

# **Proposal from the Council of Ministers for a New Arctic Co-operation Programme**

## **1 Background**

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Co-operation Programme for the Arctic was originally produced in 1996 and is based on B 157/m, a Council of Ministers' Proposal of 1995.

As a result of, among other factors, the consolidation of Arctic co-operation under the Arctic Council, established in 1996, and as a result of the fact that the Council of Ministers was given permanent observer status in the Arctic Council in October 2000, a revision of the Arctic Working Programme of the Council of Ministers has become necessary. This was already pointed out in the report 'Närmare Norden' [Closer to the North], as well as in the Council of Ministers' proposal for a revised strategy for co-operation with the Adjacent Areas adopted by the Ministers for Co-operation in March 2001.

## **2 Council of Ministers Arctic Co-operation**

The objectives of Nordic co-operation concerning Arctic issues have been defined in accordance with the following points pursuant to the Co-operation Programme For the Arctic of 1996:

1. to develop and improve the quality of life for the population and the economic and infrastructure preconditions for continuing habitation of the Arctic with special emphasis on the economic, social, cultural, and environmental situation of the Sami and Inuit population groups,
2. to contribute to the preservation of the wilderness nature, the natural qualities, and biological diversity, and to guarantee a sustainable and responsible use of the resources of the region on the basis of the national interests of the Arctic states, and in keeping with the restrictions imposed by the ecosystem,
3. to take active and binding joint action to reduce and eliminate the causes of pollution on land and sea as well as in glacial and adjoining areas,
4. to develop rational co-operation methods and bodies between the Arctic states with a commitment to implement requisite and co-ordinated measures, for instance, by means of co-financing, joint project organisation, etc.

These overall objectives have served as guidelines for the Council of Ministers' co-operation activities in the Arctic, and they will remain relevant for continuing co-operation. The overall objectives will be further clarified and specified in the three-year framework programme and in annual working programmes. Within the framework programme for 2000-2002, co-operation in the Arctic will be assigned to the following three thematic areas:

5. Indigenous populations, description and information concerning their living conditions and earning prospects as well as competence development and the removal of obstacles to the production of traditional Arctic products. Certain aspects of these activities have affected the development of business and industry as well as the earning prospects of sparsely populated areas in more general terms.
6. Welfare development in the Arctic and, in particular, health promoting measures, and new ways of organising some of the elements in health care by means of tele-medicine, have constituted important themes as is also true of the establishment of networks between women's organisations and women researchers in the Arctic.

Sustainable development in the Arctic areas is based on the report 'Sustainable Development – New Bearings for the Nordic Countries'. Among these themes we find, for example, the Action Plan for Protecting Nature and the Environment in the Arctic, bio-diversity, eco-tourism, collection of and follow-up on environmental data, local Agenda 21 for the Arctic, as well as analyses of the levels and effects of PCB in ecosystems and populations in the Arctic.

In addition to the special Arctic working programmes that have formed part of the Adjacent Areas Programme since 1999, the Council of Ministers has initiated a research programme for the Arctic. The programme has been subdivided into three main themes: natural processes on land, in marine areas, and in the atmosphere; biological diversity and threats to the environment in the Arctic; living conditions for the inhabitants of the Arctic. Working methods have included the creation of networks, education and mobilisation of researchers, seminars for researchers, and pilot projects. The programme, which is intended to run over the period 1999-2003, has a budget of a little over DKK 30 m.

As an example of other extensive Arctic activities executed within the framework of the ordinary Nordic budget, mention can be made of Sami Co-operation with a special informal Council of Ministers for Sami issues, co-operation concerning the Nordic West as well as the activities carried out in the Barents Region within the framework of the Adjacent Areas Programme. To this should be added that NAMMCO has been awarded observer status in the Arctic Council.

### **3 Future Objectives for the Nordic Council of Ministers Co-operation on Arctic Issues**

### 3.1 Geographical Objectives

Several of the sectors of the Council of Ministers pursue extensive Arctic activities addressing the Nordic Circumpolar areas. Among the sectors pursuing extensive Arctic co-operation we find protection of human health and gender equality, environment protection, fisheries, agriculture, and forestry, including reindeer herding, education and training as well as research and culture, including Nordic co-operation and Sami issues.

During 1999-2000 the Nordic Council of Ministers has been an ad-hoc-observer at the meetings of the Arctic Council. On October 2000 the Council of Ministers was given status as a permanent observer. The purpose behind the Council of Ministers participating in the activities of the Arctic Council was to locate synergies in connection with working towards a development in the Arctic region, which can be considered sustainable in all respects. The objective in that particular context is to safeguard pan-Nordic interests affecting the entire Circumpolar region. In practice this means that, in co-operation with the Nordic countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers will act to safeguard Nordic interests in Arctic co-operation structures, primarily within the framework of the Arctic Council.

In addition to the Nordic countries, three large countries - the USA, Canada, and Russia – are members of the Arctic Council. This particular geographical demarcation makes it particularly important for the Nordic countries to endeavour to influence the ongoing process in the areas in which they have developed a common policy on the basis of their shared points of departure.

### 3.2 Thematic Areas

The basis for selecting thematic areas has been the needs of the Arctic populations and the Arctic areas. The Council of Ministers directs its efforts towards areas of co-operation selected on the basis, on the one hand, of the criteria relating to so-called Nordic utility, and, on the other, the special competences of the various sectors of the Council of Ministers which can also be utilised in connection with Arctic co-operation. On the basis of these criteria the Council of Ministers will, in particular, take up the following themes:

**Welfare including Health Care and Gender Equality;** in this context co-operation already established for health-promoting measures, in particular combatting communicable diseases and co-operation in the field of tele-medicine in the Arctic. Establishing networks between women's organisations and, in particular, women's earnings prospects in the Arctic will be focal points. As regards individuals with limited working capacity, co-operation, exchange of experience, and networking can improve the integration prospects for these individuals in the labour markets and the communities of the Arctic. Long-term development activities aimed at defining living-condition indicators on the terms of the Arctic populations themselves will be pursued. Among the objectives will be the ability to describe, in particular, the living conditions of the indigenous populations to safeguard the continued existence of conditions for living in the Arctic.

**Children and Young Adults;** The conditions for growing up for children and young adults constitute a key theme for future developments in the Arctic. In the Nordic Arctic areas, and especially in the Russian Arctic areas, there are obvious problems indicating a need for special efforts aimed at ensuring the integration into society of children and young adults. The Council of Ministers will take action aimed at ensuring good conditions for rising generations on the basis of experience available in the fields of health protection, education and training, social welfare, dissemination of culture, and the voluntary sector. In the Action Programme for Children and Young Adults in the Adjacent Areas special attention will be paid to the needs of the Arctic areas.

**Development of Business and Industry;** in this connection efforts aimed at promoting economic development in sparsely populated areas will be intensified. Regional development is of crucial importance to the future earnings prospects of the Arctic population. In this connection contributions should, on the one hand, be made to further develop the infrastructure and communication systems required by the traditional Arctic trades, and to offer satisfactory conditions for the development of new industries like tourism. On the other hand, it is important to continue co-operation concerning competence building in the field of processing products derived from primary industries, and to remove barriers to trade in these as well as adjoining modern industries that can be developed as a natural extension of traditional Arctic primary industries. By way of examples in this respect, mention can be made of sustainable tourism in the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental sense of the word.

**Sustainable Use of Resources:** As a consequence of the vulnerability of the Arctic environment, sustainable use of resources is one of the most highly prioritised themes in the field of co-operation on Arctic issues. In future, the Council of Ministers will participate in activities in the various working groups and projects in the Arctic Council promoting sustainable development. In this connection the Nordic countries are working actively to stimulate the Arctic Council into developing and fostering regionally sustainable development across national frontiers, a development based on mutual endorsement of the concept of sustainable development.

**Environment and Energy;** on the basis of the strategy 'Sustainable Development – New Bearings for the Nordic Countries', the years 2001-2004 will see special endeavours to support the implementation of international agreements restricting the use, and thus the transportation, of persistent organic pollutants (POP) and heavy metals to and in the Arctic, to support the implementation of the Århus Declaration, to contribute towards the development of efficient local administration to ensure sustainable development, to contribute towards intensifying indicators for sustainable development and reporting.

In sparsely populated Arctic areas new, alternative, types of energy supply are to be looked into.

**Culture, Education and Training, Research and Mobility;** The Nordic Council of Ministers is in possession of special knowhow in connection with co-operation between universities and other institutions of higher education. The Nordic universities and their presidents enjoy good co-operation. Nordic university co-operation will be made use of as an example for developing co-operation and virtual forms of teaching within the framework of the so-called Arctic University, which consists of a network of universities and institutions of higher education in the Arctic region. The Council of Ministers considers it to be extremely relevant to develop research concerning the Arctic areas, and in this connection a network of the

Arctic education, training, and research institutions can play an important role also in the international research community.

Cultural contacts across frontiers enjoy long traditions in the Arctic Nordic regions. These are traditions that should be continued, strengthened and be seen in the context of cultural co-operation taking place under the auspices of the Barents co-operation.

**Research:** The Nordic Council of Ministers considers it important to keep focussing on research in the Arctic region, including research which has its base in the university in the Arctic area. The Nordic Arctic Research Programme, financed by the Council of Ministers, has played an important role.

The Council of Ministers has developed a number of Nordic mobility programmes as well as the Nordic scholarship programme for the Baltic republics and Northwest Russia. They may serve as an example of mobility programmes developed with the purpose of offering inhabitants of the Arctic an opportunity to gain access to education and training and to provide educational institutions in the Arctic with an opportunity to develop appropriate division of labour and a spectrum of relevant education and training programmes. In connection with the specific planning of mobility programmes existing programmes should be taken into consideration in order to avoid duplication of effort.

At primary and lower secondary school levels initiatives will be taken aimed at upholding the cultural heritage and perception of natural phenomena of the Arctic population groups.

### **3.3 Co-operation Instruments**

Present instruments for Arctic co-operation are to be further developed, and synergies are to be exploited whenever the thematic fields and instruments of the Co-operation Programme for the Arctic coincide with other activities. Similarly to what is being done under the Adjacent Areas programme the following instruments will be used:

**Information and Contact Activities as well as Networking:** The Council of Ministers will participate in Arctic co-operation structures and will promote exchange of information on its own initiative, for example, by providing information on its websites. For the purpose of maintaining contact, existing Nordic co-operation structures will be utilised as much as possible; these include the Nordic institutions and the Norden House in the Nordic Arctic area, and the Norden House as well as the information points of the Council of Ministers in the Barents area.

**Mobility Programme;** The Council of Ministers will support the Arctic area scholarship programmes allowing students and researchers to take part in co-operation between universities in the Arctic area. The scholarship programme will take advantage of the experience gained by the Council of Ministers from other scholarship and mobility programmes, in particular the Nordic scholarship programmes for the Baltic republics and Northwest Russia. The scholarship programme will finance the Nordic and Russian participants' travelling costs incurred by taking part in relevant activities. The mobility programme should be

co-ordinated with other similar programmes financed by other Arctic countries to the benefit of their own citizens. Canada, for example, has taken an initiative to ensure co-operation and co-ordination concerning such programmes.

**Co-operation Projects;** when selecting projects, priority will be given to such projects as are of joint Nordic interest, and for which co-operation will strengthen the Nordic political profile and which, seen from a Nordic point of view, will yield the highest added value within the Circumpolar co-operation of the Arctic Council. Co-financing of projects will be possible and in this connection funds will go towards financing Nordic participation in co-operation measures affecting the Arctic. Special importance will be attributed to the development of new ideas for Arctic co-operation projects.

#### **4 Co-operation Structures and Contacts to Other Relevant Players**

The Council of Ministers participates in the activities of the Arctic Council as a permanent observer. In addition, the Council of Ministers participates in financing co-operation within the working groups of the Arctic Council: the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), as well as number of ad-hoc working groups established by ministerial meetings in the Arctic Council. This also pertains to two new working programmes introduced at the ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in the autumn of 2000: Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic (ACAP) and Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). These programmes include important tasks in an Arctic context in areas of great importance to the Council of Ministers.

Arctic issues are also discussed in other arenas in which the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council of Ministers are present. Here special mention should be made of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council. Arctic issues constitute an important element in the development of co-operation concerning the EU's Northern Dimension as well as the EU's so-called Arctic Window.

In accordance with the Barrow Declaration made by the Arctic Council at its meeting in October 2000, the Arctic countries should closely co-ordinate their treatment of relevant issues concerning protection of the environment and sustainable development in the Arctic in various international fora.

#### **5 Organisation of Co-operation**

Since 1999 the Co-operation Programme for the Arctic has been a component in the Adjacent Areas Programme. In order to lend stronger prominence to co-operation concerning Arctic issues and to underscore its growing political importance, the Co-operation Programme for the Arctic will be separated from the Adjacent Areas programme as from 2003. The purpose is to involve the expertise available in the various sectors of the Council of Ministers more efficiently in Arctic co-operation. As relevant projects

corresponding to pan-Nordic interests are initiated, the possibility of giving higher priority to Arctic co-operation will be considered.

The specification of objectives and the implementation plans for the Arctic must be clarified in separate annual working programmes along the lines of those existing for the Adjacent Areas activities. In parallel with the compilation of the new Framework Programme for co-operation with the Adjacent Areas 2003-2005, a three-year framework programme for Arctic co-operation will be prepared. It is assumed that a review of the Council of Ministers' Co-operation Programme for the Arctic will be carried out in 2005. The review will take up all of the Council of Ministers' Arctic activities.

In order to effect better co-ordination between the actions of the Council of Ministers and those of the National Nordic bodies and in order for work of joint Nordic interest to be more effective, an expert committee will be appointed under the Prime Ministers and the Co-operation Committee; the expert committee will consist of the Nordic Senior Arctic Officials Committee and the Autonomous Areas and will have an advisory capacity in connection with the composition, implementation, and follow-up of the Council of Ministers' Arctic activities. The Nordic Senior Arctic Officials have already started co-operating informally with the purpose of exchanging experience and of co-ordinating Nordic positions prior to meetings in the Arctic Council. Since 2000 the Council of Ministers has participated in these meetings. Inuit Circumpolar Conference, ICC; Greenland as well as the Sami Council have been invited to take part in the work in correspondence with the Council of Ministers' guidelines for co-operation with the voluntary organisations.

The secretariat of the Council of Ministers will be in charge of the secretarial functions of the new Expert Committee.