

THE FIRST MEETING OF
THE RENEWED NORTHERN DIMENSION SENIOR OFFICIALS
(Saint-Petersburg, November 21, 2007)

CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUSIONS

The first meeting of the Senior Officials of the renewed Northern Dimension took place in Saint-Petersburg on the 21st of November 2007. The Russian Federation, as the host party chaired the meeting.

Delegations of the ND partners – the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation as well as representatives of the Regional Councils in the North, the International Financing Institutions and other institutions and bodies of the partners participated. USA took part in the meeting as observer.

The Senior Officials noted that the year, that had passed since the renewed Northern Dimension policy was launched at the Summit in Helsinki on the 24th of November 2006, witnessed its considerable intensification and growing interest towards the ND policy from local and regional authorities, IFIs, business-community, NGOs and other organizations of the civil society, universities and research centers.

The participants of the meeting took notice of the information of the NIB as the Chair of the Steering Group of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership and the EBRD as the manager of the NDEP Special Fund on the activities of the Partnership. The positive steps in disbursements and management of the NDEP projects were welcomed. The participants of the meeting expressed their hope that it would permit the Special Fund donors and contributors to take in the nearest future necessary decisions on their replenishments to the Fund.

The participants of the meeting took notice of the information of the Norwegian Presidency of the ND Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being. They welcomed the steps to intensify the activity of the Partnership, i.a. launching of the electronic data-base and the project pipeline. The ND Senior Officials asked the governing bodies of the Partnership to intensify their efforts to reach an agreement on the Secretariat legal status which will make it independent

and more effective. They also expressed the appreciation of the support which the CBSS provided to the Partnership Secretariat.

Having discussed the information of the NIB concerning the possible establishment of the ND Partnership on Transport and Logistics, the participants of the meeting noted that the existing interest of the IFIs can provide a good basis for the successful cooperation in this area. At the same time a thorough preparation will be needed before starting such a Partnership, in particular in terms of coordination with the agreed transport corridors, criteria for project selection and existing formats of cooperation, including the Russia-EU Transport Dialogue.

The Senior Officials instructed the ND Steering Group to set up a working group in order to study the possibilities of creating the new ND Partnership on Transport and Logistics. The WG will consist of experts designated by the ND partners and the interested IFIs, in particular the NIB. Independent experts can also be invited. The WG will hold its first meeting before the end of 2007 or early 2008. Its conclusions will be reported to the first ministerial meeting of the renewed ND due to take place in 2008, with the aim to take a decision on the feasibility of the new Partnership.

The Senior Officials noted the information of the Nordic Council of Ministers on the results of the Conference "Northern Dimension and Culture" (8-9 October 2007, Kajaani, Finland) that showed a considerable potential for the development of the cultural cooperation in the area of the Northern Dimension, and instructed the ND Steering Group to discuss at its nearest meeting together with the NCM the perspectives of such cooperation in the ND framework including the possibility to create a Partnership.

Energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy were also recognized as a promising direction of cooperation in the Northern Dimension, which will be further studied in the framework of the ND Steering Group. It was noted that the ND partners already cooperated in these fields on a bilateral basis and also in the framework of the BEAC. The ND cooperation should therefore be complementary and developed in coordination with the existing cooperation structures. The

possibility was discussed that projects in this sphere could be realized in the NDEP framework.

The Senior Officials discussed with the representatives of the Saint-Petersburg State University and the Lappeenranta University of Technology the perspectives of the realization of the idea of a ND Institute. The study of this project will be continued together with Icelandic, Norwegian and other interested universities of the region.

The participants of the meeting exchanged views on other possible areas of cooperation in the framework of the Northern Dimension including science and research, education, youth exchanges, cross-border cooperation and the role of the sub-regional and local actors.

The European Union, Iceland and Norway took note of the Russian proposal and the kind invitation of the City of Saint-Petersburg to convene the first Ministerial Meeting of the renewed Northern Dimension in Saint-Petersburg in autumn 2008. This issue will be decided in the framework of the ND Steering Group.

The participants of the meeting instructed the ND Steering Group to continue to study the development of information tools for the ND, including the feasibility of a joint web-site of the partners.