First Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum

Final Statement

26 February 2009

Members of the European Parliament, of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, of the Baltic Assembly, of the Nordic Council, of the West Nordic Council and of the network of Barents parliamentarians met in the European Parliament in Brussels on 25-26 February 2009 at the First Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum to discuss the development of the Northern Dimension Policy in the Baltic Sea Region and in the Arctic Region and to coordinate the policies of the parliamentary bodies within the Northern Dimension region.

The First Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum

A. having regard to the first ministerial meeting of the renewed Northern Dimension held in St Petersburg, 28 October 2008 where the ministers expressed their satisfaction with the level of cooperation between the Northern Dimension and the four Regional Councils in the North: the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Arctic Council;

B. having regard to the Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document and the Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy approved on 24 November 2006, welcomes the updated, more permanent, high profile, and structured Northern Dimension Policy, based on the principles of co-ownership of the four equal partners (Iceland, Norway, Russia, and the EU), that came into force on 1 January 2007;

1. underlines the importance and value of parliamentarians from different countries to meet and discuss issues of common concern;

2. emphasizes that the Parliamentary Forum shall not take the shape of a new institution, but rather a recurrent place for representatives of the different parliamentary bodies in the north;

3. supports the overall aim of the Northern Dimension to provide a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, strengthening stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation, promotion of economic integration and competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe;

4. encourages the partners of the Northern Dimension to focus on issues of specific relevance in the North such as its fragile environment, public health and social issues, cultural and indigenous peoples issues;

5. is deeply concerned of the effect of climate change on sustainability of the lives of the indigenous people in the Arctic region, in terms of both the general environment and the natural habitat, and underlines that any international decisions relating to these issues must fully involve and take account of all peoples and nations of the Arctic;

6. recognizes the increased importance of the Baltic Sea Region;

7. encourages close coordination between the Baltic Sea Strategy and the new Northern Dimension. The Northern Dimension provides a joint overall framework for mutual cooperation on an equal basis between EU, Russia, Iceland and Norway. In order for the Baltic Sea Strategy to be efficient, it needs to be aligned with the Northern Dimension policy;

8. promotes coordination between intergovernmental actors and other stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region, for the sake of environmental and financial efficiency, encouraging the evolution of a division of labour and responsibilities in accordance with their respective objectives and competencies;

9. underlines the need for coherent and targeted leadership in order to drive the issues of the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Strategy could contribute to the Northern Dimension process by bolstering the vertical and horizontal dialogue between stakeholders and actors of the Region. A closer synchronization of the actors would strengthen both their individual and their combined impact. Cooperation in the Region should be strengthened by building networks, not institutions;

10. stresses the need to implement the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and supports the work of the BSAP Implementation Group;

11. highlights that more knowledge is needed about climate change, its consequences for society, and our preparedness and capabilities to adapt to change. More effective actions – by means of e.g. technology transfer, research and development, and vocational training – should be promoted in order to reduce pollution and emissions and to develop renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy savings in all sectors in the Baltic Sea Region;

12. supports action and investments by Northern Dimension participants, and the maritime industry, to put appropriate resources in place to provide for emergency response capabilities, search and rescue capabilities, and specific spill response capabilities, as the Oceans open to marine shipping, and to take preventive measures to avoid shipping accidents;

13. recommends to extend cooperation to reduce the vulnerability and improve the adaptability to the consequences of climate change, as well as to the enhancement of the capacity to prevent and manage adverse consequences of climate change (such as natural hazards and technological accidents);

14. underlines the need to coordinate and cooperate on strategies before the COP-15 in 2009 (Copenhagen) in order to provide consolidated support from the Baltic Sea

Region and the Arctic Region to ambitious measures for the mitigation of man-made CO2 emissions;

15. expresses satisfaction over the newly established Northern Dimension partnership on transport and logistics and underlines the importance of infrastructure in creating sustainable and prosperous societies;

16. underlines the importance of environmental considerations when developing the partnership on transport and logistics, using environmentally friendly technologies and solutions;

17. asks for reports on the implementation of the partnerships within the Northern Dimension, to be presented at the next Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum;

18. calls on the President of the European Parliament to forward this final statement to the speakers of the parliaments and to the governments of Iceland, Norway and Russia, to the institutions of the European Union and to the national parliaments of the European Union;

19. welcomes with gratitude the kind invitation of the Norwegian Parliament to host the Second Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum in 2011.