

## **Progress Report for the First Ministerial meeting of the Revised Northern Dimension Policy**

### **Context**

The new ND policy was agreed at the first ever ND Summit on 24 November 2006 in Helsinki. The EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia at the highest political level adopted the new *ND Political Declaration and ND Policy Framework Document*. These documents provide the basis for the new ND policy. They have a permanent nature, subject to review as appropriate, and all Northern Dimension actors have been encouraged to provide their assessment to the Northern Dimension Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings in order to facilitate any review.

The two main characteristics of the new ND policy are: 1) the co-ownership of EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia and 2) the strong link between the ND policy and the four EU/Russia Common Spaces, agreed in 2004 and specified in Road Maps adopted in 2005. Canada and the US remain observers to the new ND policy.

The Northern Dimension focuses increasingly on North West Russia, the largest territory covered by this policy, with its specific challenges and opportunities for the whole Northern Dimension region.

The new ND policy has the following geographical priority areas; the Baltic and the Barents Seas, the Russian oblast of Kaliningrad and the Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas. The priority sectors identified by the Framework Document are: a) economic cooperation, b) freedom, security and justice, c) external security: civil protection, d) research, education and culture, e) environment, nuclear safety and natural resources and f) social welfare and health care.

The Framework Document also underlined the need to ensure a permanent flow of information as a key element of the Northern Dimension policy. For this reason the Steering Group was set up to ensure continuity between Senior Officials' and Ministerial meetings. The Steering Group was asked to prepare an activity report before every Foreign Ministers' meeting. In addition to the report the Framework Document stipulated that the Steering

Group shall keep itself informed of the implementation of agreed projects and that this project monitoring will form a basis also for the reporting.

This report is intended as the contribution from the Steering Group to the First Ministerial meeting of the revised Northern Dimension policy. It attempts to take account of the progress achieved since the two basic documents were adopted on 24 November 2006. The intention is not to provide an overview of all the activities which have taken place in the region covered by the ND but rather to highlight those which are of particular relevance to the policy.

### **Senior Officials' Meeting**

The first meeting of the Senior Officials of the renewed Northern Dimension was convened in St. Petersburg on 21 November 2007. The Chairman's Conclusions of this meeting are attached to this Progress Report.

The Senior Officials noted the considerable intensification and growing interest towards the ND policy from local and regional authorities, International Financial Institutions, the business community, NGOs and other organizations of civil society, universities and research centres. The meeting took account of the work carried out in the context of the existing two Partnerships and instructed further work to be carried out to study the feasibility of a Partnership on Transport and Logistics. Other issues addressed included cultural cooperation, energy efficiency and the perspectives of a Northern Dimension Institute.

### **Link with the Common Spaces**

As set out in the Framework Document the ND is a regional expression of the Four Common Spaces which will make it a cross-cutting topic and a tool where appropriate for the implementation of the road maps with full participation of Iceland and Norway in matters relevant to the Northern Dimension. In addition to the road maps the Framework Document specified that the ND policy should also address objectives of specific relevance in the North such as the fragile environment, indigenous peoples' issues, cultural diversity and health and social well-being.

The ND Framework Document mentions six priority sectors and lists several individual themes to be addressed under each sector.<sup>1</sup> The Steering Group meetings have had the implementation of the road maps as a standing item which has allowed the EU and the Russian Federation to brief Iceland and Norway on the main activities in this context. For their part Iceland and Norway have informed the EU and Russia about their activities that have contributed to the implementation of the ND priorities.

The following activities provide examples of the progress which has been achieved in the ND priority sectors:

- The new priorities for the TEMPUS IV programme agreed in October 2007 with the Russian authorities and development of educational exchanges, notably Russian participation in the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window – programme.
- Establishment in May 2007 of a new EU-Russia Dialogue on Regional Policy.
- Agreement on a Joint Cooperation Plan for 2007-2010 between the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the EU's External Borders (Frontex) and Russia's Border Guard Service.
- Finalization of the cross-border cooperation programmes including the new multilateral Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013, the first programme to potentially combine ERDF funding, ENPI funding, Norwegian funding and Russian funding. The other ENPI CBC programmes relevant to the ND are "Karelia", "Kolarctic", "South-East Finland-Russia", "Estonia-Latvia-Russia", "Lithuania-Poland-Russia".

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Cooperation (Promotion of trade, investments, customs, SMEs, business, innovation, well-functioning labour markets, financial services, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, forestry, transport and logistics, telecommunications and information technology.)

Freedom, Security and Justice (Facilitation of people-to-people contacts, development of border management, good governance, efficiency of the judicial system and judicial cooperation in criminal and civil matters, fight against organized crime, trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and other cross-border crime.)

External Security (Civil Protection)

Research, Education and Culture (Increased cooperation in research and education exchange programmes, youth policy, promotion of people-to-people contacts, links between cultural and economic life, visibility of regional and local cultural identity and heritage.)

Environment, nuclear safety and natural resources (Reduction of the risk of nuclear and other pollution, maritime safety, protection of the marine environment in the Baltic and Barents Seas, biodiversity, forests, fish stocks and protection of the Arctic ecosystems, cooperation in the field of water policy, climate change, environmental legislation and administrative capacity building.)

Social welfare and health care (Prevention of communicable diseases and life-style related diseases and promotion of cooperation between health and social services.)

- Agreement signed between Denmark and Germany in September 2008 to build a multi-billion EUR bridge across the Baltic Sea which will improve road and rail links within the Northern Dimension.

### **Progress on Partnerships**

The Framework Document noted that the partners favour the model of Partnerships as an effective way to organize practical implementation of projects in the agreed priority sectors. To date two Partnerships exist: **The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS).**

The focus of **NDEP** is north-west of Russia, however it is part of an integrated, long-term approach involving investments as well as promotion of awareness and development of environmental standards in the entire Northern Dimension area. The NDEP has demonstrated a capacity to promote large infrastructure projects in the non-nuclear envelope using relatively small grants to leverage substantial funding from IFIs, Russian federal and regional sources as well as bilateral donors.<sup>2</sup>

In the non nuclear window of the NDEP Fund, there are 15 environmental projects in different stages of implementation, mainly focusing on the improved wastewater treatment. In St Petersburg, the Southwest Wastewater Treatment Plant was completed in 2005 with the EU funded sludge incinerator facility officially inaugurated in 2007. Similarly, the Northern Sludge Incinerator plant was completed in 2008. The construction of the Northern and Okhta Tunnel Collectors will be the final step for the city of St Petersburg to reach full compliance with HELCOM for wastewater treatment. This €900 million investment will close off the remaining direct discharges into the River Neva. Other NDEP projects approaching completion include municipal services programmes in Archangelsk, Syktyvkar and Leningrad Oblast. Also significant progress towards project implementation has been achieved in Kaliningrad, Novgorod and Vologda.

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<sup>2</sup> The latest information on the current status of pledges and contributions together with disbursement ratios can be found on the NDEP website:

<<http://www.ndep.org/partners.asp?type=nh&pageid=2>>

<<http://www.ndep.org/projects.asp?type=nh&cont=prjh&pageid=4>>

Regarding the nuclear window, the NDEP grants provide full funding required for investments focusing on the Kola Peninsula, Archangelsk and Murmansk. In 2008 another milestone has been achieved by signing four grant agreements for the total of almost €74 million for the following projects: Lapse, Andreeva Bay, defuelling of Papa class nuclear submarines and radiation monitoring and emergency response system in Archangelsk. There are already plans for the remaining funds to be allocated to the second phases of the current projects. All these projects are top priorities identified by the NDEP Strategic Master Plan (SMP), a comprehensive work programme for the overall decommissioning of nuclear submarines, and service vessels, for the management of spent fuel and nuclear waste and for the environmental rehabilitation of the north-west of Russia. The SMP was approved by top level of Rosatom and a decree was issued in December 2007 directing Rosatom to use SMP as the basis for the management of the whole nuclear programme in the north-west of Russia.

Including the contributions received in 2008 (€20 million from Russia, €10 million from European Commission, €0.5 million from Norway), the NDEP Support Fund stands at €273.8 million. In addition, the EBRD agreed at its Annual Meeting in May 2008 to support NDEP non nuclear window from the Shareholders Special Fund.

€149.7 million of the Fund's resources have been allocated to the nuclear window, out of which €5 million have been committed as grants. The recently replenished non nuclear window now stands at €124.1 million, with €2.2 million committed as grant funds. The implementing agencies are now preparing a list of projects also covering other sectors (e.g. energy efficiency, agricultural pollution etc) in the whole of the Northern Dimension Area.

The NDEP November 2007 Assembly welcomed the Nordic Environmental Finance Corporation (NEFCO) as a new NDEP International Financing Institution, to work along with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) in NDEP projects.

The new Northern Dimension policy has given a new impetus to the **Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS)** by attracting an increased interest from partners in further development of the cooperation.

The **NDPHS** fulfils its mandate from the 2003 Oslo Declaration<sup>3</sup> by promoting co-operation and internationally coordinated actions in the area of public health and social well-being. The NDPHS is an effective mechanism for promoting the strategies and principles in the region, including promotion of the implementation of international commitments on health. The Partnership is helpful in intensifying and complementing bilateral cooperation between the EU Member States and the partner countries and organizations, in particular with Russia. It is expected that the Partnership's activities will produce synergies with bilateral cooperation between the EC and Russian partners in the framework of the future dialogue on public health.

The European Commission supports co-ordination of the Partnership activities on national level inside the EU, supports the cooperation between the NDPHS and the South Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN), and co-finances the NDPHS Database Project together with the Nordic Council of Ministers and 9 states - partners in the NDPHS (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden).

In 2007 the number of partners grew to 22 after the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) joined the NDPHS in August. By having included the BSSSC into its framework, the NDPHS is able to better reach out to sub-regional authorities in the regions, enhancing its co-ordination capacity.

During 2007 results were achieved in policy development, project development, implementation, and networking and information exchange. Many of the Partnership's activities were centered on a multi-component Database project led by the NDPHS Secretariat.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Partnership Annual Conference (PAC)<sup>4</sup> held at the ministerial level in Vilnius in November 2007, resulted in the adoption of the NDPHS Working Plan for 2008 and the NDPHS strategy on "Healthy life, healthy work".

The NDPHS Database<sup>5</sup> provides data on approximately 500 ongoing and implemented projects, and more than 200 organizations and persons (project

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<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://www.ndphs.org/?doc,Oslo\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.ndphs.org/?doc,Oslo_Declaration.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Available at [http://www.ndphs.org/?mtgs,pac\\_4\\_\\_vilnius](http://www.ndphs.org/?mtgs,pac_4__vilnius).

<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.ndphs.org/?database](http://www.ndphs.org/?database).

leaders, experts, etc.) working with public health and social well-being issues in the ND area. A new section on publications was more recently added thereby further enriching the database's information pool.

The NDPHS Project Pipeline<sup>6</sup> was developed to serve as a multi-agency on-line project funding coordination tool to provide a "market place" for project proponents and project financing agencies working for public health and social well-being in the ND area. Funds announced through the pipeline in 2008 were provided by Norway (approx. €1.5 million) and Finland (€1.5 million) and Sweden (approx. €1.25 million).

Professional expertise and input to the preparation and implementation of joint activities carried out within the framework of the Partnership is provided by four expert groups on HIV/AIDS; Primary Health Care; Prison Health; Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles and Work Ability; and two Associated Expert Groups (CBSS Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk and the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Safety and Health).

Under the guidance of the Committee of Senior Representatives (CSR) the expert groups play an advisory role and contribute to the implementation of the Partnership's Work Plan. The expert groups facilitate professional exchanges, increase co-ordination among Partners and Participants and monitor joint activities within their area of expertise. Within its mandate, as given by the CSR, each expert group organises its own work.

In 2008 the Partnership published thematic reports drafted by expert groups. NDPHS and their expert groups have invited Belarusian health experts to exchange views and expertise in their forthcoming meetings. Funding for these activities was secured by NDPHS partners.

An (independent) evaluation of the Partnership, which has been required by the Oslo Declaration has been presented to the CSR at its meeting in Germany on 23-24 September. Evaluation recommendations and possible follow-up actions will be discussed and agreed upon during the Partnership Annual Conference (PAC) to be hosted by Canada on 19 November..

The NDPHS in cooperation with the SEEHN and WHO Euro Observatory is co-organised a workshop, hosted by the European Commission on the

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<sup>6</sup> Available at [www.ndphs.org/?pipeline](http://www.ndphs.org/?pipeline).

subject "Neighbours Networking for Health", during the 11<sup>th</sup> European Health Forum Gastein in October.

Efforts continue to authorize legal capacity to the NDPHS Secretariat – acting in his capacity as the Chair of the NDPHS, the Norwegian Minister of Health and Care Services recently sent a letter to his fellow ministers from the NDPHS Partner Countries, and it is expected that this process will be finalized no later than at the ministerial PAC to be held in 2009 in Norway.

### **Possible new Partnerships and other activities**

The Framework Document noted the possibilities of applying the partnership model to other sectors. Senior Officials were in particular requested to examine the desirability of a ND Partnership on **Transport and Logistics** and to examine enhanced cooperation in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Senior Officials' meeting in 2007 also raised culture as a possible new field of activity.

In order to consider the desirability of a Partnership on Transport and Logistics a Working Group has been created to accomplish this task. The Working Group had its first meeting in Oslo on 27 February 2008 and submitted its final report to the consideration of the 23 September 2008 meeting of the Steering Group. The Steering Group endorsed the conclusions in the Final Report on the timeliness and desirability of the future Partnership, its main objectives, projects and measures to be addressed to reach the objectives as well as the institutional structure to ensure effective implementation. The Steering Group therefore decided to recommend to the Ministerial meeting that the Partnership be established and that a Preparatory Committee be set up to finalize the establishment process with a view to the Partnership becoming fully operational on 1 January 2010.

The Senior Officials meeting in St. Petersburg in 2007 recognized **energy efficiency** and the use of renewable energy as a promising direction of cooperation in the ND and instructed the Steering Group to further study the issues. ND partners cooperate in these fields on a bilateral basis and also in the framework of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). ND cooperation should therefore be complementary and developed in coordination with the existing cooperation structures. Steering Group participants have heard several presentations from external experts and have

discussed the issue on the basis of a Norwegian concept paper on how the ND Policy could assume a more active role in these fields. In this context it needs also to be noted that the Nordic Environmental Financing Corporation has been accepted as a NDEP International Financial Institution. The Steering Group has decided to build upon the elaborations of the recent NDEP Steering Group meeting held in London on October 6, 2008.

Senior Officials in November 2007 took note of the information provided by the Nordic Council of Ministers on the results of the Conference “Northern Dimension and Culture” which was held 8-9 October in Kajaani, Finland. Senior Officials noted the considerable potential for the development of *cultural cooperation* in the area of the Northern Dimension and instructed the ND Steering Group to discuss together with NCM the perspectives of such cooperation in the ND framework, including the possibility of creating a Partnership. The NCM decided to establish a policy group to further develop the concept. This group submitted a concept paper for the consideration of the ND Steering Group meeting on 23 September, which decided to recommend to the Ministerial meeting that a Working Group be set up to assess the feasibility of a Partnership.

**Sub-regional and sub-state cooperation** has also been mentioned as a new potential field of cooperation in the context of the ND. The Steering Group has taken note and discussed the interesting initiative (“Regional Partnership”) submitted by the City of Lappeenranta in Finland and the City of St. Petersburg. The Steering Group has also noted the proposal of the BSSSC (Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation) for the creation of an enhanced model of sub-regional cooperation and approved the circulation of a BSSSC questionnaire designed to identify the required further parameters of this model. The initiative of the University of St. Petersburg and the University of Lappeenranta to create a ND Institute might further promote cooperation at a sub-regional level.

### **Regional Organisations**

According to the ND Framework Document the four Regional Councils in the north (CBSS, AC, BEAC, NCM) are participants to the ND policy. All four Councils took part in the 2007 Senior Officials Meeting and were invited to the Steering Group meetings. In addition to the Councils there are also a vast number of other cooperation structures. There is still scope for further coordination between these actors in order to avoid unnecessary

duplication of activities. The Northern Dimension provides a valuable and useful framework for efforts to seek synergies and dovetailing of activities in order to ensure that the practical results of regional cooperation can be felt by all citizens in the region.

Within the Arctic Council (AC) three meetings of the Senior Arctic Officials were held under the current Norwegian presidency. An Arctic Council secretariat has been set up in Tromsø (Norway) by Norway, Denmark and Sweden who will be holding the presidencies successively.

As for the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) Finland completed its two-year presidency with a Ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, Lapland in November 2007. At the meeting the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) which will support both the intergovernmental and the regional structures of Barents cooperation, was established in Kirkenes (Norway). The Presidency was transferred to Russia.

The Malmö Ministerial meeting of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in June 2007 produced a Declaration that launched a substantial reform of this organization based on agreed priorities. Latvia, who took over the presidency, prepared the 6<sup>th</sup> Baltic Summit in Riga 4 June 2008 which endorsed the reform document. Since July 2008 the CBSS has been in the process of implementing the reform decisions under the Danish Presidency. According to the Chairman's Conclusions for the Summit the Heads of Government "noted with satisfaction the successful development and the considerable potential of the Northern Dimension (ND) and its partnerships and drew attention to the important role of the CBSS as a participant in the ND".

The Nordic Council of Ministers has supported some 90 projects in the framework of the Northern Dimension. In 2008 guidelines for NCM's cooperation with North-West Russia were revised as were guidelines for cooperation with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The new guidelines cover the period 2009-2013 with a mid-term evaluation planned for 2011. In September 2008, the NCM together with Greenland hosted the conference "Common Concern for the Arctic" in Ilulissat, Greenland. A report commissioned by the NCM on "The European Union and the Arctic" provided input to the conference. Finland held the NCM Presidency in 2007, Sweden holds the Presidency in 2008 and Iceland in 2009.

## **Conclusions**

The original underlying principle of the ND policy when conceived in 1999 i.e. the notion of positive inter-dependence still remains a key concept and value in Europe. The transformation of the Northern Dimension into a joint policy between all its partners and the specific linkage to the Four Common Spaces between the EU and Russia has proved to be an effective and well functioning conceptual tool which has brought clarity to the practical implementation of the objectives of the ND. During the reporting period much progress has been achieved and numerous new potential areas for further cooperation have been identified.

ND also offers to all partners a possibility to draw on the EU's special relationship with Iceland and Norway to provide an efficient multilateral framework for cooperation.

The Steering Group, which the revised policy established as new coordination structure and a structure which makes decisions within its remit to provide continuity between the Ministerial and Senior Officials meetings has proven to be a good way to exchange information and coordinate the various activities and initiatives taken in the context of the ND. More efforts should be made to further improve the results-oriented nature of these meetings. The Steering Group should also further investigate how best to address the various concrete project proposals which are brought to its attention.

The ND Steering Group is the best available forum for keeping Iceland, Norway and Russia informed about the preparation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and should provide the basis for the aspects of the strategy requiring cooperation with those partners.

Sub-regional level cooperation, between local and regional entities and actors is another important field of cooperation within the Northern Dimension. Fostering of direct links and contacts between these actors should be further encouraged and it should be considered whether some kind of framework to further facilitate this cooperation would be called for. The BSSSC and the Committee of the Regions of the EU might have a valuable role to play, as would the corresponding organs of the BEARC.

Current funding mechanisms for the ND work well. Co-financing should continue to be the rule for the revised ND policy. The International Financial Institutions continue their roles as major lenders in the region.

The successful re-launching of the ND has shown that through co-ownership constructive cooperation is possible on a range of projects producing benefit to citizens of the partners and that the policy retains much potential for future development.

### **Annexes:**

1. List of events
2. Conclusions of the Senior Officials meeting 21 November 2007 in St. Petersburg

### **Annex 1**

First meeting of the Steering Group, Moscow 13 March 2007  
Second meeting of the Steering Group, Brussels 19 June 2007  
Third meeting of the Steering Group, Reykjavik 11 October 2007  
First meeting of the Senior Officials on 21 November 2007 in St. Petersburg.  
Working Group on Transport and Logistics, Oslo 27 February 2008  
Fourth meeting of the Steering Group, Oslo 28 February 2008  
Working Group on Transport and Logistics, Helsinki 15 April 2008  
Working Group on Transport and Logistics, St Petersburg 14 May 2008  
Fifth meeting of the Steering Group, Moscow, 26 May 2008  
Working Group on Transport and Logistics, Poland 17 June 2008  
Sixth meeting of the Steering Group, Brussels 23 September 2008

Annex 2

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> 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.

28 October 2008