



13th Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Szczecin, 9-10 June 2005

Communiqué

At the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) met in Szczecin on 9-10 June 2005 for its 13th Ministerial Session.

Cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and the strengthened role of the CBSS

The 5th Baltic Sea States Summit meeting held in June 2004 in Laulasmaa, Estonia indicated the main tasks for the CBSS and other structures operating in the region. Fulfilling these tasks would further strengthen the Baltic Sea region as an area of economic growth and a model of sustainable socio-economic development. The CBSS strove to implement the guidelines of the Summit and will continue to do so.

The Council acknowledged that the accession of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to the European Union has brought new opportunities and challenges to regional cooperation in many areas. The region, as a whole, has benefited from the European integration process.

The Council noted the importance of the EU policies and the activities of the Union in the Baltic Sea region. The CBSS continues to play a positive role in the European integration process on the basis of common democratic values and market economy.

The Council looked forward to a Northern Dimension policy after 2006 agreed by all parties, and to playing an active role in its elaboration. It welcomed the plans of the incoming United Kingdom Presidency of the EU to hold a fourth Northern Dimension Ministerial meeting.

The Council emphasised the following tasks for the CBSS:

- Contribute to the further strengthening of civil society and to enhancing mutual knowledge and interaction between the citizens in the CBSS area. Such cooperation will contribute to the strengthening of regional identity and solidarity as part of the European integration process as well as to securing cultural diversity. The Council invited all relevant structures and organisations to intensify their efforts aimed at developing education, scientific, youth and cultural contacts, as well as tourism.
- Contribute to the EU-Russia dialogue, especially by enriching it with regional, subregional and local elements of cooperation. In this respect, the Council was encouraged by the results of the EU-Russia Summit in Moscow on 10 May 2005 and welcomed the positive implications that the four EU-Russia Common Spaces, in

particular the Common Economic Space and future accession of the Russian Federation to the WTO will have for the region.

- Focus on dismantling remaining barriers to cooperation and promoting the rule of law, transparency and respect for human rights, which will facilitate the optimal use of resources and assist in increasing the competitiveness of the region.
- Agree on such priorities for regional cooperation within the CBSS that could be used also within the EU or other European and international frameworks.
- Serve as a focal point for regional cooperation. Co-ordination should be further developed with other intergovernmental regional bodies, among the intergovernmental structures operating under the CBSS umbrella.

The Council underlined the importance of and welcomed the progress made in coordination and cooperation with the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Council noted with satisfaction the development of information exchange between the CBSS and intergovernmental regional bodies in Central and South-East Europe. It instructed the CSO to continue promoting the positive experience of CBSS cooperation.

The Council instructed the CSO to constantly review the methods and activities of the structures of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, with the objective to optimise their efficiency.

The Council asked the CSO to report at each Council session on the progress in carrying out the initiatives presented at the previous session and by the Baltic Sea States Summit.

The Council adopted revised CBSS Terms of Reference, which enter into force on 10 June 2005.

Cross-border and transnational activities as means to enhance economic ties and further consolidate democratic civil societies

The Council:

- Agreed that cross-border, transnational and interregional activities are important components of the European integration process, especially to prevent the creation of new dividing lines within the Baltic Sea region. Therefore, this type of cooperation remains a priority of the CBSS.
- Expressed positive expectations in connection with the Baltic Euroregional Network, an Interreg IIIB project, in which the CBSS and the Nordic Council of Ministers take part jointly with other partners. Its aim is to develop institutional capacity for cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.
- Expressed support for the existing cross-border programmes and efforts to establish new EU and other financial instruments, which will further develop and strengthen cross-border activities in the region.
- Expressed its support for the creation of an open-ended ad-hoc working group on customs and border-crossing issues in the Baltic Sea region which would concentrate on local questions of regional relevance, focusing on added value.
- Invited the members of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum to promote people-to-people

contacts and network-building between the societies across borders.

- Instructed the Working Group on Democratic Institutions to consider recommendations elaborated by the 3rd Council of Europe Summit, held in Warsaw on 16–17 May 2005. The CBSS will continue to promote democracy in the region.

Increased environmental protection in the Baltic Sea area, *i.a.* combating land-based pollution sources and ensuring maritime safety

The protection of the Baltic Sea and adjacent areas environment remains one of the priorities of the CBSS. The Council noted significant progress in many areas of environment protection and in particular expressed its support for the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. It was encouraged by the recent successful replenishment of the NDEP Support Fund and invited partners not contributing to consider doing so.

Since new challenges and threats accompany rapid economic development of the region the Council looked forward to a planned joint meeting of the Ministers for Environment and for Agriculture that would represent a new start in sector cooperation to achieve progress in tackling pollution generated by agriculture.

The Council reiterated the significance of the work of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and stressed the importance of establishing an agreed adequate safety level for oil tankers throughout the Baltic Sea area in line with the relevant IMO conventions. It also called for a strengthening of the cooperation among the Baltic Sea States to prevent the risks associated with increased seaborne oil transport in the area. The Council underlined the need for close cooperation in safeguarding transboundary response activities, *i.a.* in the framework of HELCOM RESPONSE, and invited relevant stakeholders to participate actively. Furthermore, the Council emphasised the significance of the HELCOM ship traffic monitoring system, which upon its opening on 1 July 2005 will help establish risk-based assessments of the needs for further measures.

The Council welcomed the role of HELCOM in developing an Action Plan for the Baltic Sea, and expected that it could also be an important contribution to the European Marine Strategy.

The Council welcomed the progress made by the Baltic 21 in the implementation of its new Strategy Guidelines aimed to make the Baltic Sea region an Eco-Region for Sustainable Development. It expressed support for continued efforts of Baltic 21 to develop projects with a high visibility (Lighthouse projects) and integrate the principles of sustainable development into policy making by all relevant stakeholders.

The Council noted with satisfaction the increased cooperation in science, (5th Baltic Sea Science Congress in Sopot in June 2005), with a view to protecting the environment.

Using the region's economic potential and increasing its competitiveness

The Council emphasised the significance of economic cooperation to increase welfare and strengthen cohesion. In view of the increased role of science, research and education in the modern society the Council appealed to all relevant institutions to intensify activities

aimed at deepening cooperation in these fields.

The Council underlined the significance of improving and promoting the perception of the Baltic Sea region as an area attractive for investments. It believed that it could contribute to the building of knowledge-driven economies, thus making the Baltic Sea region one of the most competitive areas in Europe. It supported the development of the Baltic Sea Initiative 2010 process, promoted by the Baltic Development Forum, as an important regional initiative for competitiveness and innovation.

The Council supported further development of common regional infrastructure, especially transport and energy networks, *i.a.* the “motorways of the Baltic Sea”. In view of the increasing trade and communication flows between Central Europe and Northern Europe, the Baltic Sea Region needs to serve as an efficient transport hub providing safe and secure systems. It encouraged deeper involvement of the International Financial Institutions in the regional economic development.

The Council noted with satisfaction the results of the work of the Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC), which has proved to be a useful framework for the monitoring and development of energy policy in a period of rapid changes in energy markets and has created an effective contact network between governments, commercial actors and the European Commission. The Council took note of the preparation of a BASREC Ministers of Energy meeting in Reykjavik on 27-28 October 2005.

The Council welcomed continued efforts to eliminate the remaining barriers to trade, investments and travelling in the region. It underlined the need for further developing co-ordinated actions in areas of mutual concern, such as border-crossing of goods, fight against corruption, and improving conditions for business and innovation in the region.

The Council noted with satisfaction the cooperation in the field of Information and Communications Technology in the framework of the Northern e-Dimension (NeD) Action Plan. The Council considered the NeD initiative as an important instrument in strengthening the Baltic Sea region’s leading position in the Information Society, as well as in enhancing cooperation among the CBSS members.

The Council encouraged the Ministers for Spatial Planning to update the vision of long-term territorial development of the region together with the relevant regional stakeholders within VASAB 2010.

Civil security

The Council assessed highly the activities of the Task-Force on Organised Crime and thanked the Danish Chairmanship for the outstanding work during the past four years. The Council considered the work of the Task-Force as a high priority and welcomed the Finnish Chairmanship.

The Council confirmed the importance of the activities of the Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety, emphasised active participation in the Group by all members and

underlined the need for an improved and harmonised cooperation, especially in the field of emergency preparedness and mutual assistance. The Council noted also with satisfaction the activities of the EUROBAL TIC programme in the field of civil protection.

The Council welcomed the conclusions of the meeting of the Ministers responsible for children's issues (Oslo, 9-10 May 2005). It confirmed the importance of increasing regional and national efforts, as well as cross-border cooperation, to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, especially of women and children and to improve the situation of children in institutions.

The Council welcomed the progress made within the framework of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing and looked forward to concrete results to improve human health and social wellbeing. It expressed satisfaction with the results of the Partnership's conference on 14 December 2004 in Tallinn and looked forward to the second Partnership conference in Sweden in autumn 2005. The Council invited countries not yet participating in the partnership to consider doing so and underlined the open nature of this cooperation.

Eurofaculty

On the eve of the closure of the Eurofaculty at the universities in Riga, Tartu and Vilnius in summer 2005, after eleven years of activities, the Council expressed its profound appreciation of the achieved results. It thanked the directors and staff of the Eurofaculty, as well as all other involved persons, for their efforts contributing to the success of this project. The Council also expressed its satisfaction with the ongoing Eurofaculty project in Kaliningrad and appreciated efforts to launch a similar project in Pskov.

Final provisions

The Council expressed its thanks to the outgoing director of the CBSS permanent international secretariat in Stockholm, Ambassador Hannu Halinen, for his work, approved and welcomed Dr. Gabriele Kötschau as the new director, assuming her duties on 1 September 2005. The Council wished her success in this work.

The Council thanked Poland for chairing the CBSS during 2004/2005 and for organising the 13th Ministerial Session in Szczecin. The Council entrusted the Presidency for the period 2005/2006 to Iceland, which will host the 6th Baltic Sea States Summit in June 2006. During this period Poland, Iceland and Sweden will compose the Troika.

The 14th Ministerial Session of the CBSS will be held in Malmö, Sweden in June 2007.