

Meeting of the Working Group on Environment

April 9th 2014

Petrozavodsk, Republic of Karelia

Venue: Hotel Park Inn, Hall Pietari

Minutes

1. The Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of the Republic of Karelia, Mr. Viktor Chikalyuk, welcomed the participants and wished a successful meeting. The participants presented themselves – list of participants can be found in the end of the meeting minutes.
2. The Chair of the Working Group on Environment (WGE), Ms. Maria Dronova (Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation) presented the priorities of the Russian chairmanship of the WGE. It can be stated, than by far many meaningful projects have been implemented, but there is still much to be done and there are many major challenges facing us, such as the climate change, pressure on nature resources and the increased risks. One of the tasks is to implement the BEAC Action Plan on climate change. Close co-operation with the Regional Working on Environment will be continued and attention will be paid to enhancing the co-operation with the other regional organisations and initiatives, such as the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Saint Petersburg Initiative as well as HELCOM and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Special attention will be paid to practical measures and enhancement of the regional engagement under the five core thematic areas of WGE: 1) the Barents environmental hot spots (further exclusion of hot spots, revision of the list with emphasis on the most acute problems, implementation of relevant investment projects), 2) nature protection (project BPAN and other regional projects, 8th Habitat Contact Forum in Russia 2015), 3) water protection and regional work, 4) cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption (linkage to hot spots via Best Available Techniques, dissemination of Best Environmental Practices), 5) climate (implementation of the Action Plan, e.g. facilitating the formation of regional climate strategies).

In the near future, a hot spot subgroup meeting (Stockholm, May 2014) and WGE core group meeting are planned to be arranged.

3. Ms Henna Haapala, WGE Chair 2012-13, presented a summary of the Finnish chairmanship. She noted, that climate and environment are priority issues in during the Finnish chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) in 2014-15 and was pleased to hear that Russia continues with the same themes than Finland did during its WGE chairmanship. During the Finnish chairmanship as many as 500 people were connected to the work of the WGE. The Ministerial Declaration from December 2013 Inari meeting will guide the environmental work for the following two years.

During the Finnish chairmanship, the situation at the Barents hot spots was assessed and it was found that some progress had taken place at all objects. Three hot spots were excluded from the list. Cleaner production and environmentally sustainable consumption activities targeted the mining sector (seminar on best environmental practices) and hazardous waste (report on treatment possibilities of hazardous waste in the region). Also a seminar series on CPESC at the universities was launched. In nature protection, project Barents Protected Area Network (BPAN) has been the major effort. Co-operation with the Green Belt of Fennoscandia has been intensified and other cross border networks developed. Strategy for the conservation of last pristine forests in Barents Region is currently under finalization. Water protection and management activities in international and national river basins were implemented during 2013-14.

The preparation of the Action Plan on climate change (endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs an adopted by the Ministers of Environment) was a process led by the BEAC Committee of Senior Officials. WGE brought a significant contribution to the process. The Action Plan includes recommendations for actions (mitigation, adaptation, research and outreach) for most BEAC working groups.

During 2012-13, WGE had interaction with Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, Arctic Council, Nordic Council of Ministers and HELCOM.

After Ms Haapala's presentation, the affirmation of passing of the Hot Spots Exclusion procedure were signed for hot spots K1, A2 and N4 by the representatives of Finnish, Norwegian and Russian Ministries of Environment and sent to the Swedish Ministry of Environment for signing.

The current WGE Chair noted, that in addition to continuing work with the traditional Barents environmental co-operation areas Finland also launched activities in areas based on pan-Barents approach like climate change and mining during its chairmanship.

4. The conclusions of thematic meetings on 8th April were presented. Ms. Tatyana Tyupenko, the Chair of the Subgroup on Nature Protection concluded that there is a common understanding on the need to strengthen the activities, to identify new work, to improve the management of the protected areas in all four countries and to gather data and use it in a proper way. Forestry issues was considered to be a very serious topic as well as climate change and its affect to biodiversity.

The key projects in Barents nature protection are BPAN and the Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF). The latter was presented in more detail by Mr. Alexander Kryshen from the Karelian Research Institute of RAS. GBF is a process that was started in early 1990s with the aim to save the integrity of the nature in the border area. 20 years of scientific research has been going on now. The GBF is now a chain of protected areas from Pasvik to Ingermanland (from the Barents Sea to the Baltic Sea) with 8 protected areas in the Republic of Karelia. In 2008 a GBF seminar launched a series of new research activities. A memorandum of understanding between Finland, Norway and Russia marked a new stage of development in the co-operation. GBF is the northern part of the European Green Belt and is connected with Eurasia through three taiga corridors. Important part of the GBF concept is the development of ecotourism which means it has a connection with the economic development of the region as well as with the cultural heritage. The Subgroup on Nature Protection informed that the Green Belt will be expanded also to Sweden.

Other future activities in the group will be an expedition to More Yu, dissemination of BPAN results and policy recommendations for Recommendation for Strengthening the Protected Area Network in the Barents Region in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Parks congress in Sydney, and organization of a side event in the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP) meeting in South Korea together with GBF and Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) under the Arctic Council, and preparing the second stage for the BPAN project. Strategy for conservation of last pristine forests in Barents Region is currently under finalization for the next Ministerial meeting. The final working programme of the Nature Protection Subgroup was stated to be ready in 7-10 days.

Mr. Vladimir Smirnov, the Chair of the Subgroup on Water Issues stated that co-operation projects initiated by the Nordic partners are on-going or have been implemented. Joint work in Paatsjoki (Pasvikelva/Paz) river catchment area was found reasonable to be continued. Priority projects had been discussed as well as topical regional issues, such as the federal water programme in Murmansk Region. In that programme Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia will allocate significant sums to raise the sunken ships up from Kola Bay in Murmansk. The final programme of the subgroup on water issues is to be sent to the WGE chair after some editing work.

The Chair of the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE), Mr. Jari Pasanen, told that the EU ENPI and the future EU ENI financing have been and will be crucial for the regional environmental co-operation. Since the ENPI programme is ending and new ENI programme will be started in the end of 2015 the earliest, there will be a gap in financing during 2015. The good news is that also Komi is included in the new programme. The on-going projects are on time. A video on Sortavala ground water project was shown to the participants. In Sortavala there are ready plans for the future, but there is no funding available yet for the construction works. The RWGE Chair will be changed in the next meeting of the RWGE in autumn 2014.

The Subgroup on Hot Spots Exclusion (SHE) will be co-chaired by Maria Dronova, Ivan Popov (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry of the Arkhangelsk region) and, until September 2014, Anna Berteig (Norwegian Environmental Agency). SHE conducted a short technical meeting on 8th April and an extended meeting with the participation of the Regional Group for Hot Spots Exclusion of Karelia, the Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sustainable Consumption and the Financial Institutions NEFCO and NDEP.

During the Swedish and Finnish chairmanships of SHE (2010-2013), the methodology for hot spot exclusion was developed, implementation of the procedure was launched and six environmental hot spots in Russian Barents excluded. Assessment of the situation was done during the Finnish chairmanship, meaning the step 2 of the exclusion procedure was performed. The regional groups for hot spot exclusion have been strengthened and the information hot spots have been disseminated with publications financed by NEFCO.

The focus of the coming work shall be in creating practical activities and investment projects and to have both regional and federal authorities (Ministry of Natural Resources RF, and the control authority, Rozprirodnadzor) involved in the work. The plan is to follow the implementation of the "long track" of the exclusion process (incl. plans how the situation will be improved), whereas by far the excluded hot spots have passed the exclusion by fast track. The possibility to approach the problems sector by sector will be considered. The possibility to exclude K4 and K7 will be considered in the forthcoming meeting of SHE in Stockholm (May 2014).

The chosen approach to target the hot spots region by region was supported by the participants. It was noted that the created methodology for exclusion provides a map for the future actions and that competence building and funding issues should be connected in the work in the future. Also the priorities of the regional groups should be taken into account.

The Chair invited the interested participants to the forthcoming meeting of Emerald nature protection network implementation in Pushkin. It was suggested that Ms Anna Kuhmonen would present the BPAN network there. Norway is also implementing the Emerald network.

5. The present stage of the implementation of the Action Plan on Climate Change for Barents co-operation was presented by Ms Tuuli Ojala from the International Barents Secretariat. A general conclusion is that the practical actions included in the Action Plan differ within and between the working groups. Some WGs have no proposals, some have one-time small actions that are easy to implement, whereas for some of the WGs there are ambitious plans with no secured funding, implementation schedule nor clear picture on the participants in the activities.

The Working Group on Environment is one the BEAC working groups that have the most proposals for actions in the Action Plan. For some actions of WGE there is already an implementation plan as well as funding, whereas for some of the actions there is no clear plan for proceeding. Many of the actions have also synergies/overlaps with proposals of other working groups or organisations. The actions included in the action plan are: 1) development of regional climate change strategies for all parts of the Barents Region, 2) inventory of emissions and analysis of short-lived climate pollutants within each country (a recommendation to the countries by WGE), 3) improvements at hot spots and other cleaner production activities, 4) expanding the protected areas network to meet the challenges of climate change, 5) co-operation in water management and studies on harmful effects of climate change to the water bodies, 6) an international conference on thawing permafrost, 7) collection and dissemination of information.

Mr Ivan Popov from the Ministry of natural resources and forestry of Arkhangelsk region presented the Ministry's Activity plan on climate for 2014-15 prepared by the Ministry. The Arkhangelsk Activity plan is based on the Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Co-operation. The Activity plan includes the creation of a Russian working group for the climate strategies in Russian Barents, the creation of guidelines for the development of a climate strategy, the creation of registries on greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sinks, the assessment of the potential to reduce emissions and to increase the carbon sinks, and, finally, the elaboration of the climate strategy. In Russia there is expertise available to work on these issues further.

It was noted, that extensive studies on carbon sinks has been conducted in Komi region within international research co-operation (www.undp-komi.org). In addition, Norsk Energi has mapped black carbon emissions in the district heating sector in the Russian Barents. The Karelian Research Center of the Russian Academy of Science noted that there is lots of experience in the Water institute of the Research Center that could be utilized in the further work. It was noted, that the regions in Barents differ quite a lot from each other and the regional characteristic should be taken into account. It was stated that the European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (EMEP) has done a lot of work with regards to the emissions of black carbon and that this should be taken into account in the future work.

Ms Henna Haapala told about project Climate SMART that will contribute to the development of regional climate strategies in the Barents. A workshop to give tools to regional planners to address climate change issues will be organized in Saint Petersburg 3.-5.9.2014. Among the invitees there are the regional planning authorities and WGE and RWGE members. The aim is to find answers to questions like how to carry out the process to outline a regional climate change strategy, what kind of mitigation and adaptation issues the regional planning can address and what are the tools for regional planning. Close co-operation with Arkhangelsk region is going to be performed in the preparation of the conference. A survey to gather background for information will be sent to the regions in spring 2014, after getting the comments to the survey from WGE members.

Henna Haapala noted also that the Barents region is one of the example regions the AACA-C project under the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). The objective of the project is to produce information for developing tools to climate change adaptation in the pilot regions.

It was agreed that a videoconference on WGE plans on climate change will be arranged later on to discuss the WGE proposals in more detail.

The Indigenous Peoples representative for WGE, Ms Anna Prakhova, informed about a forum on climate change to take place in Murmansk in mid-May 2014.

6. Synergies with other organisations were discussed briefly. Ms Maria Dianova from the Nordic Council of Ministers information office in Saint Petersburg told about the projects that have been organized in the framework of the Nordic co-operation for knowledge building and networking of experts. The recent projects are been the Green growth arena and Green mobility project addressing the city planning in Saint Petersburg from the point of view of cycling and a pilot project to introduce waste sorting in Petrozavodsk. In co-operation with NEFCO, a project to promote renewable energy in North-West Russia has been initiated. The final conference of the project will take place in August in Petrozavodsk. New initiatives on climate change and planning are of interest for the Nordic Council of Ministers.

It was stated that there are lots of on-going co-operation with especially the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministries and that further mapping of the synergies will take place in the near future. International Barents Secretariat has conducted preliminary work in mapping of the synergies.

7. The Chair told that the working groups have been asked to submit background information on financing issues for the possible creation of an own financing instrument for Barents co-operation. The subgroup chairs were asked to contribute to the questionnaire (to be sent to them in electronic format) by 18th April.
8. Ms Lotten Sjölander and Mr Mats Kullberg from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency provided the summary of the communication plan for the WGE. The strategy is based on input from the WGE and subgroups and it includes the goals and the actions to reach them. Communication is a strong but sometimes a neglected tool to create participation and to achieve objectives. The aim of the WGE communication plan is to improve WGE's contribution impact through building awareness and relationships and through increasing the presence of WGE on widely used communication arenas. Some simple practical means are e.g. publishing a calendar of events for internal communication as well as communication of the results of the work on www.beac.st site.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 9.4.2014

1. Vladimir Smirnov, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Murmansk Oblast (RU)
2. Vladimir Chizhov, Pasvik Nature Reserve (RU)
3. Jan-Petter Huberth Hansen, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
4. Asbjørg Fyhn, Troms Fylkeskommun (NO)
5. Hanne Aronsen, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
6. Anne Berteig, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
7. Jan T. Thompson, Ministry of Climate and Environment (NO)
8. Bente Christiansen, Office of the County Governor of Finnmark (NO)
9. Tiia Kalske, Office of the County Governor of Finnmark (NO)
10. Tero Väisänen, North Ostrobothnian ELY-Centre (FI)
11. Emma Nurmi, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
12. Anna Kuhmonen, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
13. Jari Pasanen, Lapland ELY-Centre (FI)
14. Henna Haapala, Ministry of Environment (FI)
15. Kaisa Vähänen, North Ostrobothnian ELY-Centre (FI)
16. Ilona Grekelä, Lapland ELY-Centre (FI)
17. Sergey Chibisov, Agency for Natural Resources, Nenets Autonomous Okrug (RU)
18. Ivan Popov, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Arhangelsk oblast (RU)
19. Tuuli Ojala, IBS
20. Maria Dronova, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (RU)
21. Viktor Chikaluk, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Karelia (RU)
22. Ruslan Butovsky, Consultant for SHE (RU)
23. Olga Bakhmet, Karelian Research Centre of RAS (RU)
24. Nadezhda Mikhailova, Karelian Research Centre of RAS (RU)
25. Tatiana Tyupenko, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Republic of Komi (RU)

26. Tapio Lindholm, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
27. Henrik G Forsstrøm, NEFCO
28. Jonas Lundin, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (S)
29. Lotten Sjölander, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (S)
30. Matts Kullberg, Swedish EPA (S)
31. Nadezda Maslova, Swedish EPA (S)
32. Åke Mikaelsson, Swedish EPA (S)
33. Mats-Rune Bergström, Västerbotten County (S)
34. Alexey Potapov, Karelian ANO Cleaner Production (RU)
35. Jan Tsygankov, Cleaner Production and Sustainable Development Centre (RU)
36. Anna Prakhova, Indigenous Peoples' Representative
37. Valentina Gorbunova, Karelvodokanal (RU)
38. Marina Amakhina, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Murmansk Oblast (RU)
39. Vladimir Valdaev, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Karelia (RU)
40. Tatyana Ilmast, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Karelia (RU)