

Council of the Baltic Sea States Terms of Reference

Adopted by the 1st CBSS Ministerial Session in Copenhagen in March 1992, revised by the 13th CBSS Ministerial Session in Szczecin in June 2005, revised by the Council through written procedure in April 2009, revised by the CBSS Ministers at their meeting on 19 May 2020, revised by the CBSS Ministers at their meeting on 14 June 2024.

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1. The Council of the Baltic Sea States was established in Copenhagen on 5-6 March 1992.
2. The Members of the CBSS are: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the European Union.
3. Member States are represented in the Council by their Minister of Foreign Affairs and the European Union by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
4. The CBSS may assign the status of Observer to other states and the status of Strategic Partner to eligible organisations. Assignment of such status is regulated in the Principles and Guidelines for Third Party Participation.
5. The CBSS encompasses all multilateral intergovernmental regional cooperation in areas agreed by its Members and serves as a forum for political dialogue. It also fosters practical cooperation in the region and acts as a focal point of information and coordination. The co-ordination shall not infringe on the responsibilities of other Ministers within their respective competence and expertise. The CBSS contributes to reinforcing the effects of regional policies and strategies adopted by its Member States in other fora by creating and making best use of regional synergies and cohesion.
6. The CBSS will initiate and implement regionally important, strategic projects and explore their financing with a view to focusing work in areas where it creates most added value, in line with CBSS long-term priorities.
7. The CBSS takes overall political guidance from the Baltic Sea States Summits, which gather the Heads of Government and the President of the European Commission.
8. The CBSS Presidency is responsible for the substantive preparation of the Summit meetings. The Summits take place when the Members consider such political discussions opportune. The consistency and continuity of the political dialogue in the region is ensured by Council meetings.
9. The meetings of the Council are convened by the country chairing the CBSS, at the end of the term of its Presidency, unless otherwise decided. The Council adopts its own agenda upon the proposal from the CBSS Presidency. The Chairman of the Council is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the country holding the Presidency.
10. The CBSS Presidency rotates among the Member States on an annual basis, from July 1 to June 30, according to the established key of rotation, unless otherwise decided.
11. The CBSS Presidency may also arrange sectoral meetings at an appropriate level, including at ministerial level, to discuss cooperation in their respective field of competence. Preparation of these meetings is the responsibility of the Member State hosting the meeting and/or the Member State tasked with coordinating the respective field of cooperation. Reports from meetings of other Ministers shall be made available to the Council.

12. The Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), as directed by the Council, or on its own accord, may establish and terminate working bodies and structures, such as expert groups having a clear and time-limited mandate.
13. Between the meetings of the Council, the CSO serves as the body for intergovernmental co-operation among the CBSS Members, in accordance with the guidance received from the Council.
14. The CSO consists of senior foreign affairs officials representing the Member States and the European Union. A senior representative of the CBSS Presidency chairs the CSO.
15. The CSO prepares the sessions of the Council and reports to it. The CSO may submit to the Council matters for decision relating to the work of the CBSS working bodies and structures.
16. The CBSS Presidency prepares the agenda for the CSO meetings. Members and the Secretariat may present their proposals for the agenda to the Chair. The CSO holds meetings, as needed, to discuss and to decide on issues pertaining to cooperation within the CBSS framework.
17. The CSO can decide on the development and implementation of CBSS projects. The CSO can decide on CBSS participation in projects initiated by relevant partners, in line with the agreed CBSS long-term priorities.
18. The CSO may invite Chairs of CBSS working bodies and structures to report on their activities. Similarly, the CSO may invite guests, in accordance with the CBSS Principles and Guidelines for Third Party Participation.
19. A Trio, composed of the CSO members of the former, incumbent and incoming CBSS Presidencies, may meet to ensure the continuity of the work of the CBSS and to assist in the smooth transition of the Presidencies. The incumbent Presidency prepares and chairs the Trio meetings. Any Trio member may call a meeting. The Director General of the Permanent International Secretariat takes part in the meetings of the Trio. The Presidency may ask a member of the Trio to represent the CBSS in other fora on an ad-hoc basis.
20. The Chairman of the CSO or the Trio may brief interested third parties on the results of CBSS meetings of key importance.
21. The CBSS is assisted by a Permanent International Secretariat in Stockholm. The Secretariat performs its duties in accordance with its terms of reference.
22. Decisions within the CBSS are taken by consensus.
23. The member hosting meetings within the CBSS bears the costs connected with the meeting, unless otherwise decided. Participants in the meetings cover their travel and accommodation expenses.
24. Council meetings are conducted in English and German. The host country provides simultaneous interpretation to and from these languages. The hosts of other meetings at ministerial level are encouraged to consider similar interpretation. All other CBSS meetings are conducted in English. The official language of CBSS documents is English.
25. Participation in the CBSS will not in any way infringe on any international obligation, be it of legal or political nature, of any of the participating states.
26. These Terms of Reference enter into force as of 14 June 2024 and supersede previous versions.