E U R O P E A N  E C O N O M I C  A R E A

# J O I N T  P A R L I A M E N T A R Y  C O M M I T T E E

## RESOLUTION (adopted at 26th EEA JPC in Tromsø- 23 May 2006)

### ON EUROPE'S HIGH NORTH: ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee of the European Economic Area:

A. Recognising the new opportunities in petroleum exploitation in the High North – Barents Sea area that may potentially become one of Europe's most important petroleum sources in the not too distant future

B. Recognising that the opportunities in the High North – Barents Sea area do pose imperative questions as to the major challenges of combining petroleum production with protection of the vulnerable marine environment

C. Having regard to the current Second Northern Dimension Action Plan 2004-2006 (NDAPII) as endorsed by the European Council held in Brussels on 16 and 17 October 2003

D. Having regard to the Northern Dimension Ministerial Conference in Brussels 20 November 2005 where the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and Russia agreed on political guidelines for the future of the Northern Dimension

E. Having regard to the European Commission's Green paper on a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy, on 8 March 2006 and the EU Presidency Council Conclusions on 23-24 March 2006

F. Having regard to the Norwegian Government Paper: Opportunities and Challenges in the North 2005

1. emphasises that the prospects of offshore petroleum activities in the High North – Barents Sea area underscore the importance of cooperation between the main actors involved as concerns environmental, energy security and availability, infrastructure, innovation and competitiveness as well as financing criteria for exploitation and management of the natural resources;

2. stresses that the Arctic environment in general is a vital source of renewable and non-renewable natural resources which are of utmost importance not only for the nations and peoples in the area, but for Europe as a whole, including the European Economic Area;

3. calls on relevant authorities to ensure that the exploitation of resources and the management of the marine environment in the High North – Barents Sea area is done in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner;

4. stresses that whilst natural resources extraction in the Arctic in general and more specifically the High North – Barents Sea could go on for many generations the resources are limited;

5. welcomes Russia's continued close cooperation with Norway, the EU and other partners in efforts to deal with the serious environmental problems that persist in North-west Russia.;

6. welcomes the Norwegian government's policy on the 'High North' and its intensified efforts to ensure the sustainable management of the area's rich natural resources such as the new coordinated system for monitoring the marine eco-system in the High North – Barents Sea area;

7. emphasises that the eco-system in the High North – Barents Sea area is vulnerable to pollution, over-exploitation and developmental strains and is under pressure as a result of not only the growing utilisation of natural resources but also long term pollution and climate change which has an intense affect on the Arctic in general;

8. underlines the importance of the Water Framework Directive, the Air Quality Directives, the IPPC directive and the Sixth Environmental Action programme and its Thematic Strategies for reducing the negative impact of pollutants in the Arctic environment;

9. calls on relevant authorities to evaluate, ratify, conclude and implement global environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, the Stockholm Convention on POPs, and the UN ECE LRTAP protocols on Heavy Metals and POPs;

10. calls on the parties to the Northern Dimension to agree on a clear cut, visible and dynamic policy, with strong political commitment by all partners that should reach beyond Europe to include the USA and Canada;

11. welcomes the shift in the Northern Dimension towards making it a regional expression in the North of the EU-Russia cooperation (PCA) and the "Four Common Spaces" and calls on the relevant authorities to create appropriate arrangements to link Iceland and Norway to this context, respecting the EEA Agreement;

12. calls on the establishment of a Northern Dimension partnership in energy where the focus is on sustainable development of existing natural resources, energy efficiency and renewable energy resources, where all Northern Dimension partners have a role to play;

13. calls on the Commission in future reviews of the Norwegian and EEA financial mechanisms to have regard to the possibilities of linkage between these contributions and the funding of the Northern Dimension;

14. calls on relevant authorities to improve cooperation and coordination between existing bodies for regional cooperation in the Northern and Arctic regions so that they are more directly linked to the Northern Dimension policy;

15. welcomes the steps being taken within the European Parliament to host a first meeting of a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum to take place in the autumn of this year 2006 so bringing together for the first time all the stakeholders and elected representatives from the Northern Dimension partners;

16. stresses that the establishment of a Northern Dimension forum would substantially raise the profile of the ND, strengthen its foundations and provide a vehicle to increase co-ordination between the existing regional organisations in the Northern and Arctic regions and the EU and EEA institutions,

17. notes with concern that EU's import dependency is rising and unless the EU Member States make energy more competitive within the next decades, around 70% of the Union's energy requirements will be met by imports, compared to 50% today;

18. welcomes the European Commission's calls for a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy which will inevitably affect the High North – Barents Sea area;

19. welcomes that High North – Baltic Sea nations Russia and Norway are specifically mentioned as strategic partners in the European Commission

Green paper on a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy;

20. stresses that a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy will also pose pertinent questions as to the EEA relevance of an internal energy market;

21. urges the EEA EFTA Member States to reflect upon the consequences if the European Commission extends the internal energy market to new third countries or develops closer cooperation in the field of energy.

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