

Declaration from the High Level Meeting on Transport in the Barents Region – 14 October 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Ministers of Transport and Infrastructure and High Level regional representatives from the Barents region:

Affirm the validity of the principles and objectives of the Barents cooperation as expressed in the Kirkenes Declaration of January 1993 and reaffirmed in the Summit Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation in Kirkenes in June 2013.

Confirm their commitment to the Joint Declaration adopted at the BEAC Transport Ministerial Meetings in Umeå 14 September 2019

Recognize the significant role of the Barents Regional Council and note that interregional cooperation and close interaction between national and regional levels are fundamental elements of the Barents cooperation in the transport area. The Ministers and high level representatives from the regions especially emphasize the Draft Joint Barents Transport Plan as an important foundation for the cooperation and for achieving tangible results. The transport system in the region shall be developed to be sustainable, inclusive, affordable, safe and efficient.

Confirm their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as relevant international treaties to which member countries are parties, and to promote the sustainability and decarbonisation of all modes of transport.

Acknowledge the extensive work laid down in the project on development and implementation of 24-hours rest areas along border crossing roads in the Barents Region as well as for the Kolarctic project Barents Region Transport and Logistics. We regard these projects as valuable input for improvement of transport flows and logistics in the Barents region.

Affirm that working towards a sustainable and connected low-carbon or carbon-free Barents cross border transport network is essential for the green recovery in the region after the pandemic and underline the need for a strong and fair recovery.

Underline that the transport system and transport infrastructure should meet the needs of both women and men, and vulnerable groups.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE, SAFE AND EFFECTIVE TRANSPORT

We:

Stress the need for ambitious action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in the region, by a consistent decarbonisation of the transport sector. To correspond to the goals set by the Paris agreement, emission reductions are needed in all transport modes.

Underline the need to concrete actions in the transport sector for the mitigation of global warming and encouraging cross border cooperation.

Promote innovative technologies in transport towards green transport, such as electrification. Cross-border cooperation on specific projects and connections can stimulate the environmentally friendly transition and contribute to faster implementation of such technologies.

Encourage BEATA to welcome the Barents Climate Action Plan and to cooperate with other working groups under the Barents Council and other concerned bodies. Involvement and enhanced cooperation with the working groups for indigenous people and youth will be important.

Affirm the need of further exploring the possibilities in the area of digitalization and intelligent transport systems, towards a connected and automated mobility without borders through the Barents area.

Encourage stakeholders to take actions to remove cross-border hurdles in the transport system with appropriate methods and possible harmonization, especially for promoting efficient transportation of goods on rail.

Continue to finding synergies between stakeholders' activities towards improved logistics and information as well as high-quality, reliable, inclusive, safe and cost-effective transportation services for tourism and other sectors, within the Barents region and with good external links to world markets. This includes exploring possibilities for joint activities on sustainable, safe and effective transport with other international initiatives, such as the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics.

ENHANCING AND DEVELOPING OF THE BARENTS TRANSPORT COOPERATION

We:

Underline the need for a well-functioning working group structure to ensure a future strong and relevant Barents cooperation characterized by substance and dynamic.

Support the initiative from the Barents Committee of Senior Officials and finds it necessary to optimize the current organizing of the working groups on transport aiming for one joint group mirroring the needs from both national and regional level.

Encourage the current working groups on transport to find a consensus based solution and design a model that suits the overall purpose of the transport cooperation and expect the new model for the Barents Transport Cooperation to be in place by the end of 2022.

Express gratitude to the outgoing Norwegian chairmanship of BEATA Steering Committee and to the Kainuu chairmanship of the Regional Working Group of Transport and Logistics, for the achievements and high level of activity during a challenging period. Finland is welcomed as the new BEATA Chair with the work program that will develop the cooperation further.

Appreciate the the Norwegian Chairmanship for the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Västerbotten for chairing the Barents Regional Council and welcome Finland and Nenets Autonomous Okrug as the incoming Chairs.

Welcome the strengthening of the International Barents Secretariat (IBS), making it possible to provide even better support for the working groups. The new Barents Financial mechanism will most certainly be beneficial for the working groups and stimulate the cooperation in the years to come.