and Arkhangelsk 2010. HCF activities are a part of the activities of the Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) of the Working Group of Environment (WGE) of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAC), this year under Finnish Chairmanship.

The HCF VII, gathering in total 50 participants, including representatives of ministries of environment, national and regional authorities, institutions, scientific and other organizations from Finland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat presented expert reviews and discussed on the following topics:

1. HABITATS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (mitigation and adaptation)

Biological diversity is the nature's immune system and insurance against large environmental changes, like climate change. HCF VII is aware that recent meta-analysis of the current scientific knowledge on forest biodiversity, carbon storage in the boreal old-growth forests concludes that they store carbon more than they emit it.

Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region is under development. HCF VII strongly supports initiatives for conservation of the boreal old-growth forests, wetlands and mires for climate mitigation and adaptation. Due to the overlap between the forest areas important for biodiversity and carbon storage, conserving more forest can solve two challenges at the same time. A good example to follow could be the UN Redd + for conservation of tropical forests.

2. HABITAT CONSERVATION IN THE BARENTS REGION - STATUS AND TRENDS.

Availability of up-dated basic data on the natural and cultural values in BEAR continues to be crucial for better planning and decisions in the conservation policy and measures in the region. Especially maps should be updated regularly as the necessary basic tool for it. The extensive work on surveying the gaps in the protected area system in North-West Russia, published in Russian in 2012 and to be published in English 2013, offers an improvement tool with basic data for the decision-makers.

The 7th HCF expresses great concern for increasing threats such as mining, forestry and construction towards existing and projected protected areas.

3. WETLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS – STATUS AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS.

HCF VII desires to strengthen the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in BEAR particularly by identifying new Ramsar sites in the BEAR, designating transboundary Ramsar sites using existing structures and programmes, i.e. Green Belt of Fennoscandia, in order to create synergies rather than multiplying work, and mainstreaming wetland issues across sectoral policies. The recommendations of the BEAC/Ramsar conference “Wetlands and flyways in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) and the Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF)” in Murmansk, Russia, 13th-15th of September, 2011, are reassured by HCF VII.

4. PROTECTION OF BOREAL FORESTS

The state of forest conservation varies between the countries in the BEAR, Norway has protected 2,7 % of its productive forest, Sweden 4 %, Finland 5 %.

An important mission for BEAC remains to raise awareness of the threats to old-growth forests on one hand, and of the importance of the conservation of the old-growth forests on the other. For the conservation it is essential to improve connectivity between the forest landscapes using research results like the Scandinavian Horseshoe concept and the existing networks like the Green Belt of Fennoscandia and the BPAN project.

HCF VII welcomes collaboration with other existing Arctic and Barents region international organizations or working groups in forest biodiversity conservation, forestry and forest land use. HCF VII recognizes the importance of the series of international expeditions in Archangel Region in 1997-2011 for bringing the still largely intact old-growth forest and mire complexes and their natural and cultural values to the awareness of BEAC societies.

As a result, HCF VII supports the idea of establishing new protected areas recommended by the former HCV meetings. It should be looked further into the possibilities of organizing international expeditions to the still remaining and potentially valuable old-growth forest areas.

5. GEODIVERSITY

It is a need to raise awareness of geodiversity values and the connection between geodiversity and biodiversity in the BEAR. To safeguard the geodiversity heritage, a selection of geotopes should be protected. The necessity for the inventories and identification of sites with high values of geodiversity is rapidly increasing with the growth of land use, e.g. road construction and mining industry in the BEAR. Often the sacred sites are geosites by their characteristics. Conservation of geodiversity should better be integrated in the nature conservation as an essential part along with biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation.

6. IMPLEMENTING THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN BEAR

The eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held 8-19 October 2012, in Hyderabad, India, was emphasizing the importance of national implementation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 in order to reach the overall goal of halting the loss of biodiversity. Among the Aichi-targets that were under particular consideration were the restoration of degraded habitats and the in-depth consideration of the Program of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). HCF VII demonstrated that the implementation of the Strategic Plan in the Barents region has commenced, but stress the importance of ensuring the thorough implementation of the Aichi-targets and the PoWPA at a national level and through international collaboration and co-financing. The challenges concerning the establishment of clear linkages

between the obligations adopted in the international convention sphere and the implementation of the provisions at the local level were highlighted.

7. BARENTS PROTECTED AREA NETWORK – BPAN

The BPAN project is a regional approach for implementing PoWPA and conducting practical cooperation in 13 regions of the BEAR between the regional and national authorities, scientists and NGOs of the BEAR. All the BEAR countries have an urgent need to fulfill the targets of international agreements and to strengthen the protected area network. The BPAN project is a Pan-Barents project that fulfills well the targets of Barents Euro-Arctic Council. HCF supports the establishment of new protected areas on the BPAN pilot projects sites. The BPAN project has gained good results and the forum supports the continuation of the project.

8. NEXT HCF

In accordance with the rotation principle next meeting, HCF VIII, will be held in Russian Federation in 2015. The place and the exact dates will be decided later by the Russian Federation.

Participants of the HCF VII expressed their gratitude to Norway, The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management in cooperation with the County Governor of Nordland, hosting and organizing the meeting.

Bodø, Norway, 13th of June, 2013

On behalf of Finland

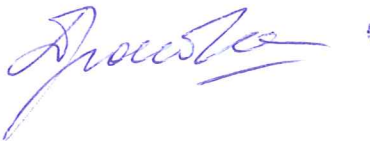

Tapio Lindholm

On behalf of Norway

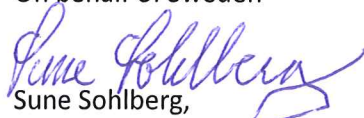

Knut Fossum

On behalf of Russian Federation

Maria Dronova



On behalf of Sweden


Sune Sohlberg,
on behalf of Mats-Rune Bergström,
Västerbottens länsstyrelse