



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

# **YAKUTSK DECLARATION**

**of the  
Third General Assembly  
of the Northern Forum**

**Yakutsk, The Sakha Republic  
10-13 August 1997**

The Governors of the member regions of the Northern Forum acting at the Northern Forum General Assembly in Yakutsk, Sakha Republic, Russia, hereby adopt the following declaration:

## **1. Cooperation, Development and Stability**

The Governors recognized the progress achieved in realizing cooperation in the North since the First General Assembly in Tromsø in October 1993 and the Second General Assembly in Hokkaido in September 1995. They expressed their belief that the rapid expansion of regional interaction in various areas, from economic to cultural collaboration, is evidence of the vitality of cooperative initiatives and enables Northern regions to speak with optimism about the prospects of further cooperation.

They confirmed their opinion that cooperation within the framework of the Northern Forum contributes to peace, stability and development in the region. They noted that the Northern Forum is part of formative interregional, international structures which eliminate the former partition between East and West and cover the entire Arctic and North.

They will facilitate the development of the Arctic and North on the basis of the principles of open, international cooperation and development, democracy, and market economics.

They will work to ensure that the Arctic and North become a permanent member of the world community.

They will strive to use the rich potential of the region and favorable prospects for its development to strengthen relations with neighboring regions.

They note that the most important goal of cooperation and partnership in the Arctic and North is the constant improvement of living standards on the basis of sustainable development, rational use of natural resources, and protection of the environment.

They emphasized that the Northern Forum is a universal organization of Northern regions. They strongly resolve to add dynamism to the work of the Northern Forum which will allow this organization to play an important role in the stable development of the North and the Arctic in the twenty-first century.

They confirmed that the Northern Forum was created through the joint action of certain member regions in 1991 in order to create an organization through which northern regional governments might seek to cooperate with each other for the purpose of addressing problems and challenges common to the North, for example inadequate infrastructure; an abundance of natural resources, which are often commonly owned; sparse population; remoteness from national and international centers; and harsh climate.

They noted that for the past six years, the member regions have undertaken numerous projects which have conferred benefits on the participating regions and reflected credit on the organization. The Governors believe the Northern Forum should take the steps necessary to meet certain new challenges, as set forth more specifically herein.

## **2. Plan for Future Activities**

The Governors discussed various issues of common interest and expressed their intention to continue the development of cooperation within the framework of the Northern Forum in the areas of economics, science and technology, transportation, protection of the environment, forestry, infrastructure, cultural and educational exchanges, and on issues related to indigenous peoples.

### **Increased Economic Cooperation**

The Governors recognize the importance of the expansion of economic cooperation through the expansion of trade, investment, and joint ventures, and through the sharing of information and knowledge which would promote such economic activity. It is acknowledged that some problems in the North have been successfully addressed in our member regions, and that appropriate technology can be transferred from one Northern region to another.

The Governors endorse the creation of a Northern Forum information system which will facilitate the transfer of such technology from one member region to another.

They endorse practical ways of stimulating trade and investment, and the creation of an organizational structure for cooperation among business entities located in the respective regions, including but not limited to forestry, fishing, construction, oil, gas, machinery, and electrical communications. Specifically, the Governors encourage proposed Northern Forum activities such as the promotion of a northern natural gas pipelines and the development of a Russian Far East grain buyers' consortium.

In order to reach these goals, the Governors agree to cooperate actively to promote the Northern Business Peoples Conference, to be held in 1999 in Rovaniemi.

### **Protection of the Northern Environment**

The Governors promise to pay special attention to the increased global demand for the natural resources common to many Northern regions, and the need to develop such resources in an environmentally responsible way. In addition, the Governors acknowledge that environmental pollution in the North frequently transcends national boundaries. The Governors confirm the importance of cooperation among the member regions for the purpose of protecting a fragile environment.

They emphasize that realistic environmental standards should be established for all types of activities in Northern regions including the development of natural resources, and that substantial reduction or elimination of pollution should be a goal of all members. They recognize that solutions for existing transboundary environmental problems will be an important factor in the transition to wider cooperation in northern regions.

Therefore, the Governors endorse the adoption by each region of certain international standards which would govern the development of natural resources in the North.

### **Communication**

The Governors of the regions believe that the establishment of efficient and reasonably priced communication systems among the regions should be a major objective of the Northern Forum. The quick exchange of information is a prerequisite for the active participation of all regions in cooperation, especially those regions in which communication is presently difficult and unreliable. The Governors expressed their desire for the regions to improve communications through the Secretariat, utilizing the most suitable method of communication in terms of quality and economy, which they believe to be electronic mail ("Email") conducted through the Internet or other network systems.

The Governors therefore endorse the completion of the Northern Forum's communication system, and agree to utilize their best efforts to secure modern communication links to all members by the next General Assembly in 1999.

### **Transportation**

The Governors express concern that there are complications with the timely delivery of goods, including high priority goods, to certain member regions. They stressed the importance of the Northern Sea Route as an international trans-arctic route for connecting Europe and the countries of the Pacific Rim. Establishment of a reliable and cost-effective Northern Sea shipping route could reduce transport expenditures significantly and allow the timely supply of necessary goods to the population of the northern regions of Russia. The Governors call for federal and regional authorities to support this project and to establish a method of guaranteeing the required financing.

The Governors emphasize the need for the continuation of discussions of more frequent scheduled air flights among the regions. They encourage cooperation between regional and federal authorities which is required in order to initiate and establish such regular air routes, if consumer demand is evident.

### **Scientific and Technical Cooperation**

The Governors recognize the importance of scientific and technical cooperation in solving regional problems, including technology suitable for cold climates. They announce their intention to work for the removal of unreasonable barriers to joint scientific research. They encourage cooperation between and among regions in the fields of geology, environmental protection, fishing, forestry, mining, transportation, construction, communication, and other areas according to the requirements of each region. They would also like to support cooperation in scientific research to solve common problems and appeal to the Northern Forum Academy to help develop such projects.

### **Education**

The Governors welcome the activity of the Association of Universities and Colleges of the Northern Forum, and express the desire that colleges and universities throughout the North will establish programs through which students and faculty in one Northern region may benefit from the academic institutions of another. They consider it important to develop a student exchange program among educational institutions of member regions and support the objectives of the Institute of the North, including the Northern Forum Fellowship Program.

## **Indigenous Peoples**

The Governors believe it is necessary to protect the rights of indigenous peoples of the North. They unanimously support the strengthening of the indigenous peoples' communities and organizations, and agree that it is desirable for the regions to exchange information on their respective policy regarding indigenous peoples. Specifically, the Governors agree to support the efforts of indigenous peoples of the North to reduce or eliminate alcohol abuse in their communities. They also recognize the importance of reindeer herding as a basis of the culture of many indigenous northern people, and resolve to support regional initiatives and programs designed to improve the management and productivity of reindeer herding activities.

### **3. Cooperation with International Organizations**

The Governors believe that the Arctic and Northern regions represent an important dimension of global affairs, and that one of the major purposes of the Northern Forum is to encourage established international organizations to reflect the views of the member regions. In keeping with this important purpose, the Governors wish to strengthen the existing relationship with the United Nations, evidenced by the 1994 establishment of the Northern Forum as an officially recognized non-governmental organization (NGO) by the United Nations.

The Governors welcome the creation of a new international organization, The Arctic Council. The Arctic Council, which represents the eight Arctic States, is expected to contribute much to the strengthening of regional cooperation in the Arctic. They also announce their wish to establish closer relations between the Northern Forum and the Arctic Council to ensure that the opinions of regional governments are reflected in the decisions made by the Arctic Council. They confirmed their desire for the Northern Forum to establish a permanent partnership with the Arctic Council and its programs.

The Governors appeal to the Arctic Council to establish in conjunction with the Northern Forum a general program for sustainable development in the Arctic and North to be implemented in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The Governors also take note of the fact that Northern Scandinavia and Northwestern Russia are cooperating through the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR). The Governors believe that the Northern Forum should establish cooperation with the Regional BEAR Council, which would confer a benefit to both organizations.

### **4. Long Term Strategic Planning**

The Governors recognize the need for and benefits of long term strategic planning for the Northern Forum to guide its future activities. Long term plans for the Northern Forum should

include the goals and objectives identified in the Tromso Declaration, Rovaniemi Code of Conduct, Hokkaido Declaration, and the current Declaration.

The Governors recommend that a working group, consisting of representatives from member regions under the leadership of the Executive Director, be created to develop this strategic plan. They agree to discuss the working plan at the Board of Directors Meeting in Anchorage, Alaska in 1998.

The long term strategic plan for the Northern Forum should be coordinated with and incorporate efforts of other international organizations to ensure their participation in developing and implementing programs and projects in the North. The Governors appeal to their national governments to support this program.

### **The Date and Place of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Northern Forum**

The Governors accept the kind invitation of the Province of Lapland to hold the Fourth General Assembly of the Northern Forum in Rovaniemi, Finland in 1999. The Governors also accept the invitation of the State of Alaska to host the 1998 meeting of the Board of Directors in Anchorage, Alaska.

Yakutsk  
August 12, 1997