



MARITIME FORUM

Second Arctic Dialogue meeting

Event date:

25/01/2011 - 14:00

On 25 January 2011 in Tromsø the Commission in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples Secretariat of the Arctic Council organised a short meeting to discuss points of common interest between the EU and the indigenous stakeholders in the Arctic. The event was attended by high-level representatives of four of the six Arctic indigenous peoples organisations that are Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council and Gwich'in Council International) as well as the officials from Canadian government, European Parliament and the Finnish Senior Arctic Official, Ambassador Hannu Halinen. The frank exchange focused on improvement of communication channels and enhanced representation of Arctic indigenous interest in EU policy-making and was complemented by presentations of several recent EU projects and programmes relevant for the Arctic stakeholders.

The Commission informed on the progress in the development of the Arctic policy. The enhanced coordination of the EU activities and international cooperation in particular in the Arctic Council should optimize EU's contribution in the Arctic to the benefit of all relevant stakeholders. The recently finalised project on EU Arctic Footprint and Policy Assessment (<http://arctic-footprint.eu> [2]) presented several policy options as regards EU's impact on Arctic peoples which prompted a broader debate on the ways to improve the communication between the Arctic indigenous stakeholders and the EU. The options included setting up an office in Brussels, fellowship programmes, cultural exchanges, Indigenous Working Group within the context of the Arctic Window of the Northern Dimension, an indigenous focal point in the European Arctic Information Centre, Saami representation in the European Parliament, and inclusion of indigenous issues in the EU-Arctic Forum in the European Parliament. It was pointed out that for some of the representatives the bilateral contacts on specific issues may be more effective than group channelling. Moreover, the improved communication should lead to greater sensitivity to different world views. The dialogue on significance of hunting for the indigenous groups remains difficult.

Another important issue mentioned was representation of the indigenous peoples' interest in the international fora. The Arctic indigenous organisations are active in various fora and are currently monitoring the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The EU supports to the adoption of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and provides financial aid to civil society organisations working on indigenous issues in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

The discussion was followed by a presentation of the Resolution on the sustainable EU policy for the High North adopted by the European Parliament in January 2011, which addresses extensively the aspects relevant for Arctic indigenous peoples. One of the representatives asked whether it would be possible to

translate the text in Russian. The representatives were also informed about an initiative of the EEA to organise a workshop on lay, local, and traditional knowledge in late spring 2011. The invitations were about to be sent out to the Permanent Participants, among others.

The Commission provided a brief overview of several recent EU projects and programmes relevant for the Arctic indigenous peoples. Some representatives pointed that the instruments should be better adjusted to the realities of the indigenous peoples in particular as regards complexity of applications and reporting.

Finally, the Commission encouraged all the participants to provide a written feedback as regards presented initiatives and further development of the dialogue.

Participants	Organisation
Bridget Larocque Executive Director	Gwich'in Council International - Canada
Carl Olsen	Inuit Circumpolar Council - Greenland
James Stotts President	Inuit Circumpolar Council - Alaska
Rodion Sulyandziga Director	Russian Association of Indigenous peoples of the North (RAIPON)
Gunn-Britt Retter	Saami Council Saami Parliament, Norway
Geir Tommy Pedersen	Sami Council
Erik Gant Acting Executive Secretary	Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat
Anders Oskal Director	International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry, Norway
Nikolaj Bock Special Advisor on International Affairs	European Environment Agency
Keltie Patterson Deputy Director	Circumpolar and Aboriginal Affairs Division (MDA), Canadian Ministry Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Shannon Headland	Canadian Ministry Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Emily McGlynn Project officer	Ecologic Institute
Paul Nemitz Head of Unit	European Commission
Zuzanna Bieniuk Policy Officer	European Commission
Steffen Webber	European Parliament
Hannu Halinen Ambassador	Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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[1] <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/1829/ical.ics>

[2] <http://arctic-footprint.eu/>