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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN ECOLOGICAL SPHERE AS A FACTOR OF LIFE ENHANCEMENT IN THE ARCTIC

Over the past few years there has been a tendency towards strengthening international cooperation among circumpolar regions¹. In the Russian Federation significant attention is given to international projects aimed at developing local self-governance in those regions, protecting and preserving the environment and developing northern territories [Panin, 2011. Pp.87-98].

Main motivational factors leading to engagement in such international collaboration in the Arctic are as follows: joint efforts to preserve the unique nature of the region, to enhance the Arctic lifestyle, to protect indigenous peoples of the north and their traditional activities. Biodiversity of this unique region, health and life expectancy of the aborigines are mainly dependent on ecology of the Arctic seas and rivers, reindeer pastures, and tundra soil.

Sensitive environment, unique biological resources, economic and scientific importance of the Arctic dictate the necessity to strive for coordinated actions of the Arctic states in the sphere of scientific research of the wildlife and natural habitats in the Arctic as well as human impact on the quality of life of aborigines.

International cooperation in the Arctic was initiated by the Soviet government in 1987 ("Murmansk initiatives of M.S. Gorbachyov").

Further development of the international collaboration was triggered by increasing ecological problems and cross-border transfer of pollutants. The problems were

caused by the intensive development of the Arctic resources; construction of mining, metallurgical, oil exploration and production plants; pulp and paper enterprises, energy companies; disposal of liquid and solid radioactive waste into the waters. All the Arctic states realized the negative consequences of the human impact in the Arctic. In spring of 1989, Finland offered to hold a conference on the environment conservation in the Arctic. The idea was adopted by the governments of Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Norway, the USSR, the USA, and Sweden. The first preliminary meetings, which were held in Rovaniemi (Finland) in September 1989, laid the foundation of "the Rovaniemi process".

First reports on the condition of the Arctic environment were presented at the First Arctic Ministerial conference in Rovaniemi in June 1991. The conference gave a start to international cooperation in the environmental sphere of the Arctic. The Arctic states further adopted the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). The following main objectives were listed:

- preserving the arctic ecosystems and local people,
- ensuring environmental protection principals while keeping in mind the needs and traditions of Arctic Native peoples,
- monitoring environmental conditions as well as reducing and eventually eliminating pollution in the Arctic environment.

To realize this Strategy the following five working groups were set up:

- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP),
- Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF),
- Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME),
- Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR), and
- Sustainable Development and Utilization (SDU).

¹ Issue «Russia's contribution to the International polar year 2007/08": Polar atmosphere; Oceanography and sea ice; Polar cryosphere and ground water; The structure and history of development of lithosphere; Land and sea ecosystems; The quality of life and socio-economic development of polar regions; The results of the International polar year 2007/08 and perspectives of Russian polar research. – М. – Spb: Paulsen, 2011.

МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО КАК ФАКТОР ПОВЫШЕНИЯ УРОВНЯ ЖИЗНИ В АРКТИКЕ

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Аннотация: В статье рассматривается вопрос о международном сотрудничестве в северных регионах, где актуальной остается задача повышения уровня жизни коренных народов Арктики. Авторы дают краткую историю развития такого сотрудничества. Они иллюстрируют это на примере российско-канадского проекта НОРДЕП.

Ключевые слова: Арктика, коренные народы, международное сотрудничество, устойчивое развитие, проект НОРДЕП.

The First Ministerial conference was followed by two more conferences – one in Nuuk (Greenland) in 1993 and the other in Inuvik (Canada) in 1996. After that, the programs were united under the aegis of the Arctic Council.

On September 19, 1996, in Ottawa (Canada) the Ministers of Foreign affairs of the eight Arctic states – Denmark, Iceland, Canada, Norway, the Russian Federation, the USA, Finland, and Sweden – signed the Ottawa Declaration to establish the Arctic Council as a forum for promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, with involving Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants in such issues as sustainable development and environmental protection.

The Arctic nature is so unique that even a slight impact on it leads to a significant imbalance in its vulnerable ecosystems the consequences of which cover large territories and last for a very long time (sometimes hundreds of years). The fragile nature of the Arctic environment in combination with a high probability of cross-border consequences of ecological damage determined the necessity of establishing sustainable development of the region as soon as possible; balancing human impact and ecological capacity of a specific natural habitat should become a priority.

At the end of the 20th century, Arctic countries promoted their cooperation in the sphere of Arctic environment protection. The world learned how important it is to protect ecosystems of the Arctic after huge oil spills in Alaska and Siberia, as well as after being exposed to evidence of disastrous effects of accumulation of chloride pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) in the Arctic food chain; those substances were brought by water and air masses from the southern areas of the world.

In October 2002, AMAP presented the Assessment Report “Arctic Pollution Issues”² which was a result of joint 5-year research done by 250 experts from the Arctic states and observer states in the Arctic Council. The Assessment Report showed that although most sources of pollution are far away from the Arctic, contaminants are carried all the way to the Arctic with air masses and water currents. Contaminants are accumulated in animal chains and negatively affect health of the people in the North, especially of some indigenous peoples whose organisms are more prone to be affected by contaminants.

Because problems concerning functioning and development of Arctic economy as a system of interconnected regions are becoming vital for the Russian Federation in the current conditions of internationalization, a long-term goal for Russia is conducting research of issues related to inter-regional cooperation and efficient usage of natural resources as well as territorial distribution of social and economic resources.

International cooperation in researching the best practices of social policies related to northern territories in different countries contributes to the development of a country’s own approach to the ways of enhancing the

standard of living and the quality of life of the population in the Arctic region. Countries also take into account their own regional peculiarities such as traditional economies, local customs, local community’s way of thinking and traditions.

Interdependence is obvious in the northern regions, particularly in the Arctic. It can be put down to the unity of the natural environment and unique spiritual and cultural traditions of the peoples of the North. Development of those regions takes place within the concept of sustainable development which means a gradual change in the behavior of society and individuals towards the natural resources and the environment. Planning and carrying out this sustainable development should take into consideration the needs of future generations.

There are many ways of international cooperation that open new opportunities for social and economic development of the Russian Arctic regions. They are cooperation with other countries in the sphere of oil and gas field exploration, harmonization of Arctic countries’ legislation, sharing experience of managing small Arctic settlements, and integration of aborigines into the market economy.

Another component of the integration processes is northern regional organizations of different nature and with different specifics, which have been gaining strength over the past few years. These organizations have a special role in the realization of major goals of the integration process: they create the atmosphere of good neighbourhood and trust and contribute to the economic, cultural, humanitarian and other kinds of cooperation.

Canada has been a long-term partner of the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district in the process of implementing joint ecological projects. One of the most significant projects in terms of its influence on the social development in Yamal is the Canadian-Russian project “Programme of the institutional development and Russian aborigines’ involvement in the sustainable development of the Arctic” (NORDEP).

The first project resulted in the involvement of indigenous peoples of the North in the economic development of the local territories and the legislation process on the federal, regional and local levels. Corporations of economic development of the indigenous minority peoples of the North were established, uniting different communities. Rules and regulations for establishing such economic bodies as well as for their efficient management were worked out.

Apart from that, in the framework of this Russian-Canadian project, a Center for empowerment of indigenous minority peoples of the North was created. It was Russian Training Center for indigenous peoples under the Association of indigenous minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation. There are regular trainings on social and economic development of the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district in this center. The topics of such trainings include federal legislation on the rights of indigenous peoples, introduction into entrepreneurship and small business management, management of traditional economy in the market conditions, fundrais-

2 Pollution of the Arctic - 2002. Report of the working group of the Arctic Council of AMAP.

ing, etc. Within the project, members of aboriginal communities were introduced to the Canadian experience of aboriginal business and entrepreneurship; established partnership relations with many organizations and agencies in Canada; studied Canadian technologies of gathering and processing wild berries and mushrooms, reindeer and fish processing, and so on.

This mutually beneficial international partnership with Canada made it possible for the Russian Association of indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation to represent the aborigines of the North on the national and international scale. Moreover, an integrated information space on the problems of indigenous minority groups of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation was created.

Thanks to this Russian-Canadian project, Russian northern peoples have managed to create their own information network which is able to respond rapidly to conflict situations³.

Within the same Russian-Canadian project NORDEP, a centralized system of aboriginal crafts production, distribution and retail was created in the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district. It allows artisans to generate more income.

With that purpose in mind, in Salekhard, the Arts Center was opened, which is now a resource center for local artisans that provides programming software, hosts trainings and acts as a platform for artisans' and artists' work. This organization coordinates distribution and

retail of crafts and serves as a link between producers and customers. Within the NORDEP project new jobs were created and twenty-two contracts were signed with representatives of nearby artisan settlements. Representatives of the regional Arts Center interact with local settlements and collect information about artisans and their crafts. The center also organizes workshops with Canadian artists and artisans for Yamal craftsmen, hosts joint craft exhibitions, which provide exchange of experience and skills of working with modern tools in processing stone, metal, and bone carving.

This partnership approach is the key to success in international projects because it creates favorable conditions for the development of business relations between Canadian and Russian communities and state organizations.

The projects on the development of the continental shelf with the involvement of international companies are one of the priorities of social and economic development of the Russian Arctic. There are many interesting areas for Russian businesses to learn: the experience of private and state partnership, corporate and social responsibility, and international ecological standards. International cooperation contributes to the new vision of perspectives on preservation of the traditional culture and knowledge, their advantages in the modern world and niche in the market economy.

International cooperation in the Arctic contributes to creating a new vision of perspectives how to keep traditional culture and knowledge in the modern world and to keep a place for them in the market economy.

3 www.raipon.info.ru

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Summary: The article addresses the issue of international cooperation in the northern regions which serves the aim of improving the standard of living among indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The authors give a short history of development of such cooperation. They illustrate international cooperation in the Arctic describing the Russian-Canadian project NORDEP.

Keywords: the Arctic, indigenous peoples, aboriginal peoples, international cooperation, sustainable development, the NORDEP project.

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