

1996 CBSS 5th Ministerial Session - Kalmar Communiqué

Council of the Baltic Sea States

Fifth Ministerial Session, Kalmar 2-3 July 1996

COMMUNIQUE

(i) Introduction

1. At the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) - the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden and the Representative of the European Commission - met in Kalmar on 2-3 July, 1996, for its Fifth Ministerial Session. The Presidency of the European Union was represented by the Minister of State for European Affairs of Ireland.

2. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the development of relations between the CBSS Members, most recently evidenced by the meeting of the Heads of Government of the Baltic Sea States in Visby on 34 May, 1996, affirming their support for the process of co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region with particular emphasis on promoting the region as an area where co-operation, democracy and market economy would prevail. The Ministers welcomed the unique opportunity offered to promote prosperity in and solidarity between the CBSS countries, thus strengthening confidence, stability and security in the region.

3. The Ministers emphasised that the new situation with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland as applicant countries to the European Union and the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Union had opened up new vistas for further development and for deepening co-operation between the CBSS Member States and the European Union. Co-operation is not only important for the States of the Baltic Sea region but also for the European Union, as is its active engagement in the region. The conclusion of trade and co-operation agreements among Baltic Sea countries, such as the Free Trade Agreement between Lithuania and Poland, as well as the Agricultural Free Trade Agreement between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, is equally important.

4. The Ministers confirmed their commitment to the principles of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and its work on issues concerning the security and stability of Europe, expressing the wish to develop interaction between their regional endeavours within the CBSS and those of the OSCE.

5. The Ministers noted with appreciation the strong engagement of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Council of Ministers in the development of Baltic Sea regional co-operation and the significance this has for the CBSS.

6. The Ministers welcomed the fact that all CBSS Member States are now members of the Council of Europe after the entry in 1996 of the Russian Federation. They noted that the ratification by all CBSS Member States of the European Convention on Human Rights will enhance the focus on human rights and democracy in the region.

(ii) Decisions and Conclusions

7. The Council has contributed to the development of co-operation in many fields and has further improved the exchange of information with a number of relevant organisations, leading to valuable inputs as regards the process of co-operation in the Baltic Sea region.

The role and position of the CBSS was strengthened through the Visby Summit by recognition of the CBSS as the forum for guidance and overall co-ordination among the Baltic Sea States and the European Commission. The importance of the CBSS was further enhanced by development of closer relations with the Parliamentary Conference on co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area Rönne, Denmark on 12-13 September, 1995) and the Conference on Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation (Västerås, Sweden on 8-9 November, 1995).

The Council noted with appreciation the increasing contacts with the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB 2010), the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association (BCCA), the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), the Baltic Tourism Co-operation (BTC) and the Baltic Ports Organisation (BPO). Relations were further developed with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Central European Initiative and the Black Sea Economic Co-operation.

8. The Council adopted three Action Programmes, in areas also emphasised by the Visby Summit to increase people-to-people co-operation and civic security, economic development and integration, and strengthen environmental protection (Annex 1), also taking into account the Baltic Sea Region Initiative worked out by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in Florence on 21-22 June, 1996 (Annex 2). The CSO was instructed to initiate as soon as possible the process to follow up and co-ordinate the implementation of these programmes.

The Council emphasised the importance of linking the European Commission's Baltic Sea Region Initiative to the process.

9. The Council noted the successful work completed during the first full year of the mandate of Professor Ole Espersen as CBSS Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, including the Rights of Persons belonging to Minorities. They welcomed the support for him expressed by the Heads of Government at the Visby Summit.

10. The Council approved the report of the Working Group on Assistance to Democratic Institutions and expressed its appreciation that a dialogue had been established between the Working Group and the CBSS Commissioner on how mutually to reinforce each other's work, and welcomed the fact that the Working Group had been able to include in its proceedings results from the Commissioner's work.

11. The Council noted with appreciation the continued progress made by the Working Group on Economic Co-operation, underlining the importance of improving the transport systems in the region, including the Via Baltica (Helsinki - Warsaw) and maritime transport. The Council also expressed the need for initiating studies for upgrading the Via Hanseatica (St. Petersburg - Gdansk). The need for speeding up border crossing and customs procedures was emphasised. The possibility of establishing a focal point for monitoring problems and progress in this field will be examined. The CSO was furthermore encouraged to give high

priority to the issue of Land Administration and to energy co-operation. The Council also stressed the major role of International Financial Institutions in the region.

12. The Council noted with satisfaction the further progress made by the Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety in identifying nuclear and radiation risks and monitoring various projects, as well as its efforts to enhance safety in nuclear installations and in the management of radioactive waste.

13. The Council expressed its full support of the activities of the EuroFaculty and welcomed the decision by the EuroFaculty Steering Committee to present in November 1996 an evaluation which should be used for planning the future activities of the EuroFaculty. The Council furthermore welcomed with satisfaction that additional means had been secured to extend the EuroFaculty to Kaliningrad in the academic year of 1996/97. This exploratory first year programme at the University of Kaliningrad would be followed by an evaluation to determine the question of continued funding. The Council supported the idea of developing model agreements on the status of the EuroFaculty to be concluded between the EuroFaculty and each host State and instructed the CSO to follow the progress.

14. The Council welcomed with satisfaction the Swedish readiness to set up a Baltic Sea States Support Group in Stockholm as a result of the Visby Summit. The Group could, where appropriate, provide technical and administrative support to the Chairing State of the CBSS, serve as a focal point for information on ongoing Baltic Sea co-operation at various levels, including the European Commission, as well as between non-governmental organisations. The Council instructed the CSO to follow further developments and review the situation at an appropriate time.

15. The Council welcomed the offer of the City of Gdansk to award the Prize for Outstanding Achievements in the Development of Co-operation in the CBSS Region in conjunction with the 1000th Anniversary of the City in 1997. The possible awarding of further prizes should be based on the experiences of the 1997 award.

(iii) Other regional activities

16. The Council noted with satisfaction the results of the Baltic Sea Regional Meeting of Ministers in charge of Industry and Economic Affairs in Helsinki (August 1995). They welcomed the offer of Poland to hold a follow-up conference in Poland on 4-5 November, 1996.

17. The Council noted the importance of the parliamentary dimension of co-operation, looking forward to the Fifth Parliamentary Conference on Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area in Riga on 10-12 September, 1996.

18. The Council expressed satisfaction with the development of cultural co-operation. The Baltic Sea States Ministers of Culture met in Tallinn on 10-12 September, 1995 to discuss obstacles to cultural exchange in the Baltic Sea region, to take stock of achievements in 1990-1995, and to decide on priorities in future cultural co-operation. Support was expressed for a Swedish proposal to the effect that a survey of cultural centres in the Baltic Sea region be made. Ministers of Culture will meet again in Lubeck, Germany on 21-23 September, 1997.

19. The Council welcomed the constructive results of the Third Conference on Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation, held in Västerås, Sweden. The Council expected the next conference, which will be held in Vaasa, Finland on 17-18 October, 1996 to further co-ordinate and consolidate the Baltic Sea co-operation.

20. The Council stated its satisfaction at the intensified work to combat organised crime in the Baltic Sea Region. Recent meetings - in Oslo November, 1995) and Helsinki (May, 1996) - had contributed to closer co-operation and further joint actions. Referring to the decision of the Heads of Government at the Visby Summit, the Council noted that a task force to elaborate measures for immediate implementation had already started to work. The Council strongly underlined the general importance of continued and increased co-operation among the Baltic Sea States in combating organised crime.

21. The Council welcomed the successful outcome of the Seminar on Cross-Border Co-operation in the Baltic Sea States Region in Karlskrona, Sweden on 27-28 March 1996. The Council underlined the need for proper follow-up on local, regional and national levels to the issues raised at the Seminar.

22. The Council expressed its full support to the activities of HELCOM and recognised the instrumental role that HELCOM has and will play in following up, co-ordinating and implementing the environmental aspects of the Action Programmes for the Baltic Sea States Co-operation according to its mandate under the Helsinki Convention. The Council also welcomed the development of an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea region to be initiated at the meeting of the Ministers of the Environment in Stockholm on 20-21 October, 1996.

In view of the interdisciplinary character of a regional Agenda 21, the Council calls upon all other ministers concerned to support the development of such an Agenda. The Council should be informed about the progress of the work as well as of the final results.

23. The Council looks forward to the further strengthening of the implementation of VASAB 2010 at the Fourth Conference of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development, to be held in Stockholm on 22 October, 1996, under German presidency. It welcomed the close co-operation between Spatial Planning Ministers and Ministers of the Environment as the Agenda 21 will be based also on sustainable spatial development at the Baltic Sea region.

24. The Council expressed support for the cultural, scientific and publicist activities conducted by institutes and centres, such as the Baltic Institutes in Gdansk (Poland), Karlskrona (Sweden), Tampere (Finland), Rostock and Travemünde (Germany), as well as by the Conferences of the Baltic Universities Rectors, the Baltic Conferences at Bornholm, Denmark and the Baltic University Programme in Uppsala, Sweden.

25. The Council, appreciating the importance of close co-operation between business communities in the Baltic Sea region as demonstrated by the Baltic Sea Business Summit in Stockholm on 24-25 April, 1996, expressed its satisfaction and support for the development of the action-oriented activities of the Baltic Chambers of Commerce Association and for the Baltic Sea Partenariat in September 1996 in Poland.

26. The Council reiterated its support for direct contacts between relevant institutions in the fields of navigation and safety at sea, especially with the view to improving the maritime

safety for roll on-roll off passenger ferries in accordance with regional international agreements.

(iv) Chairmanship

27. The Council thanked Sweden for chairing the CBSS during 1995-96 and for organising the Fifth Session at Kalmar Castle.

The Council entrusted Latvia with the chairmanship for the period 1996/1997. During this period, the Troika will be composed by Latvia, Sweden and Denmark.

The Sixth Session of the CBSS will be held in Latvia in June 1997.

The Council expressed its gratitude to the guests of the Session for their participation and for their reports.