



FINNISH PRESIDENCY
2023–2024

Porvoo Declaration

14 June 2024

On 14 June 2024, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy met for the 21st Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in Porvoo, Finland.

1. The Council reiterated its condemnation in the strongest terms of Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, a CBSS Observer State. Russia has flagrantly violated the very foundations of the rules-based international order based on international law and the principles of the UN charter, with the continued military support provided by Belarus, North Korea, and Iran. Russia must immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine, refrain from any further unlawful threat or use of force, and immediately, completely and unconditionally, withdraw all of its armed forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. Russia and the individuals responsible must be held accountable for the crimes and fully compensate for damages caused. Further steps are needed to weaken Russia's ability to continue waging its war of aggression, including by strengthening sanctions.
2. The Council concluded that Russia's war against Ukraine has led to a profound shift in the security landscape in the Baltic Sea Region. Heightened tensions have created a more challenging security environment and unpredictability in the region. Our countries are facing increasingly complex threats. As the geopolitical tensions continue, it is important to continue further strengthening and deepening our cooperation in the region among the democratic and like-minded states.
3. The Council and its Member States will continue to stand with Ukraine. In the face of brutal aggression, Ukrainians have shown extraordinary resilience and determination. The Council underlined its firm support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and Ukraine's path towards joining the European Union and future membership in NATO.

4. The Council expressed its deep concern over increased hybrid operations by Russia, including sabotage and acts of violence, carried out in the Baltic Sea Region. These operations include but are not limited to disinformation campaigns, malicious cyber activities, electronic interference, and activities aiming at degrading the critical infrastructure. The Council condemns the inhuman and cynical instrumentalisation of migration by Russia and Belarus on the borders of their neighbouring countries. The Council called for immediate termination of all the hostile activities. The Council stressed the importance of countering rising threats and security challenges in the region and underlined the importance of intensified cooperation between the democratic countries of the region, all of which are now NATO allies.
5. The Council condemns the accelerating systematic internal repression in Russia and Belarus including the cracking down on opposition politicians, civil society organisations, independent media and other critical voices.
6. The Council underlined the importance of strengthening resilience, preparedness, and crisis response in the Baltic Sea Region as a matter of urgency. The shadow fleet transporting Russian oil, in particular, calls for decisive joint actions, including the strengthening of sanctions. The shadow fleet undermines the international regime regarding maritime safety, and the liability and compensation regime, as well as poses a significant danger to our marine environment especially in the Baltic Sea, which is vulnerable to oil spills and pursuantly designated as a particularly sensitive sea area. In addition, transporting Russian oil in circumvention of sanctions contributes to the ability of Russia to wage its war against Ukraine.
7. The Council welcomed the excellent achievements of its expert groups, networks and projects and the participation of Ukrainian partners in the work. This holds in particular for the work related to enhancing safety and security of the Baltic Sea Region. In the current geopolitical landscape, these topics will remain the focus of practical cooperation within the CBSS.
8. The Council took note of the recent European Parliament elections held on 6–9 June 2024 and highlighted the importance of democracy and upholding the integrity of electoral processes in the light of the increased threat of foreign interference. Inclusive and transparent elections, an independent judiciary, and citizens' trust in them are essential prerequisites for resilience.
9. The Council emphasised the value of robust networks and multi-level cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The Council congratulated HELCOM, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in April, and thanked the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference for bringing forth issues of common concern in the region. The Council also welcomed the ongoing valuable work of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which contributes substantially to the promotion of practical cooperation through its revised action plan and renewed governance structure.

10. Young people and their meaningful participation in society, e.g. through the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum, are key to our region's well-being. The Council took note of the Youth Ministerial held in Helsinki in May 2024, which focused on youth social participation and resilience. The Council welcomed the message of the meeting, underlining that the next generations deserve a possibility to be part of the decision-making process in building a safer and more secure, sustainable and integrated region. It is important to enhance young people's inclusive opportunities to influence and participate in our societies.
11. The Council highlighted the successful adaptation of the CBSS during the last two years and agreed on the need for continuing the development further. The Council decided to initiate a review of the role of the CBSS and recommendations on its future, led by a high-level wise person and supported by a task force open to CBSS Members.
12. The Council thanked Finland for its successful 2023–2024 Presidency of the CBSS, thanked the Permanent International Secretariat in Stockholm and welcomed Estonia as the incoming Presidency from July 2024.