



25 years  
of building  
collaboration  
and trust

# Declaration on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Council of Baltic Sea States

Reykjavík, 20 June 2017



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of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)**

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The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the representative of the European Union met in Reykjavík on 20 June 2017 to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) launched in 1992 at the initiative of the Foreign Ministers of Denmark and Germany.

The CBSS is a unique intergovernmental forum for political dialogue and practical cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Over the past quarter of a century, the CBSS has matured and successfully expanded into new fields of cooperation. The CBSS has built a track record of sustainable results to the benefit of the entire region in such areas as energy; environment; the labour market; culture; child protection; maritime policy; tourism; youth; education; science, research and innovation; civil protection; nuclear and radiation safety; as well as the fight against trafficking. In this context, the CBSS Project Support Facility has provided a basis for project implementation.

The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives agreed on the need to maintain and strengthen the role of the CBSS towards 2020 and beyond. They underlined the significance of acting upon - at the regional level - the challenges and the opportunities of the region. They encouraged the CBSS to continue efforts aimed at improving regional synergy and cohesion through enhanced cooperation with all relevant regional cooperation formats. They also noted a need to improve communication of the results achieved by the CBSS. They emphasized the importance of restoring confidence and understanding in the region.

The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives therefore invited the CBSS to appoint an independent group of wise persons, including representatives from civil society. The task of the independent group would be to elaborate a report with recommendations for a vision for the Baltic Sea Region beyond 2020 and on the future role of the CBSS and the means to expand its impact as a forum for political dialogue and practical cooperation in the region. The composition, mandate and financing of the independent group should be decided by the CBSS.

The independent group should present its report and recommendations to the CBSS for consideration before the end of the Swedish CBSS Presidency 2017-2018. Further reflections on implementation of the report with recommendations should take place during the Latvian CBSS Presidency with a view to form the basis for a decision on the issue at the political level.

The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives encouraged the CBSS to continue working actively to achieve tangible results within its three long-term priorities: Regional Identity; Sustainable & Prosperous Region; Safe & Secure Region.

They invited the CBSS to identify and launch new project activities, as appropriate, with a view to achieving concrete results within each of the following areas:

- Sustainable Development: The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement marked the beginning of a new era in global cooperation for sustainable development. The CBSS should play an important role in delivering regional responses to the global challenges outlined in the 2030 Agenda, including through increased cooperation on mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Drafted by the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development, the CBSS Action Plan – “Realizing the Vision: The Baltic 2030 Action Plan” - for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda can be an important first step in this direction and provide a solid basis for concrete CBSS action to meet the global Sustainable Development Goals at regional level.
- Youth: Youth are the future of the region. Learning about, and from, each other contributes to strengthening regional identity. In this context, the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue is an instrument for building transnational trust and mutual understanding, in particular in challenging times, and should provide the basis for sustainable Baltic Sea youth cooperation in media, education, science and the labour market.
- Human Trafficking: The CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings has successfully been operating since 2006 and has earned international acclaim. The current global migration reality has led to a significant rise in the number of refugees and displaced persons in Europe who are at risk of being exploited by traffickers. Against this background it is important that the Task Force continues its endeavours to prevent trafficking in human beings. Referring to the recent successful CBSS conference on Soft Security and Migration, the CBSS is encouraged to further promote cooperation on this topical issue among the Baltic Sea countries.
- Child Protection: The CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk has been highlighting issues of regional concern since 2002, such as children in alternative care, promoting child-friendly justice, preventing trafficking and exploitation of children, as well as promoting the best interests of children in migration. Child protection issues are highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which underlines the need for further focused action in this field. The Expert Group has extensive experience from its commendable work on child protection and is in a strong position to follow up on the 2030 Agenda.
- Civil Protection: Since 2002 the CBSS Civil Protection Network has been developing activities to strengthen resilience towards major emergencies and disasters in the region. Increases in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather conditions make it important to accelerate these efforts through enhanced cooperation at all levels of government and in line with the objectives of the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives expressed their gratitude to Iceland for its successful 2016-17 Presidency of the CBSS and for the initiative to organize this meeting marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CBSS.