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By: State Secretary Erik Lahnstein

Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region from the CBSS perspective
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Madam Chair,
Esteemed parliamentarians,
Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to greet you on behalf of Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, my Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Council of the Baltic Sea States for the next year.

Norway places a lot of importance on the work of parliamentarians as a vital link in the chain of governance, which is why I am glad that the very first official event where Norway represents the Council of the Baltic Sea States is here, giving us a possibility to both present and discuss directly with you our priorities in the work ahead in the Baltic Sea Region. Let me add that it is a particular privilege to be hosted on the Baltic Sea itself for such an event, a privilege which I wish to thank the Åland Parliament and its Speaker Mr Roger Nordlund, for.

Before turning to some of the specific issues of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, let us reflect a bit on the context we are working within. Out of 11 CBSS Member States Norway is one of three non-EU members. Like Iceland, Norway is closely integrated with the EU and is part of its inner market through the European Economic Agreement and has a strong multilateral cooperation with Russia through the Northern Dimension Framework. Norway also currently hosts the Secretariats of two other organisations in the region, the Arctic Council in Tromsø and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Kirkenes on the Russian border, and is active in the Nordic Council of Ministers. All of this provides a potential for extending the scope of the Baltic Sea Region cooperation further north, and hopefully to diminish duplication by the various stakeholders in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As a Strategic Partner to the CBSS you are regularly informed by the rotating Presidencies and the Secretariat of activities undertaken by the CBSS under its five priority areas which were determined by the CBSS reform decision in 2008 that is Environment, Economic Development, Energy, Education and Culture, Civil Security and the Human Dimension. I will not go into the details of these priorities because you know them very well. It is sufficient to say that Norway during its Presidency will take the baton from Lithuania, whose Presidency culminated with the adoption of the Vilnius Declaration. I'd rather speak more thoroughly on the three Norwegian priorities:

- **Maritime policy**
- **Fight against trafficking in human beings**
- **Further development of the CBSS as an organization to become more efficient, relevant and operative.**

For the first two we are urging you to dialoguing and challenging us. For our intergovernmental cooperation to be successful, parliamentary support is imperative. I, and later my colleagues from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat of CBSS, will therefore listen very carefully to the progress reports of your two working groups which are working on these same subjects and we look forward to seeing your recommendations in the resolution which you will adopt at the end of your stay here in Mariehamn.

It will come as no surprise to this group that Maritime Policy resonates strongly in Norway and during our Presidency this will be reflected in actions of the CBSS. Shipping and related maritime activities are vital for the economic development of the region. However, there are also negative environmental effects that we must deal with; air emissions, discharge of oil and other waste and introduction of organisms through ballast water. The Presidency will make use of the CBSS Expert Group on Maritime Policy to meet these challenges.

The use and distribution of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in Baltic shipping will be the specific priority area during the Norwegian chairmanship in the field of Maritime Policy. Due to the expected growth in maritime transport and the related environmental challenges, as well as new emission regulations from 2015/2016, there is a need to examine alternative fuel solutions. Thus the Norwegian chairmanship will organize a workshop with focus on the challenges and possibilities of utilizing LNG in Baltic shipping in cooperation with stakeholders. Another task of the Expert Group during the Norwegian Presidency is to organize an event during the European Maritime Day in May 2011 in Gdansk, in close cooperation with Poland. In addition, the Norwegian Presidency will build on what has already been achieved by the Expert Group, thus:

- We want to initiate and facilitate maritime economy cluster building in the Baltic Sea region to combine regional interests, strengthen their visibility and enable a regional maritime policy dialogue between business and political decision-makers. The initial evaluation of this field, done by the group, shows that there are already several maritime clusters in the region. Norway has strong maritime clusters and it is of benefit that we link up these clusters. The group has already organized one workshop with practitioners in this field to facilitate communication and best practice exchange.
- An interactive communication dimension will be developed to compliment a databank which has already been elaborated. That includes a collection of relevant information such as documents and links on maritime policy in the region.
- When it comes to projects, the group has already entered into a regular and constructive dialogue on cross-sector pilot projects in maritime policy within the framework of transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and during the Norwegian chairmanship this cooperation should become more concrete, for instance by raising project results to the political level, as appropriate. You as parliamentarians should follow this closely.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Norway at the 15th Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States held in Elsinore in June of 2009 gave firm support to the work done by the CBSS to combat Trafficking in Human Beings. This is the second issue I want to discuss with you. I stress the need for countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention against trafficking, and I am pleased to see from your draft resolution that the BSPC takes the same view. I wish again to underline the need for all our countries to develop action against trafficking on the solid foundation this convention represents. The group of experts tasked with monitoring the implementation of the convention – GRETA – has just started a round of evaluation. The work done by GRETA contributes to making the convention a strong mechanism in a victim-centred approach to trafficking.

Norway has decided to focus on combating all forms of Trafficking in Human Beings during its Presidency. There can be no doubt that labour trafficking is on the rise in our countries, we have had such examples of workers from Poland and the Baltic States in Norway. It is important that we jointly recognise this problem and share experiences. We as parliamentarians and governmental representatives should actively take bold measures to fight this unworthy phenomenon. In this we should have a dialogue to better coordinate our efforts.

Trafficking is a very complex issue, and is addressed by three expert bodies in the framework of the CBSS.

First we have the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TH.THB), an expert group currently chaired by Norway, which will continue to implement previously approved strategy and project activities until the end of 2010. In partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Task Force is conducting a series of Training Seminars for Diplomatic and Consular Staff in the Baltic Sea Region. So far the feedback on the seminars has been overwhelmingly positive. The seminars provide consular staff with instruments to assist victims through cooperation with social services, support organisations, police, immigration authorities, customs, labour inspectors and other relevant actors. The Task Force will this autumn publish a handbook to support seminars and to serve as an essential guide for the CBSS consulates and embassies beyond the completion of the training seminars.

Another successfully implemented activity was the Joint Project with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Fostering Civil Society and Law Enforcement Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking in the Baltic Sea Region. This project culminated in a comprehensive assessment study which was discussed and presented during a two-day Regional Conference at the Swedish Prime Minister's Office in December 2009. The report on this project has been distributed to your Enlarged Standing Committee meeting in Vilnius and to your Working Group on Civil Security/including Trafficking.

The success of these initiatives has spurred the expert group into even more action:

- During 2010 the Task Force will launch a pilot information campaign on human trafficking in Sweden called Safe Trip. The campaign will target women trafficked for sexual exploitation and will be connected to a national telephone support line. If successful we hope to see the campaign implemented in other CBSS Member States in accordance with their national needs.

- The expert group is also working on an assessment study of the Data Collection Mechanisms on Human Trafficking to map what type, how and by whom data is currently being collected in the CBSS Member States. This is a direct response to existing weaknesses in current investigations, data collection and knowledge exchange between various actors working in the field of combating human trafficking. We need to identify the gaps.
- Furthermore, the Task Force and the Uppsala University will hold a Research Seminar on Human Trafficking on 25 November 2010 in Uppsala, Sweden. The Seminar will bring together international researchers on human trafficking from different disciplines and key actors from the operative level.
- For the near future, the Task Force is planning a comparative regional legal analysis on human trafficking. This review will focus on existing legislation for the protection of victims of human trafficking.

The Task Force will continue to build on to its current activities and find forceful ways to address labour exploitation, a form of modern slavery which all our countries must combat. In May this year, the Lithuanian presidency organised a conference in Vilnius on prevention and control of trafficking with a strong focus on trafficking for labour exploitation. Norway wishes to bring this issue further, in order to establish better ways of identifying victims of labour exploitation.

First, the task force is planning to develop cooperation between police authorities and labour inspection authorities in the Baltic Sea states to more effectively identify victims of forced labour and trafficking on the labour market.

It is Norway's intention that the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings shall bring together representatives of law enforcement and labour authorities, as well as workers' and employers' organizations, for discussions and work on developing anti-trafficking efforts. Norway through the EEA Joint Financial Mechanism will use funds for this purpose.

An outcome should be to develop a guide or best practices for labour authorities to contribute more effectively in victim identification of forced labour and trafficking on the labour market and to strengthen cooperation between Baltic Sea labour inspection authorities through instruments such as Memorandums of Understanding. Secondly I want point out that victims of trafficking in human beings are of all ages; accordingly the second tool under the CBSS Framework, the Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC), has elaborated its second Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children 2008 – 2011. The Expert Group makes use of National Contact Points, NCP, which are operational in all the CBSS Member States, with the exception of Russia and Germany, to design appropriate programmes addressing the most pressing demands in the region.

In one of those programmes, the Baltic Sea Region – Comprehensive Assistance to Child Victims of Trafficking training is provided for experts in the care, protection and rehabilitation of children victims of trafficking. A holistic training programme has been conceived with content ranging from motivational work with teenagers with no trust in adults, psychological and social rehabilitation techniques to children's participation in shaping their own healing context. Previously the Expert Group has worked to identify who bears information on children in migration where there is a risk or suspicion of exploitation and a new project is currently underway on Information Management to Prevent Trafficking where experts focus on young people in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation; unaccompanied asylum seeking children and child labour and children committing crimes in a foreign country. The last will be

the subject of discussion in Tallinn in two weeks time. A report building on the expert inputs from these seminars and as well as interviews in the CBSS member countries will be launched in December 2010, naturally the report will be shared with you, in particular the WG on Civil Security (Trafficking in Human Beings)

Lastly the links between organized crime and trafficking in human beings are well known and at the 8th Baltic Sea States Summit on 2 June 2010 in Vilnius the Heads of Government prolonged the mandate of the Task Force on Organised Crime in the Baltic Sea Region to 31 December 2016 and approved its Regional Strategy for 2010-2014.

I cannot depart from the issue of Trafficking in Human Beings without mentioning specifically my appreciation for the support that your Working Group on Civil Security /Trafficking has shown by various means to the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings, for instance by posing parliamentary questions to the national governments. This is a good illustration of what your Chairman said earlier today about our pragmatic cooperation.

All Member States and parliaments in the Baltic Sea Region have a joint responsibility in curbing organised crime, including trafficking. If this problem is not fought by all, it can easily paint a negative picture of individual countries or the region as a whole. This must not be allowed to happen. The opening of borders has been good in integrating the region but there are certain challenges attached; we must not allow this to damage the image of our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I hope that my intervention will provide you with food for thought for discussion but before I leave the podium I would like to shortly mention the last Norwegian priority, namely the further development of the CBSS as an organisation. Fittingly, on the very first day of the Norwegian Presidency of the CBSS, the Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials signed a contract with the incoming Director General of the CBSS Secretariat, Mr Jan Lundin, who to our pleasure has joined us here at the BSPC Conference although he is not formally instated until 1 September. I do not want to go into detail of what is essentially an internal matter for the organisation but let me inform you that we seek greater visibility and more efficiency in the organisation and hope to build a strong project portfolio with our partners. The latter will obviously need to take into account work done in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the partnerships established under the Northern Dimension.
Ladies and Gentlemen

I will stop as I began by underlining that Norway and the CBSS value highly your Forum, appreciate your support and yes even your parliamentary control. As previous presidencies we will endeavour to keep you informed of the state of cooperation within the CBSS framework and as I wish you a fruitful conference I should also like to remind you that Norway will host the Second Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum in Tromsø on 22-23 February 2011 and that we certainly hope many of you can attend.

Thank you for your attention.