

NRF Report

Breakout Session

Group 2, Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Rapporteur: Audrey Giles

Topic: Future of Northern Cooperation/Arctic Council

NRF Steering Committee Member: Susie Crate

The opening up of arctic waters has a tension to it: it is beneficial for some (such as those who ship resources), but it is harmful if not catastrophic for others (such as Indigenous peoples living in vulnerable areas). It is important for organizations and governments to negotiate these tensions. In order for negotiation to be facilitated in a way that is not inherently confrontational, it was suggested that there is a necessity to develop a culture of cooperation between and within arctic nations.

The discussion focused mostly on the Arctic Council. One participant noted that there were parallels between the opening up of the Baltic Sea and the ensuing relationship between Moscow and the regions. It was questioned if this same sort of relationship would emerge through the opening up of arctic waterways. Indeed, some questioned the extent to which the regions in the North are actually participating in decisions at the Arctic Council. It was pointed out that Russia and the USA have problems of communication between horizontal actors. Further, it was noted that data is not always being shared between arctic states, which has resulted in holes in how the Arctic Council operates. Greater cooperation could help to facilitate, for example, a “condominium mode” (joint investment/mutual investment) in shipping between Russia and other countries.

In order to foster a culture of cooperation, it is necessary to avoid an environment of suspicion, which can provoke reactions up to and including military interventions. It was suggested that all security systems need to include Russia in order to create the most promising situation for the fostering of a culture of cooperation.