



**Declaration
of the Council of the Baltic Sea States
on the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration
on *A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020***

Adopted through silent procedure on 20 June 2014

Recalling the Vilnius Declaration on *A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020* adopted at the 8th Baltic Sea States Summit, Vilnius, 2010;

Reconfirming the core role of the Council of the Baltic Sea States as a forum for all multilateral intergovernmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in areas agreed by its Members;

Emphasizing that the CBSS serves as a forum for political and policy dialogue in the region and is guided by a commonly agreed vision for the region set out in the Vilnius Declaration;

Underlining that the CBSS is a useful platform for intergovernmental coordination with and monitoring of regional development strategies and formats, and offers practical implementation support when appropriate;

Acknowledging the call of the CBSS at its 16th Ministerial Session, Oslo, 2011, and reiterated at the 18th Ministerial Session, Pionersky, Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation, 2013 to **recommend** further necessary steps to achieve the goals set out in the Vilnius Declaration;

The Council

underlines that the increasingly integrated sustainable, prosperous, safe and secure Baltic Sea Region represents a successful achievement of regional cooperation, enhancing stability and wellbeing in Europe and **recommends** to further pursue this ultimate objective;

underlines that the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration should be achieved by a coherent approach and close cooperation between all cooperation formats in the BSR;

notes the progress made by the CBSS to implement the Vilnius Declaration paving the way for comprehensive Baltic sea cooperation;

invites the Members of the Council to take into account the objectives set in the Vilnius Declaration when preparing strategic documents concerning the region;

invites the CBSS structures and intergovernmental networks to take an active lead in the implementation of the goals of the Vilnius Declaration;

agrees that the three long-term priorities outlined in the *Decision on the Review of the CBSS long-term priorities* – Regional Identity; Sustainable and Prosperous Region, and Safe and Secure Region – will facilitate the realization of the goals outlined in the Vilnius Declaration, thus strengthening the CBSS's position to meet challenges of the future;

approves the CBSS review and recommendations on the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration on A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020;

CBSS review and recommendations on the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration on A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020

1. In order to achieve that “**the Region has a well-balanced intergovernmental structure for political dialogue and practical cooperation**”

The Council

acknowledges significant progress in achieving the objectives of the Riga Declaration in 2008 on the Reform of the CBSS;

calls on all cooperation formats active in specific fields of regional development to promote coherence, seek synergies and support each other's activities where added value can be attained;

encourages cooperation among CBSS Members in those areas where mutual benefits and synergies can be achieved between the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation (NW2020) and other relevant regional strategies and action plans;

encourages the CBSS working bodies to support the implementation of common priorities of these strategies and actions plans as appropriate;

encourages the CBSS working bodies to further develop a structured dialogue and cooperation with other relevant regional organizations and formats through, i.e. elaborating common agendas, joint working documents, and regular meetings to enhance coherence and synergies, with the aim to define common steps in implementing a comprehensive vision for the region;

2. In order to achieve that “**the Baltic Sea is regaining its ecological health, with its littoral States playing a leading and exemplary role in dealing with the environmental challenges**”

The Council

acknowledges the previous work of the Expert Group on Sustainable Development - Baltic 21 in implementing the *CBSS Strategy on Sustainable Development 2010 – 2015* adopted by Member States in 2011 focused on saving the sea on land, and the progress made in developing resilient and ecological approaches for sustainable, and better management of natural resources, addressing climate change, city/rural development, sustainable production and consumption, innovation and education for sustainable development;

underlined the importance of taking further action by all HELCOM member states to implement the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to reach a good environmental status for the healthy marine ecosystem supporting a prosperous Baltic Sea Region as committed by the adoption of the HELCOM Ministerial Declaration 2013;

acknowledges the role of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) as an effective mechanism to contribute to the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea by tackling most pressing environmental problems in the region and thus supplementing the activities of CBSS and HELCOM;

notes the efforts by projects such as the CBSS Baltic 21 Lighthouse Project MARLIN to reduce marine litter on the shores of the Baltic Sea through awareness raising actions on marine litter among policy makers and general public, other relevant stakeholders as well as capacity building measures to incorporate marine litter in environmental management routines;

welcomes the elaboration of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the Action Plan for the Baltic Sea Region and the facilitation of a transnational dialogue, knowledge exchange and capacity building on climate change adaptation;

calls for increased transnational cooperation and knowledge exchange on the issue of climate change adaptation among member states, and calls on the Expert Group on Sustainable Development – Baltic 21 to facilitate cooperation, coordination and capacity building in this area;

underlines the importance of further implementation of the Vision and Strategies for the Baltic Sea strategic document (VASAB) “VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region” adopted by ministers responsible of spatial planning and development in the Vilnius Ministerial meeting 2009; and **welcomed** in this regard the well established cooperation between VASAB and HELCOM on the development of coherent and ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea;



welcomes the establishment of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group developing a common Baltic approach for Maritime Spatial Planning, and its Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap for 2013-2020;

confirms the commitment of all member states to work together on the transformation of the Baltic Sea Region into a model region for green and blue economy which can reduce negative environmental impacts, and at the same time increase competitiveness and create new business and employment opportunities;

3. In order that “marked progress has been achieved in fostering investment-friendly economies and innovation driven production”

The Council

acknowledges the work of Expert Group on Sustainable Development – Baltic 21 in supporting green economy, facilitating Green Public Procurement, as well as identifying and testing appropriate incentives for SMEs to apply eco-innovation in their business, and the work within the field of sustainable waste management aiming at harmonizing different approaches;

recognizes the need to intensify regional joint efforts to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions thereby contributing to reaching the 2°C objective and to accelerate the process of building a suitable policy framework to transform the BSR into a green economy region;

calls on the Baltic Sea Region member states to become front runners in the development and implementation of actions towards green economy and facilitate collaboration in this respect and promote the incorporation of sustainable consumption and production instruments in sectorial policies;

takes into account of the potential for growth and employment in the fields of short-sea shipping, tourism, especially coastal and maritime tourism, maritime industry, environmental technologies, and renewable energies, especially offshore wind energy;

acknowledges the progress made in the area of promotion of innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration through mentorship and leadership programmes for creative industries and SME's;

recognizes the support for innovation projects, which aim to create a more business and investment friendly region;

encourages continued activities to develop the Baltic Sea Region as a tourist destination and to establish a permanent platform for cooperation on tourism;

recommends continued support for networks which bring together entrepreneurs in the region, mentorship and sponsorship programmes for regional talent and potential leaders such as the Balticlab initiative, facilitation of contacts between innovative initiatives and funding mechanisms, and **calls** for increased cooperation between regional organisations working in the field of innovation, creative industries and interdisciplinary collaboration.

4. In order to achieve that “**using the potential of public-private partnerships and driven by a common understanding, the public sector and the business community take a shared responsibility for sustainable development**”

The Council

welcomes the establishment by the Permanent International Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), and the State Corporation “The Bank for Development and Foreign Economic Affairs (Vnesheconombank)” of the Pilot Financial Initiative, aimed at providing financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in the field of innovation and modernisation, as well as for Public-Private-Partnership Projects;

acknowledges the progress made by the Saint-Petersburg Initiative as a new mechanism for public-private practical interaction to promote cross-border cooperation, economically viable actions and projects for the benefit of the Baltic Sea Region environment;

notes the work done by the Expert Group on Sustainable Development - Baltic 21 and the progress made in implementing the CBSS Strategy on Sustainable Development 2010 – 2015 endorsed at the 16th CBSS Ministerial Session in Oslo, June 2011;

welcomes the Rio+20 final outcome document “The Future We Want” and **duly recognises** Rio+20 follow-up initiatives as an inspiration to continue the work on sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region;

recommends that the Expert Group on Sustainable Development – Baltic 21 work on a new sustainable development agenda for the BSR with specific goals post 2015;

supports further development of the Pilot Financial Initiative as a Baltic Sea Financial Initiative, incorporating new regional partners;

5. In order to achieve that “**regional economic growth benefits from an integrated maritime policy and well-interconnected transport networks**”

The Council

welcomes the results of the 5th CBSS Conference of Ministers of Transport held in Moscow in December 2012;



acknowledges in this regard the enhanced cooperation between the CBSS and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB), Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL), Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS), Baltic Sea Forum - Pro Baltica (BSF), Baltic Sea Commission within the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR-Baltic Sea Commission), in order to maintain, broaden and further develop regional cooperation, strengthen visibility and raise awareness of the advantages of the Baltic Sea cooperation on maritime issues;

acknowledges the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) as a useful tool for the development of the transport system of the region and improvement of international logistics chains and agrees that the partnership should be used to steer initiatives in the field of transport and logistics in the region with the aim of searching synergies with all relevant stakeholders;

welcomes the work of the Expert Group on Maritime Policy in promoting clean shipping, and the contribution by the Group in the launching of the Green Technology and Alternative Fuels Platform for sustainable Baltic Sea shipping on 16 January 2014, initiated by the HELCOM Ministers in 2013;

recognizes the need for continuous activities in respect of safe and environmentally friendly sea transportation and maritime innovation in the Baltic Sea Region and **notes** the potential for economic growth in the development of clean shipping and maritime technologies;

6. In order that “**all countries in the Region enjoy the results of integrated energy markets, improved energy efficiency and extended use of clean and renewable energy**”

The Council

takes note of the conclusions on energy security, low-carbon energy policy and sustainable growth of the 6th Ministerial Meeting of the Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC) held in Berlin in May 2012 and the conclusions of the Declaration on Energy Security adopted by the 17th CBSS Extraordinary Ministerial Session at Plön Castle in February 2012;

agrees that both documents were designed to deepen regional trust and laid the basis for ever closer cooperation on energy efficiency and renewables in the Baltic Sea Region;

acknowledges the work of the Expert Group on Sustainable Development - Baltic 21 to support and facilitate energy efficiency as well as sustainable production and consumption of energy;

invites BASREC to further pursue efforts to enhance energy efficiency and to continue dialogue on energy topics contributing to economic growth of the region;

7. In order to achieve that “**the people of the Region benefit from positive dynamics of socio-economic development, ensuring good public health and social well-being**”

The Council

recognizes the role of and progress made by the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being towards ensuring good public health and social well-being and **stresses** the need for a close cooperation between CBSS and the partnership;

acknowledges the progress made by the Expert group on Sustainable Development - Baltic 21 and Visions and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) in supporting project and policy developments for sustainable rural development, strong urban-rural relations, promoting more sustainable ways of living, as well as in improving quality of life through rural-urban-planning and cyclical sustainable management schemes for economic growth, environmental integrity and social justice;

welcomes the establishment of a Baltic Ecovillages Network as a vehicle towards the transition to resilient and sustainable communities in the Baltic Sea Region;

8. In order to achieve that “**the countries of the Region are effectively reducing unemployment, social exclusion and inequality in the labour market**”

The Council

acknowledges the progress on social dialogue and tri-partite exchanges in the region between employers’ associations, trade unions and government actors undertaken by the Baltic Sea Labour Forum as crucial to achieve sustainable growth and social development;

welcomes the initiatives and projects by the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings in order to build knowledge and establish practices to reduce exploitation and trafficking for forced labour in the region; specifically focusing on establishing networks and increasing the capacity of key labour actors to identify instances of trafficking for labour exploitation;

stresses that the Baltic Sea Region has economic potential which has not yet been fully exploited;

invites the region to take international competition and globalized markets more into account as these can bring entirely new challenges as well as opportunities;

underlines the importance of continued work on youth unemployment and **recommends** exploring and pursuing training and apprenticeship initiatives, to aid young adults to enter the labour market including, transitional measures between completion of education and entering the labour market;

recommends to continue to investigate the needs of cross border commuters and to improve labour mobility in the region – especially in terms of improved cross border information management;

recommends that established working groups in each member state dealing with labour exploitation and trafficking of forced labour be strengthened and solidified over the long term;

underlines that labour market challenges should be addressed through close cooperation and agreement with all the Social Partners;

9. In order that “the Region benefits from advanced regional networks built on active application of information technologies”

The Council

acknowledges the recent Information and Communications Technology (ICT) initiatives such as the Digital Agenda for Europe – a Europe 2020 initiative, and **welcomes** the conference “ICT 2013 – Create, Connect, Grow” held November 2013 in Vilnius, organised by the European Commission in partnership with the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013 as well as the Russia ICT Day held in November 2013 in Washington DC., organised by the World Bank Group in Copenhagen in cooperation with the Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation as examples of international knowledge-sharing forums for dialogue between government executives and the ICT expert community;

welcomes initiatives focused on topics such as e-government, use of cloud technologies in the public sector, IT industry development, access to broadband, and IT skills development and **encourages** cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region on themes such as ICT for Excellence in Science, ICT for Industrial Leadership, and ICT for Societal Challenges;

10. In order that “the people of the Region are experiencing a steady progress in combating terrorism, in enhancing the protection and resilience of critical infrastructure and in fighting organized crime, especially trafficking in human beings, including children, and in illegal drugs”

The Council

appreciates the work of the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings in combating all forms of human trafficking in the Region via preventive and protective activities using a practical multi-sectorial approach;

acknowledges the progress made by the Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk by consistently investigating, adding new knowledge and seeking cooperation on children's right to protection; the valuable dissemination of knowledge in order to expand the expertise of professionals and increasing the awareness of stakeholders working for children's rights including their right to protection, as well as its emphasis on efficient child protection systems being in line with the Member States' commitments and obligations of the UN, Council of Europe, EU and as a follow up to the UN Millennium Development Goals;

acknowledges and **encourages** efforts by the CBSS Civil Protection Network to develop common macro-regional risk assessment guidelines to ensure reliable results and enhance interoperability;

further encourages identifying gaps in capacity and preparedness to disasters of potential cross-border and/or macro-regional impact, as well as efforts to apply a full-cycle disaster management approach to disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and **welcomes** the results of CBSS cooperation in the form of Macro-Regional Risk Assessment Guidelines;

notes the work of the Baltic Sea Task Force on Organized Crime, and acknowledges its efforts to coordinate cross-border cooperation between the relevant bodies in the region;

notes international initiatives and commitments on disaster risk reduction such as the United Nations Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015 as well as the agreements between relevant EU and Russian authorities on civil defence, emergencies and elimination of consequences of natural disasters and **welcomes** awareness raising initiatives to strengthen overall societal resilience to disaster risks;

acknowledges the successful work implemented by the Expert Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety (EGNRS) in operationalizing information, experience, capacity and network exchanges among the CBSS Member States and the CBSS Observer States and, while recalling the CBSS Agreement on Exchange of Monitoring Data, strongly welcomed EGNRS achievements in sharing experience on nuclear radiation monitoring in the Baltic Sea Region;

further welcomes the efforts by EGNRS to share its work with other sectors as well as the public and **supports** its ambition to become a centre of excellence for radiological and nuclear safety within chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear safety;



invites the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings to continuously develop sustainable strategies and structures and to involve new actors in order to continue addressing trafficking and to strengthen the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking in the Region, including combatting human trafficking as a criminal enterprise;

recommends to increase focus on social inclusion, social protection and accessibility to services to safeguard human integrity and dignity, including children's rights to protection against violence;

recommends further action to increase cooperation with sectors vital for the protection of children, such as law enforcement and child welfare and health agencies and civil society, within and across countries in the Baltic Sea Region;

recommends to establish macro-region-wide initiatives to involve the private sector, the media and the public in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) processes and to further strengthen DRR capacity in coping with complex emergencies;

encourages application of a gender-specific approach in full-cycle disaster management recognizing the significance of gender specific needs and capabilities in DRR;

welcomes and **encourages** the continued establishment of joint cross-institutional and cross-sectorial civil security cooperation related activities involving relevant regional cooperation frameworks and regional networks such as Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation BSRBCC, as well as the sharing of regional expertise with other relevant stakeholders;

recommends enhancing maritime safety and security in the Baltic Sea by establishing a common Baltic Sea maritime awareness picture;

11. In order that “a strong regional identity is emerging, fostered by research, education, culture, and the common heritage of the region“

The Council

acknowledges the input and renewed efforts of cultural networks operating in the region to affect and boost regional identity;

also acknowledges the support given to the development of regional identity also through heritage co-operation promoted by the Monitoring Group on Cultural Heritage of the Baltic Sea States;

calls on the relevant stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region to support dialogue and cooperation in the fields of cultural heritage, contemporary culture and creative industries;



welcomes the identification of common features for the whole Baltic Sea Region in order to strengthen a common identity and to make the region more visible as a tourist destination;

acknowledges the launch of the second phase of the EuroFaculty Pskov project in October 2012 to be completed in August 2015 as a significant benchmark to upgrade curricula in the field of business administration in the region of Pskov of the Russian Federation;

suggests to foster regional identity through youth exchange during school, apprenticeship and university and to promote more school and university cooperation through innovative actions including new educational approaches;

12. In order that “the Region benefits from promotion of tolerance and extended people-to-people contacts”

The Council

commends the German and Russian CBSS Presidencies for launching and supporting the Modernization Partnership of the South Eastern Baltic Area (SEBA);

acknowledges in this regard the importance of the cross sectorial dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region;

further acknowledges the vibrant NGO community in the fields of civil society, rule of law, human rights and democracy building and the work of civil society actors in their efforts to promote people to people exchanges in the Baltic Sea Region;

recognizes the importance of the XI Baltic Sea NGO Forum, held April 2013, Saint Petersburg, Russia, with tolerance and cultural diversity in the region as its main theme and of the XII Baltic Sea NGO Forum held in Turku, June 2014;

acknowledges the international youth contacts including workshop streams at the international youth camp in 2012 and 2013 in Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation to further strengthen youth dialogue, people-to-people contacts across the Baltic Sea Region;

emphasizes the importance of the cooperation between young people in the Baltic Sea Region including youth networks and youth dialogues and in this regard welcomes the round table on youth cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region held in Turku, June 2014;

encourages further improvement of cross border mobility for citizens of the Baltic Sea Region and **stresses** the need for continued efforts to expand people-to-people contacts – the tourism sector should play an important role in this context.