

Presidency Declaration

Baltic Sea States Summit Riga, 22-23 January 1998

Presidency Declaration

At the invitation of the Prime Ministers of Latvia, hosting and co-chairing the meeting, and of Denmark, presently chairing the council of the Baltic Sea States. the Heads of Government of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation and Sweden, Member States of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), met in Riga on 22 - 23 January 1998 for their second Baltic Sea States Summit. The President of the European Commission and the Presidency of the European Council participated in the meeting-

A. The Outlook and Challenges for Regional Co-operation

The Heads of Government welcomed the substantial progress achieved in the co-operation between their countries since their first meeting in Visby. They reaffirmed their support for further co-operation in the Baltic Sea region, which will contribute to the creation of a stable, democratic, and prosperous undivided Europe. In particular, they welcomed the meeting of the European Council in Luxembourg, which took the historic decision to launch the European Union (EU) accession process with the CBSS countries Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. They also welcomed the entry into force of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Communities and their Member States. They took note of the communication of the European Commission on regional co-operation in Europe and of the intention to include the Northern Dimension in the EU policies. They underlined that co-operation in the CBSS will ensure that benefits derived from the integration process and the transition process are shared by all. They welcomed the results achieved at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Copenhagen.

The Heads of Government welcomed the continued development of the regional identity, based on ties of neighbourhood, common history, common cultural heritage, democratic values, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. They noted that people to people contacts (in particular youth exchanges) were the basis for better understanding and respect of the cultural diversity in the region. They underscored the significance of intensifying co-operation in the fields of education and culture. They agreed that activities of Non-Governmental Organisations are an essential complementary element to the intergovernmental co-operation. The Heads of Government underlined the importance of developing cross-border co-operation in the region as a way of strengthening mutual understanding and confidence. They encouraged sub-regional authorities in the Member States to continue to establish cross-border working structures.

The Heads of Government stressed the importance of combating organised crime and illegal immigration and called for the signing of readmission agreements among the countries in the region.

B. Democracy, Human Rights and Civic Security

The Heads of Government stressed the importance of promoting human rights in the region. They underlined the presence of independent and pluralistic media. They expressed their appreciation of the contributions of the CBSS Commissioner to their activities.

The Heads of Government found that the Task Force on organised crime had achieved operative and concrete results in the four main areas of its work, improved and increased exchange of information, joint operative measures, judicial co-operation and special surveys and training. The Heads of Government stated their appreciation of the work of the Task Force on organised crime and prolonged its mandate for 1998.

They recognised the substantial progress made towards developing asylum and refugee policies, and underlined the necessity of further development of the judiciary, of public prosecutors offices and on training of lawyers in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs. They supported further development of co-operation between border guards of the CBSS Member States. They expressed their appreciation of the assistance received in these areas.

The Heads of Government welcomed the readiness of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to associate themselves with two Joint Actions of the EU on Combating Trade in Human Beings and Sexual Exploitation of Children. They took note of the findings in the report on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

of Children, made as a follow-up to the CBSS Ministerial Session in Riga, 2-3 July 1997 and proposed that the Presidency of the CBSS organise the continued work in this field in accordance with the report. They encouraged the CBSS to mobilise assistance to those Member States preparing themselves for implementing the EU Joint Actions. They welcomed in this regard the decision of the Council of Europe Summit to intensify co-operation between Member States aimed at preventing all forms of exploitation of children and at strengthening their legal protection and invite CBSS members to contribute actively to the respective Council of Europe activities.

The Heads of Government welcomed the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation's intention to develop co-operative measures to reinforce institutional and administrative capacity at municipal levels in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. They emphasised that co-operation with the European Commission was essential and possibilities for co-financing should be explored.

The Heads of Government agreed to reinforce regional co-operation in the area of civic security. They would, in particular, consider actions in the fields of joint rescue agreements and early warning systems. They encouraged government agencies to convene a conference in order to prepare for further regional co-operation in the area.

C. Economic Co-operation

The Baltic Sea region has developed into an area where co-operation and market economy prevail.

The Heads of Government welcomed the ongoing transformation of the region into an important and effective market and meeting place. In this context, the Heads of Government expressed their support for the intentions of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia to join the OECD.

They regard an early accession of Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the WTO as an important contribution facilitating economic co-operation and new investments in the region.

The Heads of Government underlined the important role of the CBSS and its Member States in contributing to strengthening economic co-operation in the Baltic Sea region. The Heads of Government encouraged the CBSS to keep all its members informed about the EU enlargement process and the development of the co-operation with Russia. They assured applicant countries that they would continue to provide assistance to their EU-preparation process. The CBSS and its Member States will assist in the removal of existing barriers and prevent new barriers to trade, and they will encourage investments and other economic co-operation.

Investments

The Heads of Government welcomed the contribution of the international financial institutions, other development banks, and commercial banks to the increased level of investments in the region. They reiterated their commitment to create a more favourable investment climate in their respective countries. They called upon the international financial institutions to pay particular attention to investments in both public and private sectors targeted at upgrading environmental, energy, and transport facilities and industries. They underlined the importance of providing credits for projects of relevance to regional co-operation. They recognised the need to co-operate with Russia, Poland and the Baltic countries in the preparatory phase of such projects.

Transport

The Heads of Government stressed that joint efforts to develop sea ports, hinterland connections, transit routes, from road to sea-facilities and border crossings would be beneficial to all countries in the region. They underlined that access to transport infrastructure, in particular to Baltic Sea ports, is an example of common interest and of potential mutual benefit to the Baltic Sea region.

Energy

The Heads of Government underlined the importance of producing, transmitting and using energy as efficiently as possible and with due regard to the impact on the environment and to the use of renewable energy sources. They took note of the initiative of the Nordic Prime Ministers to develop the potential with respect to further co-operation on sustainable energy supplies and networking in the Baltic Sea region. They welcomed the initiatives and activities of the Nordic Ministers of Energy to strengthen the

basis for enhanced co-operation in the energy sector and for a sustainable energy system in the Baltic Sea region.

The Heads of Government welcomed the completion of the feasibility study on the Baltic electricity ring. The parties in the Baltic Ring Study were encouraged to take the necessary steps for its implementation with the assistance of the respective national authorities. They recognised that an electricity grid around the Baltic Sea was a precondition for a common and regional electricity market, which would be beneficial to the electricity customers and producers and make a substantial contribution to the environmental challenges.

The Heads of Government underlined the importance of strengthened measures at national level and increased international co-operation in support of nuclear safety enhancement and improvement of radioactive waste management.

Environment and Sustainable Development

The Heads of Government strongly supported the on-going cross-sectorial work aiming at enhancing sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region. They remained firmly committed to restoring the ecological equilibrium in the Baltic Sea through the Helsinki Commission process on removing the most polluting localities, "hot spots". They requested the CBSS to take action on the Agenda 21 report at its next Ministerial Session. They welcomed the contribution of "Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010" to Agenda 21 and the assistance from the European Union in financing multilateral spatial planning projects. In this context they recognised ship-generated waste as a major environmental problem in the Baltic Sea area. They fully endorsed the Baltic Strategy for Port Reception Facilities for Ship-generated Waste, stressing the importance of swift implementation of the no-special-fee system and mandatory delivery of ship-generated waste and agreed that necessary external expertise be made available to assist the countries in their implementation of agreed provisions on port reception facilities.

Information Technology

The Heads of Government stressed the vast potential for more intensive co-operation in the field of information technology. They noted the significance of facilitating market access as a prerequisite for intensified use of information technology. They welcomed the intention of the CBSS Presidency to convene ministers concerned in order to i.a. share information on co-operation within the EU and between the Nordic countries and to discuss the possibilities of extending such co-operation to the whole Baltic Sea region.

D. Higher Education

The Heads of Government expressed their satisfaction with the extensive support for higher education projects in the region. They asked the CBSS to encourage the appropriate authorities and the institutions of higher education in the region, co-operating closely within the framework of the Conference of Baltic University Rectors, to continue to develop joint study programmes. The Heads of Government stressed the need for more extensive mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education, academic degrees and diplomas. They asked their Ministers of Education to encourage universities in the region to co-operate closely within partnership programmes.

They recognised that shortage of university graduates with relevant training in economics, law, political science and public administration as well as in European studies constituted a major constraint to the reinforcement of institutional and administrative capacity.

They asked the CBSS to encourage better co-ordination between the higher education institutions receiving foreign assistance, in particular those involved in programmes which contribute directly to the preparation for EU-accession. They agreed that Euro-Faculty has to play a central role in this co-ordination.

Conclusions on small and medium-sized enterprises and energy

- We welcome the Swedish initiative, supported by Lithuania in its capacity of future presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, to invite the ministers of trade of the CBSS member states to a meeting with special attention to the situation for small and medium-sized enterprises.

- Similarly, we also welcome the initiative of Norway, also endorsed by Lithuania, to convene a ministerial conference to discuss integration of energy markets and networking in the Baltic Sea Region as well as nuclear safety enhancements.