

Report on Project Session
Northern Research Forum
Veliky Novgorod, Russia
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Northern Forum Roundtable; Role of the Northern Forum in Forming the Strategy of Sustainable Development of Northern Regions

The round table discussion took place within the framework of the 2nd NRF in St. Antonov Monastery campus on 20th September from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. The chairman of the round table was professor Valery Bronislavovich Mitko, sciences and projects director of St. Petersburg 's Associate Secretariat of the Northern Forum. During the day 10-15 participants took part in the round table session. The main language of the day was Russian, because all presenters were from Russia. Of course, interpretation to English was offered for non-Russian speakers.

Aims of the round table

The chairman had made guidelines for the round table in advance. A couple of important aims were mentioned in the paper. First and foremost, the basic task was to discuss coordination of co-operation efforts in northern regions and to develop the unity of opinions concerning appropriate documents that realize the concept of sustainable development in the north. Another purpose of the round table was to discuss how diverse frameworks, policies and councils directed towards northern issues could be made more commensurable. Furthermore, one important task was to deliberate the possibilities of co-operation between northeast and Arctic regions of Russia and foreign partners in terms of questions such as how to attract investments to northern areas and how to improve educational and scientific facilities in the north.

According to the guidelines paper, questions to be considered in the round table were the following:

1. Mission of Northern Forum in Arctic region and its interaction with the Northern Research Forum and other organizations such as the Arctic and Barents Councils, Ministerial council of Nordic countries etc .
2. Organizational forms of activity of Northern forum.
3. Basic programs of Northern Forum: Environment, sustainable economic development, society and culture, government and policy.
4. Priority projects of Northern Forum: Wildlife management, reindeer management, ecological education in northern regions, sustainable development of tourism and research of water birds in the Russian Arctic.
5. Projects of Northern Forum submitted by St. Petersburg.
6. General Assembly of Northern Forum in St. Petersburg in 2003.
7. Resolution of the round table.

Realisation of the round table

During the day there were eight short (ten minutes) presentations of researchers presenting diverse fields of science – themes of the presentations varied from sewing technology to cartography. Even though all presentations were interesting, I would have preferred discussion on the theme of the round table: sustainable development. Only the first three presentations included environmental aspects, and, quite self-evidently, these three presentations were the ones I personally found most fascinating. Only one of them, the presentation of professor M.B. Ignatiev, discussed sustainable development explicitly. It introduced an interesting model of sustainable development, a model that can be used in organising sustainable way of life in northern regions.

The first speaker was V.I. Fomitchev, the General director of the St.Petersburg Associate of Secretariat of the Northern Forum. He told us about the role of Northern Forum in northern co-operation and invited the NRF to the 6th General Assembly of the Northern Forum, taking place in St.Petersburg in next April. He stressed the importance of separating the two different institutions, namely, the Northern Forum and Northern Research Forum. At present these two institutions are too often muddled up. Also Valery Mitko, who was the second speaker, underlined the importance of understanding the different roles of the Northern Forum and the Northern Research Forum. The Northern Forum is an international non-governmental organization, more oriented towards concrete action and implementation, whereas the NRF is a scientific community, a “laboratory” of new concepts, ideas and models to implementation of which the Northern Forum, in turn, can be used.

Besides these three presentations, one presentation was interesting especially from the point of view of young researchers. Mihail Pogodaev, the chairman of the young scientists of the North League, told about the newly established League and invited the young researchers of the NRF to co-operate with this Russian association of young scientists of the north. In my opinion, this is definitely a challenge, and the NRF should contribute to creating connections between young researchers of the NRF and participants of the respective Russian organisation.

After presentations there was some time for open discussion. In particular the problem of dispersed co-operation in northern issues was discussed. The need to enhance co-operation and decline overlap in activities was underlined by many speakers.

Resolution of the round table

The participants of the round table discussion agreed that the NRF should contribute to increasing the efficiency of co-operation in northern regions by encouraging direct mutual personal contacts and interaction between counterparts from different countries and different fields of activity: scientific as well as business, technical, administrative etc. It should also try to foster open access to information and the use of modern information technology everywhere in the region. The

delineation between the Northern Forum and the Northern Research Forum should be encouraged. Ideas that were brought up in the 2nd open meeting of the NRF should be presented in the 6th general assembly of the Northern Forum in St. Petersburg in April 2003.

The participants of the round table convey that St. Petersburg Institute of Technologies of Indigenous Peoples of Russia wants to make an initiative for the NRF to organise an international youth forum in 2004 when the institute as well as the International Programme on Indigenous Peoples will celebrate their 10 years of existence. Also the enhanced co-operation between the Russian League of the Young Scientists and the young researchers of the NRF is welcomed by the round table. Last but not least, the round table proposes that, taking into account the historical Northern traditions of Novgorod oblast, the Oblast Administration could consider joining the Northern Forum.