

Baltic Sea States Summit, Kolding, 12-13 April 2000

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CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUSIONS

BALTIC SEA CO-OPERATION AND EUROPEAN STABILITY AND INTEGRATION

At the invitation of the Prime Ministers of Denmark, hosting and co-chairing the meeting, and Norway, presently chairing the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Heads of Government and representatives of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden met in Kolding on 12-13 April 2000. Present were also the President of the European Commission and the Presidency of the European Union.

On the threshold to a new Millennium the Heads of Government wish to underline the progress achieved over the past decade in strengthening security and stability in the Baltic Sea Area. They welcome the improvement in co-operation among the countries of the Baltic Sea in a number of fields since their last meetings in Visby and Riga.

The region can become a leading growth area in the new century where economic development goes hand in hand with respect for the environment. The Heads of Government welcome the opening of EU accession negotiations with Latvia and Lithuania and the coming enlargement of the European Union as an important contribution to stability and security throughout Europe. Enlargement should lead to increased trade and economic growth in the European Union as well as with partners. They welcome the Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the EU, and stress the importance of the Agreement on Partnership and Co-operation between the European Union and the Russian Federation.

Democracy, rule of law, human rights, OSCE principles and norms of the Council of Europe are commitments which have to be honoured by the countries in the Baltic Sea region.

They emphasise the significance of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and other regional fora in contributing to increased understanding, security and growth. They also note the contributions by recent Ministerial meetings in the areas of labour-market policy, youth, children at risk, culture, energy, trade and economic co-operation, and education, as well as the continued progress in the co-operation to fight organised crime. They are committed to intensify regional and sub-regional co-operation and ask the Council of the Baltic Sea States to follow up their meetings. They welcome that the European Commission is actively participating in this process and that it will, after the adoption of the action plan for the Northern Dimension, contribute to substantial co-operation.

Growth and Sustainable Development

The Heads of Government discussed ways to fulfil the opportunities for co-operation and advance economic growth in the region. The promotion of employment and increased standards of living are key tasks. The overall aim is stable growth, sustainable development and the narrowing of economic disparities.

Private sector contributions are central. The Heads of Government welcome the work by the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association, the Baltic Sea Business Summit, the Business Advisory Council and the Baltic Development Forum. Obstacles to trade and investment will have to be further reduced. The ultimate objective is free trade and fair competition in the region.

They support

- the action plan from the Bergen meeting of the Ministers for Trade and Economic Co-operation on 7-8 February 2000. They stress the need to reduce the time for border crossing procedures for goods. Continuing the fight against corruption, solid legislative framework and improving the business environment for small and medium-sized enterprises are also key tasks.

- the initiative to establish a dialogue on labour market issues and related topics between the CBSS and the social partners.
- the need for concrete engagement in the action programme of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region from all parties concerned, including the sector ministries.
- introducing education as an additional sector of Baltic 21 of importance for sustainable development, as agreed by the Ministers of Education at their meeting in Stockholm 23-24 March 2000.
- the readiness of HELCOM to make use of the legal basis of the Helsinki Convention to strengthen its contribution to sustainable development within its mandate, based on Baltic 21, and to analyse the need for re-enforcing the existing legal instruments to achieve this.
- that the EU and Russia and all interested countries, in particular in view of the enlargement of the EU and the situation in Kaliningrad, will actively develop, within appropriate frameworks, cross-border co-operation.
- continued co-operation to improve the safety of nuclear power plants. Safety management will have to be strengthened, nuclear safety hazards removed, and early warning systems for nuclear accidents maintained. Radiation monitoring data should be continuously available.
- management of nuclear and radioactive wastes to ensure reliable isolation of wastes from the biosphere.
- the commitment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council members, the European Commission and other participating states to renew their efforts to bring the negotiations on the agreement for the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme for Russia (MNEPR) to a successful conclusion.
- the regional co-operation initiative adopted by the Ministers for Energy of the Baltic Sea Region at their meeting in Helsinki in October 1999. The energy sector, including non-discriminatory delivery of energy, should be a driving force for further sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region.
- continued co-operation towards integration and deregulation and harmonisation of the framework conditions of the Baltic Sea regions' electricity and gas markets. The construction of new international transmission networks will be important for successful integration of the markets and a stable and environmentally safe energy supply system.
- continued co-operation towards harmonisation of regulations in the energy sector and on climate issues, renewables and energy efficiency.
- efforts for joint action to improve the water sector and waste water treatment facilities in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad, as well as toxic wastes treatment in Leningrad oblast.
- the promotion of people-to-people contacts and tourism, and preservation of the region's rich cultural heritage.
- important infrastructural investments in the transport sector. Many completed and planned transport projects in the Region serve as models for cross-border co-operation in the 21st century and illustrate that public-private partnership is an effective way of obtaining resources for investments in infrastructure.
- initiatives with the aim to develop and strengthen the Baltic Sea Region's already leading position in the IT sector in general, and at the same time asking the European Commission to include relevant IT proposals in its draft working plan on the Northern Dimension.
- public and private sector and academic co-operation in the region on research and development and R&D based production and services.

Strengthening Regional and Sub-regional Co-operation

The future enlargement of the European Union and the development of its Northern Dimension on the one hand, and the strengthening of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and sub-regional and cross-border co-operation on the other complement each other.

They welcome continued financial support of the European Union for regional and sub-regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea region and the European Commission's aim to further improve the co-ordination of these instruments.

The Heads of Government confirm their willingness to play an active role in the consultation by the EU with partner countries and regional fora in preparing an action plan for the Northern Dimension.

They recommend

- consolidation within the framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States of all regional intergovernmental, multilateral co-operation taking place among the group of CBSS members.
- close co-ordination between the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and appropriate EU institutions. This is particularly valuable in connection with the action plan for the Northern Dimension.
- further steps to strengthen the sub-regional co-operation between municipalities and counties. They recognise the valuable contributions of the Baltic Sea States' Sub-regional Co-operation and the Union of the Baltic Cities, and the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council.
- expanded cross-border co-operation, in particular involving Kaliningrad Oblast and other north-western regions of the Russian Federation.
- continued work on flexible mechanisms for financing cross-border projects.

Human Security

In times of rapid change it is necessary to safeguard human security in areas such as protection of human rights and development of democratic institutions, health and welfare, and against threats such as crime and natural disasters. Abuse and sexual exploitation of children in particular are unacceptable phenomena in our societies.

The Heads of Government particularly appreciate the concrete results achieved by the Task Force on Organised Crime. They approve of its detailed report and its proposals for the future organisation of the Task Force, which will continue to report directly to the Heads of Government, and prolong its mandate until the end of 2004. They express their appreciation of the valuable work done by the outgoing Swedish chairmanship and welcome the Danish chairmanship of the Task Force from 2001.

They appreciate the work done by the CBSS Commissioner.

They recommend steps to

- intensify regional co-operation and other measures to counteract the threat to public health caused by a sharp increase in communicable diseases, and decide to establish a task force of personal representatives of Heads of Government to be chaired by Norway to elaborate a joint plan to enhance disease control throughout the region. The task force should involve international expertise such as the World Health Organisation, UNAIDS and the European Union, and report back to the Heads of Government with its recommendations by the end of 2000.
- intensify efforts to enforce a co-ordinated and multidisciplinary approach towards children at risk in the Baltic Sea region, including, inter alia, initiatives at the local level, and to further develop the Child Centre for Children at Risk IT network for intergovernmental exchange of information and experiences in the area of child welfare and protection.
- promote co-operation between NGOs and authorities involved in children's issues.

- continue the co-operation on promoting active participation of young people in the development of democratic and pluralistic societies.
- continue to support the co-operation between the competent civil security authorities and specialists. The aim is co-ordinated action in the fields of disaster prevention and surveillance, as well as search-and-rescue operations and joint disaster relief oriented crisis management.