

1995 CBSS 4th Ministerial Session - Gdansk Communiqué

**Council of the Baltic Sea States
Fourth Ministerial Session
Gdansk, May 18-19, 1995**

COMMUNIQUE

I. Introduction

1. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation and Sweden, and the representative of the European Commission, met in Gdansk on May 18-19, 1995, for the IV Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.
2. The Ministers exchanged views on political and economic issues, especially regarding the Baltic Sea region and on the activities of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.
3. In the year of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, which started in the vicinity of Gdansk, in Westerplatte, the Ministers noted with satisfaction the development of good neighbourly relations between the members of CBSS, as evidenced by the lively political contacts and development of trade and cooperation in all spheres of life. This contributes to stabilization in the region, as well as in all of Europe.
4. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the full withdrawal, by August 31, 1994, of foreign troops from Estonia and Latvia, and expressed their conviction, that completion of the proceedings related to the withdrawal of troops, will contribute to strengthening stability and good neighbourly relations in the region. They appreciated the role of OSCE in this context.
5. The Council recognized, that the results of the OSCE summit in Budapest in December 1994, will contribute to the stabilization and strengthening of democratic tendencies in Europe, including the Baltic Sea region.
6. The Council expressed its support to the actions of OSCE and the UN Commission on Human Rights undertaken in connection with the crisis in Chechnya.
7. The Council expressed its conviction, that the Pact on Stability in Europe, adopted in Paris on March 21, 1995, will contribute to the strengthening of democracy and development of cooperation in the region, and of the role of CBSS as a body inspiring and coordinating multilateral cooperation between the Members.
8. An important and positive process was the further rapprochement between the States of the Baltic Sea region and the European Union. The Ministers welcomed the accession of Finland and Sweden to the EU. They also expressed satisfaction with the completion of negotiations on Europe Agreements between EU and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and expressed their

conviction, that relations between the other members of CBSS and the EU, will be strengthened.

The Council also expressed its conviction, that enlargement of the European Union in the region will strengthen economic ties between CBSS members and give impetus to harmonious development of the whole region.

9. The Council expressed its satisfaction with the admittance of Latvia to the Council of Europe.

The Council paid attention to the development of democracy and economic reforms in Russia and expressed its hope, that Russia would also become a member of the Council of Europe according to the criteria set for membership.

II. Decisions and Conclusions

10. The CBSS contributed to the development of cooperation in a broad range of fields. In accordance with the suggestions contained in the Report of the Nordic Working Group, the coordinative role of the Council, with respect to other organizations dealing with cooperation, was improved. The flow of information on the activities of various non-government and local associations and organizations, was also improved. The high number of bodies cooperating in various fields, reflects the growing interest in regional cooperation and strengthens the consciousness of regional identity of the Member States.

The international role of CBSS was also strengthened. The Council participated in the CSCE/OSCE review conference in Budapest and in the works preceding the conclusion of the Pact on Stability in Europe and in the Conference in Paris, as well as in the ministerial conferences of the Central European Initiative and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Council of the Euroarctic Barents Sea Region.

The Council instructed the Committee of Senior Officials to consider further measures increasing the role and position of CBSS.

11. The Council noted with satisfaction progress in the development of democracy in the region, and underlined the necessity to continue activities aimed at its consolidation.

The Council attached great importance to the commencement of activities in October 1994, by the CBSS Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, including the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities, Mr. Ole Espersen. The Council welcomed the establishment of the Commissioner's Secretariat in Copenhagen and the conclusion of the Agreement on the Secretariat between the Government of Denmark and other Member States.

The Council has received a report and was informed by the Commissioner on his efforts aiming at the development and consolidation of democratic institutions and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The Commissioner will continue to enjoy full support for his activities from the Council.

12. The Council approved the activities of the Working Group on Assistance to Democratic Institutions, its action plan for the period 1995/1996, and the handing over of the chairmanship from Sweden to Poland. The working group will continue to focus on the

obstacles to development of democratic institutions in the countries in transition and on their further development. The Working Group shall include in their proceedings the results of the Commissioner's work.

13. The Council approved the activities of the Working Group on Economic Cooperation, its action plan for the period 1995/1996, and the handing over of the chairmanship from Estonia to Sweden.

The Council stressed the need to pursue the principles of free trade in line with the WTO Agreement at the global, regional and bilateral level, and economic policies aimed at macro-economic stability, and to work towards harmonization of economic legislation, introduction of standardized procedures for business transactions and attracting foreign direct investments in the region. It noted the efforts of the members in the transition to pursue privatization and encouraged them to phase out remaining state subsidies, which have the effect of distorting competition. The Council invited the International Financial Institutions, as well as bilateral donors, to provide full support to the successful completion of the transition process.

The Council noted the progress in upgrading the border crossings, in particular the six priority ones, with the support of the PHARE program. The Council recognized the need to take further steps to eliminate the existing bottlenecks. In this context the Council encouraged introduction of modern standardized communication systems and networks linking the border crossings and welcomed PHARE and TACIS assistance to such projects.

The Council underlined the importance of balanced development of regional infrastructure, and welcomed the conferences on maritime issues and customs cooperation in Finland and Denmark, and on energy in Estonia. As to transport corridors, the development of TransEuropean Networks, especially the planning of the transport corridor no. 1 was given full support, as well as the formation of a High-level International Working Group on Via Baltica. The Council looks forward to the completion of a comprehensive report by this Working Group later this year.

The Council recognized the important role, which small and medium sized companies play in the economic development of the region and will support measures facilitating the creation and development of SME's, inter alia through appropriate financial institutions and credit facilities and by promoting regional trade fairs, business days and data information centers.

14. The Council was acquainted with the report and action plan of the Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety, and noted with satisfaction progress achieved in this field. The Council approved the report and further chairmanship of the WG by Finland. The priorities of the WG remain: identification of nuclear and radiation risks, monitoring various projects, and making recommendations towards enhancing safety.

The Council evaluated the decommissioning of Paldiski nuclear reactors as a good example of international cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

15. The Council expressed its full support to the activities of the Eurofaculty, and considered it necessary to conclude an agreement on the status of Eurofaculty. The Council emphasized the need for the CSO to maintain close ties with the Eurofaculty Steering Committee. The Council noted with satisfaction, that the donors will ensure further financial contributions for

the continuation of Eurofaculty's activities, and they committed themselves to consider the possibilities of raising additional means for an extension of Eurofaculty to Kaliningrad.

16. The Council was informed by the representatives of the European Union on its policy approach to the Baltic Sea region and welcomed the concrete prospects this offers for further development and deepening of cooperation between the European Union and CBSS Member States.

III. Other regional activities

17. The Ministers appreciated the establishment of the Baltic Council of Ministers - an institution for intergovernmental cooperation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and expressed their belief that this body will contribute to regional cooperation

18. The Council welcomed with satisfaction the results of the Conference on subregional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, held in Travemünde in October 1994. The Conference established, under the auspices of CBSS, a new dimension of cooperation. The Council expressed the conviction, that the next conference, which will be held in Västerås in Sweden, will result in further development of cooperation in this field.

19. The Council expressed its full support to the activities of HELCOM. Conscious of the need for continued efforts to improve the state of the natural environment, the Council recognized, that further efforts should be made to find financial means to eliminate sources of pollution. Participation of international organizations and institutions and private sector will be welcome. The Council will continue to maintain close contacts with HELCOM.

20. The Council values the parliamentary dimension of cooperation, and looks forward to the parliamentary conference on Bornholm, on September 12-13, 1995.

21. The Council expressed its support to the works of the initiative ²Visions and Strategies around the Baltic 2010², corresponding to other similar initiatives in Europe, especially of the EU, Council of Europe and the Central European Initiative - 2010. The results of the Third Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development, held in Tallinn, in December 1994, and the creation of a secretariat of VASAB 2010, under Polish chairmanship, facilitate further cooperation among the Member States.

22. Appreciating the importance of direct contacts between private companies in the Baltic Sea Region, the Council expressed satisfaction with the development of activities of the Baltic Chambers of Commerce Association, and confirmed its interest in maintaining working contacts with BCCA.

23. The Council noted with satisfaction the organization in Poland of the Conference on Combatting Theft and Smuggling of Cultural Objects (November 1994) and the Second Conference on Combatting Organized Crime in the Baltic Sea Region (March 1995), on the initiative of Sweden and Poland. These conferences contributed to closer cooperation in these fields and established relevant mechanisms for joint action. The Council strongly emphasized the general importance of continued and increased cooperation among the Baltic Sea states in combatting organized crime.

24. The Council noted with satisfaction the development of cultural cooperation, in particular within the framework of the Ars Baltica program. The Ministers expressed the conviction, that the forthcoming seminar of the Ministers of Culture on Bornholm, on May 23-24, 1995, will stimulate further close cultural cooperation. The Council also expressed its support to the cultural, scientific and publicistic activities conducted by institutes and centers, such as the Baltic Institutes in Travemünde, Karlskrona, Tampere and Gdansk, as well as the Conferences of the Baltic Universities Rectors and the Baltic University Program in Uppsala.

The Council acknowledged the importance of the Workshop on new communication technologies, arranged in March 1995, by Finland, by the Baltic Institutes of Finland and Sweden, in cooperation with CBSS.

25. The Council noted with satisfaction the initiative of Sweden to organize, in cooperation with CBSS, a meeting of experts with a view to discussing certain health problems (e.g. spread of contagious diseases, especially STD, including HIV).

26. The Council expressed its support to direct contacts between the relevant institutions in the fields of navigation and safety at sea, as well as cooperation in the framework of important Baltic organizations like International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission, Union of the Baltic Cities, Organization of Baltic Ports and Baltic Tourism Cooperation.

IV. Institutional decisions and perspectives

27. The Council accepted Iceland as a member of CBSS.

28. The Council welcomed the intention of the Prime Minister of Sweden to invite Heads of Governments of the CBSS Member States, to a meeting in Sweden next year, with a view to working towards the goal of giving the Baltic Sea Region political strength as a dynamic part of a democratic Europe. The meeting will be prepared and organized within the CBSS framework.

29. In view of the new challenges in economic cooperation the Council considered it desirable to convene, at the earliest possible date a conference of Ministers in charge of economic cooperation. The Council welcomed the proposal presented by Finland to hold this conference in Helsinki.

30. The Council considered the issue of setting up an annual prize for outstanding achievements in the development of Baltic Sea region cooperation. The rules for awarding the prize will be elaborated by the CSO.

31. The Council instructed the CSO to examine the need and possibility of establishing a permanent secretariat and to present relevant recommendations.

32. The Council expressed its thanks to Poland for organizing the IV Session of the Council and for chairing the Council during the period 1994/1995, as well as entrusted Sweden with the chairmanship for the period 1995/1996. During this period, the Troika will be composed of Sweden, Poland and Latvia. The V Session of CBSS will be held in Sweden in May 1996.

The Council expressed thanks to the guests of the Session for their participation in the debate, and presented materials and reports.