

# CONCLUSIONS

of the 11<sup>th</sup> Barents Parliamentary Conference

Hosted by the Finnish Parliament

In Rovaniemi, 25–27 September 2023

The participants of the 11th Barents Parliamentary Conference underline the importance of the unique regional format of Barents co-operation for building trust, co-operation, friendly relations, and people-to-people contacts across national borders in the region and call on the national and regional governments of the co-operation to:

1. *Take into account* the principles and provisions of the 1993 Declaration on Co-operation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (Kirkenes, Norway), which forms the basis for multilateral co-operation in the Barents region. Hence, they condemn in the strongest possible terms the illegal war of aggression by the Russian Federation against the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine and the devastation and destruction of its people, cultural heritage, infrastructure and environment;
2. *Reiterate* its full support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and continue to act in resolute solidarity with Ukraine;
3. *Recall* the Resolution of the 10<sup>th</sup> Barents Parliamentary Conference hosted digitally by the Norwegian Storting in 2021, reaffirming the importance of promoting various forms of parliamentary co-operation in the Northern Europe;
4. *Further recall* the Joint Statement of Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the European Union regarding Barents Euro-Arctic co-operation, made on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, in which the signatories condemned in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprecedented military aggression against Ukraine and made the decision to suspend activities involving Russia in the Barents Euro-Arctic co-operation;
5. *Note* that the Russian Federation after being suspended has voluntarily chosen to withdraw from the Barents Co-operation;
6. *Assure* not to consider welcoming the Russian Federation back into the co-operation, until they have ceased to commit human rights violations and violations of international law, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states and have been held accountable for the crime of aggression against Ukraine;
7. *Take into account* the programme of the Finnish Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2021–2023, focusing on peace and stability in the region, the European Green

Deal, sustainable development and healthy environment, people-to-people contact and transport and logistics;

8. *Take into account* the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recognize the importance of the co-operation between indigenous peoples in the Barents region and welcome the conclusions from the Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People in Brussels on the 22–24 March 2023, as well as welcome the European Parliament's intention to continue this dialogue in a structured and permanent format;
9. *Condemn* all violations of human rights committed by the Russian Federation, including those against its own population, and call on the Russian Federation to respect and uphold human rights, democracy, and freedom of expression, as well as release political prisoners;
10. *Call on* the Russian Federation to respect and honour the rights of the indigenous peoples;
11. *Support* elaborating on the next steps and future key areas of Barents co-operation, as well as ensuring funding for co-operation in the region.

#### **GREEN TRANSITION**

The geopolitical importance of the Arctic and the Barents region has increased further after Russia attacked Ukraine, and the region is marked by much tension due to political interest. At the same time global warming and climate change are accelerating at an increased pace. Their impact is felt more strongly in the Barents and the Arctic region since these regions are warming much faster than the global average. These regions are unique in their own ways, with the fragile polar nature. Urgent measures are required to ensure sustainable development and mitigate the effects of climate change. Sustainable solutions that help to create jobs are needed more than ever. The Green Transition needs to be secured while respecting the culture and human rights of peoples living in the region. We call on the national and regional governments of the Barents region to:

12. *Recall* the joint Green Transition Action Plan for the northern regions of Finland, Sweden and Norway presented by the Finnish Chairmanship in the Spring of 2023 and encourage the respective governments to consider the implementation of the proposed recommendations;
13. *Note* the need to improve the interconnectivity in the area by developing common infrastructure and logistics in the area in a sustainable manner;
14. *Assure* the availability of skilled labour, energy and raw materials which is vital in helping to facilitate the dialogue between relevant stakeholders of the region and make the region an attractive target of investments in the northernmost part of the EU's single market;

15. *Ensure* that rare minerals from the northern regions help secure the region's self-sufficiency and security of supply in a sustainable way;
16. *Stress* the need for a constructive dialogue with the local communities and especially the indigenous Sámi people. Indigenous rights and traditional knowledge of the Sámi people on the climate and environment of the polar region should be recognized when designing and implementing Arctic policies and strategies;
17. *Strengthen* the co-operation with the business community to promote new innovative solutions helping to preserve the region's biodiversity by reducing CO<sup>2</sup> and black carbon emissions;
18. *Support* activities aimed at creating better opportunities for electrifying the region, including both the transport sector and the industry sector;
19. *Strive* that the actions taken will not harm the culture nor traditional livelihoods of the indigenous Sámi people and that the Free Prior and Informed Consent -principle is implemented, also with regards to Green Transition;

#### **YOUTH CO-OPERATION**

Investment in youth co-operation is crucial since young people of today are the ones that will live in tomorrow's world. Youth involvement and participation needs to be ensured at all levels, and dialogue and cross-border co-operation are to be promoted. We call on the national and regional governments of the Barents region to:

20. *Acknowledge* that young people have a central role in contributing to modern societies and good living conditions, and therefore they are to be actively involved and their voice needs to be heard at all levels in the framework of the Barents co-operation;
21. *Support* the Barents Youth Programme 2021-2024 by improving the living conditions for youth in the region, increasing youth co-operation, having more focus on the youth dimension in all priority areas within the co-operation;
22. *Focus* on the views of the young people on how the Barents region should be developed as well as ensuring youth involvement in strategic thinking and policy-making within the Barents co-operation;
23. *Strengthen* Barents identity among youth further by supporting contacts across cultural and geographical borders and promoting dialogue and increased cross-border youth co-operation within areas like culture, sport, health, education, environment,

entrepreneurship, human rights, equality, community development and indigenous peoples.

### **THE FUTURE OF BARENTS CO-OPERATION**

With regards to the future of Barents co-operation we call on the national and regional governments of the Barents region to:

24. *Strengthen*, and support the current activities of the Barents co-operation further, especially with regards to green transition, infrastructure, transportation, logistics, young people as well as energy security and security of supply in and between the northern regions of Finland, Sweden, and Norway to help in meeting the goals of the European Green Deal, as well as contribute to the EU's Green Transition;
25. *Continue* its support for existing youth platforms, as well as encourage the development of new youth platforms and meeting places for youth to strengthen young peoples participation in international cross border co-operation projects;
26. *Continue* to deepen co-operation on different political levels, adapt, be resilient in face of ongoing geopolitical challenges, as well as consider initiating an analysis of the future of the co-operation whilst acknowledging the importance of people-to-people contacts, cross-border co-operation, and the regions as key actors;
27. *Ensure* participation, representation, and a free prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes, respecting their rights and traditions. Involving all stakeholders is the key for meaningful future co-operation in the Barents region.