

## THE FOURTH SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING OF THE RENEWED NORTHERN DIMENSION

Oslo, 8 April 2014

### CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

The fourth meeting of the Senior Officials of the renewed Northern Dimension (ND) took place in Oslo on 8 April 2014, hosted by Norway. The meeting was attended by the Senior Officials of the four Northern Dimension Partners – the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation.

The Northern Dimension participants – the Regional Councils, the International Financial Institutions – as well as other representatives involved in Northern Dimension cooperation also participated in the meeting. The USA attended the meeting as an observer.

The Senior Officials reviewed the implementation of the Joint Statement of the third ministerial meeting of the renewed Northern Dimension (Brussels, 13 February 2013) and noted the progress that has since been made on the issues highlighted in the statement and other developments in the ND area that have since taken place.

The Senior Officials acknowledged the work between the EU and Russia on defining common priority themes for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region based on identifying objectives of mutual interest. They asked the ND structures to elaborate how their potential can be used in support of these common priorities. Coherence should be ensured with the strategic priorities of all ND partners and with the activities of the regional councils in the north and other relevant organizations. The Senior Officials took note that work would continue in this regard using all main regional cooperation platforms in the relevant fields as appropriate.

The Senior Officials welcomed the proposals by Iceland and Norway on developing the Northern Dimension's contribution to cooperation in the European Arctic area. They encouraged deepening and systematizing cooperation between the ND and Barents structures as well as seeking synergies with other relevant cooperation formats and programmes in the Euro-Arctic region. The full potential of the Northern Dimension Institute and the Northern Dimension Business Council should also be utilized. In view of the next ND ministerial meeting, the Senior Officials asked the ND structures, in close cooperation with relevant Barents working bodies, to elaborate concrete proposals in this regard.

The Senior Officials asked the ND Steering Group to reflect on further concrete steps to achieve these goals in the whole Northern Dimension area and report back to the next ministerial meeting.

The Senior Officials took note of the progress achieved by the **Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP)** and thanked the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for its continued management of the NDEP Support Fund on behalf of the donors and IFIs. They welcomed the recent key

developments including: (1) inauguration of the Northern Tunnel Collector in St Petersburg in October 2013 which will have a significant impact on water quality in the Baltic Sea; (2) signing of several high value contracts to speed up the implementation of NDEP nuclear safety projects in the Murmansk and Archangelsk regions; (3) signing of the first NDEP wastewater treatment projects in Belarus; (4) new projects for energy efficiency and for the management of municipal and agricultural solid waste.

The Senior Officials recognized the significant value of the NDEP, which has over the past 12 years proved to be a successful mechanism for implementing concrete investment projects to fulfill the objectives of the ND policy and to reach HELCOM environmental targets. Recalling the ND ministerial meeting statement, the Senior Officials called for the swift completion of the Kaliningrad Waste-Water Treatment Plant project. They welcomed the discussion started at the NDEP Assembly on future development and priorities of the NDEP non-nuclear window. They encouraged active participation of all stakeholders in this process and looked forward to the Steering Group's report to the next Assembly in this regard. The Senior Officials stressed the importance of this strategic review of the partnership both in considering the use of the remaining funds in the Support Fund for the benefit of the whole Northern Dimension area, as well as in preparing decisions on the partnership's future with its current mandate expiring in 2017. They welcomed the overall good progress in the NDEP Nuclear Window projects and noted that a substantial amount of work remains to be contracted in 2014 and subsequently implemented.

The Senior Officials took note of the information presented by the **Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS)**, and stressed the strategic added value to the development of public health policies in the Northern Dimension area that is provided by the NDPHS. They recognized the NDPHS as an established forum for policy dialogue and exchange of expertise that improves networking among health care actors in the region so as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of transnational co-operation. They welcomed the establishment of the NDPHS Secretariat and thanked the host country Sweden for its support and generosity and encouraged the remaining NDPHS Partner Countries that have not done so to sign and ratify the Agreement on the Establishment of the Secretariat without further delay. They also took note of the NDPHS' on-going efforts to develop a new NDPHS Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2014-2020. To that end, the Senior Officials underlined a unique role that the NDPHS performs as the linking agent for cooperation, helping bridge priorities and efforts related to policies and strategies of various actors in the Northern Dimension area.

The Senior Officials acknowledged that the **Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL)** has proved to be an efficient cooperation tool for the development of the transport system of the region and improvement of the international logistics chains, and welcomed the decision of the NDPTL High Level Meeting on 17 December 2013 to prolong the activities of NDPTL for the next period of five years. The Senior Officials welcomed the commencement of the operations of the NDPTL Support Fund with four projects from Finland, Poland and Russia receiving the first grants in 2013. They agreed that work on projects is a key activity of the partnership enhancing the NDPTL regional networks with the aim to support international trade and people-to-people contacts and contribute to sustainable socio-

economic and environmentally friendly development of the region. They welcomed the partnership's second call for project proposals in early 2014 and encouraged work on new projects with a regional dimension and a regional added value to be supported by the partnership's support fund. The Senior Officials acknowledged the decision of the NDPTL High Level Meeting to enhance the general co-ordinating role of NDPTL, and agreed that the partnership should be used to steer initiatives in the field of transport and logistics in the Northern Dimension area. They appreciated the work done by the NDPTL Secretariat to develop contacts within the network of stakeholders so as to search for synergies and avoid duplication of activities, and encouraged the secretariat to continue developing these activities

The Senior Officials acknowledged the potential of the **Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC)** in facilitating the development of the cultural and creative industries (CCI) sector in the region. They welcomed the partnership's continued network development, knowledge building and exchange among private and public stakeholders involved in promoting cultural and creative industries. They welcomed the progress in preparing a legally binding agreement for the partnership's secretariat, and called for further work in this regard with an active participation of all partners in the region. They stressed the importance of elaborating a long term strategy for the partnership and encouraged it to continue close cooperation with the ND Institute and the ND Business Council.

The Senior Officials welcomed the new Finnish and Russian coordinators of the **Northern Dimension Institute (NDI)** and the temporary financing solution. This should strengthen NDI's work on European Arctic and Baltic Sea regions, sharpen co-operation with the ND Business Council, and boost NDI's contribution to ND Partnerships.

The Senior Officials commended the **Northern Dimension Business Council's (NDBC)** achievements in building up an extensive network of companies and urged the NDBC to further enhance cooperation with the Northern Dimension structures. They welcomed the **Northern Dimension Business Forum** held in St. Petersburg on 3 April and the initiative of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and NDBC to organize a second **Northern Dimension Stakeholder Conference**.

The Senior Officials took note of the Conference Statement of **the Third Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum**, held 11-12 November 2013 in Archangelsk, Russia and welcomed the parliamentarians' active interest in Northern Dimension cooperation. They looked forward to the upcoming Fourth ND Parliamentary Forum, to be organised in Iceland in 2015.

The Senior Officials took note of the presentation by the **Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC)**, acknowledged the importance of sub-regional cooperation and asked the Steering Group to reflect on how cooperation with organisations representing the sub-regional level in the ND area could be further developed.

The Senior Officials took note of the readiness of Iceland to convene the next **Northern Dimension Ministerial Meeting** in 2015.