

1997 CBSS 6th Ministerial Session - Riga Communiqué

Council of the Baltic Sea States

Sixth Ministerial Session, Riga 2-3 July 1997

COMMUNIQUE

Introduction

1. At the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) - the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland (represented by the Minister of Environment and Development Co-operation), Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden, and the Representative of the European Commission met in Riga on 2-3 July, 1997, for its Sixth Ministerial Session. The Presidency of the European Union was represented by the Minister for Environment of Luxembourg. Representatives of France, the Ukraine and the United States of America were attending as special guests.

2. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved in the regional co-operation which reflects the growing awareness of the values that once again unite the nations around the Baltic Sea. This region is re-establishing its own identity. The Ministers also expressed their firm belief that a strengthening of co-operation in the entire Baltic Sea area will substantially contribute to the creation of a stable, democratic, prosperous and undivided Europe.

3. The Ministers noted the challenges posed by the transformation process in the fields of infrastructure, energy, environment, legal and institutional frameworks and combating organised crime. They stressed the opportunities to use comparative advantages around the Baltic Sea, as well as the important role to be played by cross-border co-operation. These issues should be addressed in a broad regional framework on the basis of sustainable development. The Ministers emphasised the role of the CBSS in overcoming imbalances between the states of the Baltic Sea.

4. Full compliance with the OSCE principles and commitments shall form the basis for co-operation in the Baltic Sea area. The CBSS acts as a subregional partner in support of the confidence building tasks of the OSCE. The member states will contribute to the work on a Common and Comprehensive Security Model for the 21st century. The Council calls upon the OSCE Ministerial meeting in Copenhagen in December to promote mutually reinforcing co-operation between organisations in Europe.

5. The Council expressed its satisfaction with the European Union support in the Region, as set out in the Commission's Baltic Sea Region Initiative. This is being implemented with financial support from the Phare, Tacis and other Community programmes, and on the basis of the relations of the EU with each of the countries in the region. In view of the future accession of applicant countries, co-operation is being further intensified. Also the EU relations with Russia are further developed and intensified, and the highest importance is attached to further strengthening of co-operation among all countries in the Region. In order

to promote harmonious development throughout the region, it is essential for Russia to take part in the efforts of aligning rules and legislation. The useful experience of the regions of Russia, participating in the CBSS co-operation, in this field is noted.

The Council emphasised that the ongoing process of EU enlargement, which includes the Baltic states and Poland, will further contribute to the consolidation of security and stability in the Baltic Sea region and will provide possibilities for even closer co-operation in the framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

6. The Ministers welcomed the ratification of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights by Latvia, and the signing by Russia of Protocol 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights on abolition of the death penalty.

The Ministers also noted with appreciation that the conclusion of readmission agreements by the Baltic and Nordic States contributed to the facilitation of a readmission network, and encouraged its further expansion in the Baltic Sea region.

7. The Ministers noted the importance of the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers and Baltic Council of Ministers for the CBSS as a contribution to the integration processes. The Ministers welcomed the programme of the Nordic Council of Ministers on Co-operation with Areas Adjacent to the Nordic Region. They expressed their appreciation of the offer made by the Nordic Council of Ministers of assistance to the implementation of the CBSS Action Programmes and encouraged closer co-operation with the Nordic Council of Ministers.

8. The Ministers welcomed the proposal of Poland to award the Prize of the City of Gdansk for Outstanding Achievements in the Development of Co-operation in the CBSS Region to Mr. Ingvar Carlsson and Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki for their initiative and organisation of the [first meeting of the Heads of Government of the Baltic Sea States in Ronneby in September 1990](#).

Implementation of the Action programmes and follow-up decisions

9. The Council expressed its satisfaction with progress made in the implementation of the Action Programmes and in particular with the widespread involvement of the regional organisations and institutions in this process. The support given to the process by governments and a significant number of regional bodies will further consolidate the development of Baltic Sea co-operation.

The Council acknowledged the coordinative activities of the Committee of Senior Officials, the Working Groups on Assistance to Democratic Institutions, on Economic Co-operation, on Nuclear and Radiation Safety, and HELCOM in the implementation of the Action Programmes.

The Ministers recognised that in addition to financial resources, progress in the Region depends on human capital. Continued investment in human resources is thus essential. Also continued and consistent commitment by each of the CBSS members is essential in order to achieve results in regional co-operation. Close liaison with other regional bodies competent in specific fields is equally important for achieving the CBSS co-operation objectives.

10. The Council took note of the various initiatives which have been taken in the field of democratic institutions and human rights: seminars on freedom of the press (6-8 September, 1997, in Warsaw) and on procedural rules for the treatment of complaints before the European Human Rights Commission and Courts (7-8 March, 1997, in Copenhagen), and participation in the 2nd European meeting of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (20 January, 1997, in Copenhagen). Such initiatives contribute to the development of a common understanding of democratic values in the Region. The Council also welcomed the strengthening of co-operation with other international fora such as the Council of Europe, the Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations Development Programme.

11. The Council appreciated the initiatives in the spheres of civic security and combating organised crime, which have high priority. The CBSS will continue to study the concept of civic security. The Council noted the importance of existing bilateral and multilateral co-operation between the police, immigration, customs and border guard authorities. In this context, the Council noted that in the Baltic Sea region Border Control Conference held 26-27 May, 1997, in Helsinki the authorities responsible for border control had agreed to establish a regular co-operation. The Council gave its full support to this co-operation the results of which will be reported to the Council.

The Council noted with satisfaction the progress made in regard to free travel in the Region and the bilateral agreements concluded between the countries on abolition of visas, as well as ratification of relevant international conventions. The Council also noted problems which hinder free movement still exist. Thus, the Council agreed that co-operation in this field is still needed.

12. The Council expressed its appreciation of the work of the Task-force on organized crime, established by the Heads of Government at the Visby Summit. The Task-Force has achieved impressive operational results in the four main areas of work: improved exchange of information, joint operative measures, judicial co-operation, training and seminars. The Council looks forward to the continuation of this important work and to the report of the Task-force to be submitted to the next meeting of the Heads of Government.

The Ministers reiterated the need for further high priority to be given to co-operation in the field of civic security, both in a bilateral and a multilateral framework.

13. The Council appreciated the wide range of activities undertaken for implementation of the people-to-people programme. Adoption of the Baltic Sea Tourism Programme and co-operation in the framework of "Ars Baltica", Annual theatre festival "Baltic House" in St.Petersburg and the Baltic Network of Art Academies (established in Poznan, on 5-6 March, 1997), provide possibilities for development of contacts between peoples across borders.

The Council looks forward to the meeting of the Ministers of Culture in September, 1997, in Lubeck furthering co-operation in this field.

14. The Council noted with satisfaction the increased co-operation between the Working Group on Assistance to Democratic Institutions and the CBSS Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, including the Rights of Persons belonging to Minorities, in the implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations. The rights and duties of armed

forces personnel, non-citizens' voting rights and the right to stand for public office, are examples of such co-operation.

The Council took note of the conclusions and recommendations in the report of the Commissioner. The Council noted the active and successful work of Professor Ole Espersen, during his term in office, in consolidating and promoting democracy. The Council agreed that this work must be continued and adopted an amended mandate for the Commissioner for three years, reappointing Professor Ole Espersen in this position.

The Council expressed concern over the findings in the report of the Commissioner on the implementation of the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child in the CBSS States with regard to specific articles (sexual abuse, violence in media, children of asylum seekers). The Council instructed the CSO to organise work on this issue, including to study and evaluate the extent of sexual exploitation of children in the region, and to exchange information on existing measures.

15. The Council underlined the important role of the EuroFaculty in adapting and improving higher education in the Baltic States, and reiterated its support to the EuroFaculty. It agreed that close co-operation with the host universities is essential in order to introduce the necessary reforms in the curricula and new methods of teaching and learning. The success of the EuroFaculty depends on the governments and universities of the host countries fully sharing the objectives and co-operation with the project management as well as the continued moral and financial support by the donors. The Council welcomed the recommendations by the CSO and looks forward to their early implementation. The Council expressed satisfaction with the commencement of EuroFaculty activities in Kaliningrad and reiterated its determination to further support the functioning of the project.

The Council welcomed the various educational exchange activities and scholarship schemes operating in the Region. These activities should be streamlined in order to facilitate the equalisation of standards for mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas.

16. The Council noted the progress made in economic integration in the Region and supported the efforts of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia to join the WTO. The Kalmar objective of having most favoured nation treatment (MEN) as the minimum standard for trade relations among CBSS members will be achieved when Russia will grant MEN to Estonia. It is noted that trade relations among most countries in the Region are already at higher standards.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction that the Free Trade Agreement in agricultural products between the Baltic countries entered into force on 1 January, 1997.

17. The Council noted that in spite of the many actions already undertaken to improve infrastructure, legislation and procedures, border crossing problems are still a constraint to economic co-operation and development in the Region. Continued and strong commitment by national governments is essential for removing the remaining obstacles. Special attention must be given to the training, organisation and equipment of professional staff with a high standard of integrity. It is noted with satisfaction that according to the "Kalmar objectives" all CBSS countries have appointed national authorities to whom border crossing problems can be reported and who shall be responsible for monitoring the solutions. In this context, the Council welcomed the results of the 2nd Baltic Sea Customs Conference held on 5-6 June, 1997, in Tallinn.

18. The progress in adjusting the legal and institutional framework is also welcomed, as this is essential for improving the climate for investment. In order to extend economic development throughout the Region it is important that legislation and rules in all countries are compatible, clear, transparent, non-discriminatory, stable and proportionate with the objectives pursued. Continued follow-up is essential. The financial sector requires high professional standards and proper legislation and supervising structures. A modern system of land and other real estate property registration is essential and the process of land reform and creating a real estate market must be continued. Small and medium size enterprises (SME) contribute a major share to the creation of value added. In order to allow them to prosper, governments need to take consistently account of SME's in all their policy decisions.

The CBSS will continue its efforts towards establishing the macroeconomic identity of the region as a whole and to contribute towards co-ordinating the required financial resources for major public investments from national budgets, from bilateral and multilateral co-operation and from the international financial institutions.

19. The progress in the development of transport networks and other communications is noted. Further development is needed. Special attention must be paid to the growing West-East-West traffic. The Council expects that the results of the meetings of the 3rd Conference of Ministers of Transport of the Baltic Sea States and of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, both in Berlin on 21-22 April, 1997, and of the 3rd Pan European Transport Conference in Helsinki on 23-25 June, 1997, will contribute to the development in this field.

The Council took note of the various studies on the possible interconnection of various energy networks and that decisions on investments will be taken by the energy enterprises. The Ministers welcomed the Declaration made by the Nordic Prime Ministers in Bergen on 27 June, 1997, concerning Sustainable Supply of Energy Around the Baltic Sea.

The CBSS members are encouraged to align their national legislation and to adhere to the principle of national treatment in matters of transport, communication, energy and related services.

20. The Council welcomes the establishment of the Baltic Business Advisory Council (BAC) and looks forward to its contribution to stimulating development throughout the region. The results of the General Conference of the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association (BCCA) on 5-6 June, 1997, in St. Petersburg are also noted.

21. The Ministers took note of the Conference on Labour and Social Policy (Sobieszewo, Poland, 8-9 May, 1997) and of the proposal to enhance co-operation in this field in the context of the CBSS.

Ministers recognised that a well functioning labour market, with low unemployment rates and safe working conditions, is crucial for a stable democratic and social development of the region.

Ministers instructed the CSO to ensure that these issues, including cross-border co-operation on development of labour market and social policies, were duly taken up by the Working Groups.

22. The Council noted the importance of multilateral co-operation for restoring the ecological balance in the Region. In this regard the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) is considered as a major actor in the Region for implementation of the third Action Programme. The Council also noted the efforts made by HELCOM to make environmental protection an integral part of all activities in the transport sector (landbased transportation, airborne transportation, as well as waterways and ports) in order to achieve sustainable transport systems.

The Council welcomed the continued co-operation between HELCOM and Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB) regarding co-ordinated development programmes for coastal areas and the contribution of spatial planning to the protection of ecologically sensitive areas.

The Council appreciated the project on up-dating and strengthening of the Joint Comprehensive Programme (JCP) to overcome deficiencies and shortcomings, as well as to increase the pace of implementation under the responsibility of HELCOM.

The Council expressed the wish that HELCOM would follow the Baltic Sea Agenda 21 closely and co-operate with the Senior Officials Group for elaboration of an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region.

The national governments should undertake a commitment to develop action programmes for all transboundary water courses/bodies. The recommendations regarding the proper handling of solid and hazardous waste, introducing modern landfill techniques and phasing out of illegal dumping sites should be elaborated and adopted.

The Council welcomed the initiative by HELCOM to consider concrete measures for the Inventory on transportation patterns and risk estimation of oils carried in the Baltic Sea Area.

The Council expressed appreciation for the adoption of the Project on Agriculture.

The Council also encouraged the countries parties to the Helsinki Convention to give high priority to implementation of agreed decisions concerning nature conservation.

The Council expressed concern over the incidents related to netting of dumped chemical weapons in the Baltic Sea. They discerned the need for more information and education activities, especially among fishermen, taking into account the experience of HELCOM.

The Council also noted the contribution to the implementation of the third Action Programme of Ministers responsible for the Environment, who met in Stockholm on 21 October, 1996, and the important role of the work of the Senior Officials Group preparing Agenda 21.

The Council asked HELCOM, as a follow-up to the Kalmar Action Programmes regarding the phasing out of dangerous substances, and in view of the persisting high levels of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) in the Baltic Sea, to investigate relevant potential sources of PCB's in the Baltic Sea area, to elaborate an action programme aiming at the elimination of these sources and to report to the HELCOM meeting of Ministers in March, 1998.

23. The Ministers noted that spatial planning in most countries is at an early stage of development. By bringing together the different sectoral policies, as well as the different levels of authority (national, regional, local, cross-border), spatial planning allows for more

efficient use of scarce resources. The Council concurred with the view expressed by VASAB that spatial cohesion of the Baltic Sea Region needs to be enhanced after decades of political division and that there is a feeling of belonging together, which is reflected by a remarkable number of emerging initiatives leading to co-operation.

The Council noted with satisfaction that close co-operation has been established between the VASAB and Baltic Sea Agenda 21.

24. The Council expressed its satisfaction with bilateral and multilateral co-operation in matters pertaining to nuclear and radiation safety and the contribution made by the Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety.

The Council supports the ongoing activities for remediation and restoration of the Sillamae waste depository and for planning new technology for waste management. Further international co-operation within the framework of EU programmes and other initiatives is still necessary for solving the problems in Paldiski. Strong support should be given to co-operation for the development of Radiation Monitoring Network and data exchange system.

Progress has been made in the fields of radioactive waste management, waste depositories, regional and bilateral co-operation on early warning, development of national legal frameworks and emergency planning exercises.

Being aware of the problems related to illicit trafficking of nuclear materials the Council encouraged all relevant authorities to co-operate to prevent these activities.

The Council expressed support for multilateral and bilateral activities enhancing safety at nuclear power plants in Ignalina, Sosnovy Bor and Kola, which are co-ordinated by a committee founded by the G24 countries, utilising a priority list established by the International Atomic Energy Agency and financed amongst others by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Further substantial progress is needed in the area of nuclear safety. In this regard the full implementation of the Nuclear Safety Account agreements is of major importance.

25. The Council welcomed the contribution of the local authorities in implementation of the Action Programmes while fostering particular co-operation projects in the area and promoting regional co-operation.

The Council noted with satisfaction the agreement concluded by Lithuanian, Polish and Belarussian local authorities on establishment of the Euroregion "Nemunasi Niemen", which is open to other interested parties.

The Council noted with appreciation the results of the Fourth Baltic Sea States Subregional Conference (BSSSC) on 17-18 October, 1996, at Vaasa (Finland) and the establishment of the rotating BSS SC secretariat, as well as the setting up of permanent working groups corresponding to the Action Programmes and reflecting the particular know-how and expertise of the subregional level. It encouraged the CSO to continue its exploration of how this dimension could be strengthened in co-operation with the BSSSC.

26. The Council noted the support of parliaments of the Baltic Sea States for co-operation in the Region, which was confirmed during the Fifth Parliamentary Conference on Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area on 10-11 September, 1996, in Riga.

The Council expressed its satisfaction with the exchange of experience between CBSS and other European regional groupings - Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Central European Initiative, and Black Sea Economic Co-operation.

Institutional decisions and chairmanship

27. The Ministers, resolved to enhance and strengthen the CBSS co-operation, instructed the CSO to prepare and consider a final proposal for setting up a permanent CBSS secretariat, and, if agreed upon, submit the proposal to the ministers for decision by written procedure.

A secretariat shall provide technical and administrative support to the Council and be a focal point of information.

In considering this issue the CSO shall also define a detailed mandate, the size (including staff), the financing and the location of the secretariat.

The establishment of a secretariat will take into account the Presidency Declaration of the Visby Summit, 3-4 May, 1996, and the Kalmar Communiqué of 2 - 3 July, 1996. The Ministers expressed gratitude to Sweden for the activities of the Baltic Sea States Support Group.

28. The Council thanked Latvia for chairing the CBSS during 1996-97 and for organising the Sixth Ministerial session in Riga.

The Council entrusted Denmark with the chairmanship for the period 1997/98.

During this period, the Troika will be composed by Denmark, Latvia and Lithuania. The Seventh Session of the CBSS will be held in Denmark in 1998.

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