

Brussels 19 December 2022

European Commission

Dear Commissioner,

We welcome You to Kiruna in region Norrbotten for the inauguration in January of the Swedish EU Council Presidency. On one hand the traditional meeting that start every chairmanship. On the other hand, a unique meeting, given where it takes place; in the heart of the European Arctic.

Northern Sweden is in the center of the green industrial revolution with large investments in fossil-free steel production, wind power, mining of crucial rare earth minerals and metals that will give Europe a larger share of own resources for batteries, mobile and IT technology. To this come climate smart battery factories, datacenters cooled by nature plus new unique circular economy industries that reuse minerals, metals, biomass, textiles, oil products and more. Clean renewable energy is a basis for all this, to be stepped up with new large hydrogen installations.

In Kiruna, You find the mining company LKAB that delivers 90% of the EU's own iron-ore. Due to the expansion of the mine, the city of Kiruna is moving, as You will see. There are many small communities over the vast region and there are also cities that are pioneers in climate smart solutions and social well-being, seen in the EU social and innovation score boards.

The regional universities play a crucial role and northern Sweden are one of the few regions where the EU structural funds and research funds interact for companies, society and academia to build innovation capacity. The space center Esrange in Kiruna is an example; it connects education, research, global industry, and local businesses into a unique innovation eco-system.

The dependency of natural resource industry, long distances, harsh climate, and sparse population create challenges. The EU play a vital role to unleash the regional potentials, by place-based regional support, adapted investment tools and incorporation of infrastructure into the TEN-T. It also creates an understanding of the need to cooperate, such as the network of Northern Sparsely Populated Areas, NSPA, between northern Sweden, Finland and Norway, engaged in an EU-financed OECD driven project to implement the EU green and digital agenda.

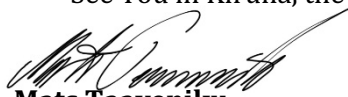
Northern Sweden will continue to deliver resources to Europe and cooperation and climate smart solutions in the European Arctic. It demands a balanced approach, as investments in a green and digital shift is also about investments in people and society. Not least the very many micro companies that are the sheer basis in remote areas, with lack of own recourses or easy reach of external capital, but essential for a diversified long-term sustainable economy.

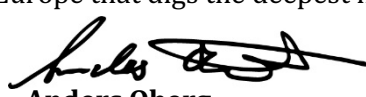
The Ice Hotel, that You will visit, is an example of true entrepreneurship with high set ambitions that can be found all over Swedish Lapland and the European Arctic. The growing tourism sector and the unique culture of EU's only recognized indigenous peoples, the Sami, with their reindeer herding, need to co-exist in a sustainable way with the industry.


The forestry is in this both a raw material industry and a small-scale, often family-runned, business, that for centuries has delivered local economy by producing climate smart building materials and paper products. Modern forestry makes use of all biomass rest-products to reduce and replace fossil-based energy, fuels and materials. It is a circular bioeconomy from generation to generation, that truly contribute to the European long-term circular green economy.

Thank You, for taking Your time to read. We appreciate Your work in these critical times for Europe. The EU need to do the right things and we will in turn do our part. Everything happens somewhere and that somewhere is us in our part of the EU. So, Welcome to our place.

See You in Kiruna, the city in Europe that digs the deepest mine and reach the highest space!


Mats Taaveniku
Incoming Mayor, Kiruna Municipality


Anders Oberg
Incoming Chair, Region Norrbotten


Mikael Janson
Director, North Sweden