



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Mr Forsberg,

I would like to thank you for forwarding the opinion of the Riksdag's Committee on Foreign Affairs concerning the Communication of the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of 20 November 2008 on the European Union and the Arctic Region {COM (2008) 763}.

The Commission is satisfied to see that the Riksdag supports the Commission's efforts to shape a coherent EU Arctic policy and that it welcomes the 20 November Communication as a first step in this process. This was indeed the Commission's interpretation of the Communication, i.e. to become the first layer of an EU Arctic policy that should be built gradually, respecting both the EU's and the Member States' legitimate interests in the region.

I would also like to express the appreciation for the Riksdag's support to the Commission's application to become permanent observer in the Arctic Council. The significant EU efforts and resources on Arctic research made available through successive EU Framework Programmes will be better coordinated with the Arctic stakeholders through closer co-operation, and also the presence of the European Environment Agency in the Arctic Council working groups.

Finally, I would like to reassure you that the Commission has also taken good note of the gaps identified by the Riksdag in the Communication. All the mentioned elements are of great importance to the Commission and receive its full attention. For example, the Commission considers cross-border cooperation as a tool of great value for our relations with our immediate neighbours. This certainly applies to the Barents Region, where the Northern Dimension policy and the Barents cooperation structures represent a successful reference for our overall relations with the Russian Federation. The Commission, through its membership in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, looks forward to a close and fruitful cooperation with the BEAC Swedish Presidency over the next two years.

Yours sincerely,

Margot WALLSTRÖM  
Vice-President of the European Commission

Mr Anders Forsberg  
Secretary-General of the Riksdag