

Statement of conclusions

Exploratory discussion about setting up a North Sea Regions Intergroup at the CoR on 27 November 2008

Attendees: See attached attendance list.

Agenda item 1: Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The meeting was opened by **Michel Delebarre (FR/PES)**. He thanked the CoR members from Bremen for their initiative of setting up a North Sea Regions intergroup. Thanks to support from CoR members representing North Sea regions, this initiative was already a success. The conditions for setting up an intergroup, i.e. ten full CoR members from at least four Member States, were already fulfilled.

Agenda item 2: Discussion about setting up a North Sea Regions Intergroup

Dr Kerstin Kießler (DE/PES) emphasised that an intergroup was a useful instrument for exchanging experiences, drawing up common positions and representing these both within the CoR and to the European Parliament and the European Commission. The North Sea regions were an example of where common interests could be expressed and brought together using this instrument. A North Sea Regions intergroup should not in any way be perceived as a competing enterprise to the CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe) and its North Sea Commission.

Alain Le Vern (FR/PES) explicitly called for a North Sea Regions and proposed that regions with English Channel coasts be included in the intergroup so that the Atlantic regions would also support it. He emphasised the good cooperation that had been taking place between French and British regions with Channel coasts over the last ten years. **Gordon Keymer (UK/EPP)** supported this proposal. It was also important that there be cross-party participation in the intergroup. **Michel Delebarre (FR/PES)** replied that this went without saying.

Agenda item 3: Possible key topics for a North Sea Regions Intergroup

Dr Hermann Kuhn (DE/PES) presented the following key topics:

- Adapting to the effects of climate change, with a particular focus on coastal protection;
- Energy issues, with a particular focus on offshore wind energy;
- Clean shipping (sea transport and shore side electricity);
- Sustainable use of the seas, with a particular focus on fisheries.

The proposed topics were supported by the participants.

.../...

Gordon Keymer (UK/EPP) suggested that the focus should not be exclusively on maritime issues, but that the range of topics should be kept more general. **Dave Wilcox (UK/PES)** agreed, adding that the Baltic Sea Regions and Mediterranean intergroups would also be dealing with a wide range of issues.

Cormick McChord (UK/PES) was pleased that the initiative for setting up a North Sea Regions intergroup came at just the right time to look at the EU's integrated maritime policy.

Peter Moore (UK/ALDE) referred to the costs – particularly those relating to interpreting – that would arise from the intergroup's work. He was concerned that the CoR's work could become "fragmented" as a result. Michel Delebarre (FR/PES) stressed that the intergroup was not interested in carrying out unnecessary expenditure. Interpreting was the CoR's responsibility as host.

Lenie Dwarshuis-Van de Beek (NL/ALDE) stressed the particular importance of the exchange of experience in the intergroup. She suggested international cooperation in the area of Interreg IV as an additional key topic. She also expressed an interest in taking part in the presidency of the intergroup.

Annelie Stark (SE/PES) referred to the work of the CPMR and its North Sea Commission. As a member of the board of the CPMR and a member of the North Sea Commission, she was convinced that this group would be complementary to the North Sea Regions intergroup. She, too, expressed an interest in taking part in the intergroup presidency.

Rolf Harlinghausen (DE/EPP) welcomed the establishment of a North Sea Regions intergroup and said he wanted to do all he could to support its work. It was important to decide on key topics, which should be neither too narrow nor too broad. There were many issues of interest to the North Sea regions that could be dealt with jointly. He pointed out that it was unhelpful for the CoR's intergroups to meet at the same time – as was currently the case. A solution needed to be found. He suggested that a future meeting (without interpreting) be held in parallel with the next plenary session.

Dr Kerstin Kießler (DE/PES) explained that the timing issue was well known, but that no slot other than 8-9 a.m. on the second day of plenary was possible. Consideration had already been given to timetabling the meetings at lunchtime after the plenary session, but many CoR members would already have left by then. In addition, the availability and working time of interpreters needed to be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, the following next steps were agreed:

- Bremen's representation to the EU would, until the next meeting of the intergroup, which was to be held on the sidelines of the next plenary session on 12-13 February 2009, operate as a secretariat so as to organise the formal registration of the intergroup with the CoR Bureau.
- CoR members wishing to take part in a North Sea Regions intergroup are invited to submit an appropriate expression of interest to Bremen's representation to the EU as soon as possible. The

same applies to members who are interested in being part of the presidency (chair, first vice-chair, second vice-chair).

- The CoR Bureau was to be informed of and asked to approve the establishment of a North Sea Regions intergroup at its extraordinary meeting in Pilzen on 15-16 January 2009.
- The next meeting of the North Sea Regions intergroup would probably be held on the second day of the next plenary session, i.e. 13 February 2009. This meeting would elect the presidency and discuss and adopt the intergroup's future work programme.

Brussels, 28 November 2008

Constanze Ripke