



Declaration on the reform of the Council of the Baltic Sea States

CBSS Ministers' Deputies Meeting
Riga, 3 June 2008

The Foreign Minister of Latvia and the Representatives of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, Sweden and of the European Commission constituting the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), met upon the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Latvia in Riga on 3 June 2008 in preparation of the 7th Baltic Sea States Summit in Riga on 4 June 2008.

The Council

- *recalling* the Declaration of the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea States in Copenhagen on 5-6 March 1992,
- *also recalling* the recommendations of the Heads of Government of the 3rd Baltic Sea States Summit in Kolding on 12-13 April 2000,
- *also recalling* the Political Declaration and the Policy Framework Document of the Northern Dimension adopted by the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation on 24 November 2006,
- *also recalling* the Declaration of the 14th Ministerial Session of the CBSS in Malmö on 13 June 2007 on a Renewed Baltic Sea States Cooperation,
- *also recalling* that this Ministerial Session confirmed its desire to increase cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region considered relevant to enhancing its competitiveness,
- *also recalling* that this Ministerial Session decided to reform the CBSS, on the basis of agreed priorities, with the aim of revitalising the CBSS to ensure that the organisation is better equipped to focus on priority actions, including a capacity to develop regionally important and strategic projects and to explore the financing of projects,
- *reaffirming* its shared responsibility for the prosperity of the Baltic Sea Region, its competitiveness and its sustainable development including gender equality, the public health and social well-being of its population, and its commitment to create favourable conditions for the development of the region and for further strengthening of mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation, including cross-sectoral, cross-border and sub-regional cooperation, as well as promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law,

Decided as follows:

1. in the context of the CBSS, the long-term priorities for Baltic Sea Region cooperation, without prejudging the right of initiative of any member, shall be:

- **environment**, which may include climate change,
- **economic development**, which may include innovation and competitiveness and a favourable business environment, fostering entrepreneurship, cluster development, maritime economy, transport & logistics, research and development, customs cooperation and well-functioning labour markets,
- **energy**, which may include energy security, energy efficiency and saving, renewable energy and the impact of energy on the environment,
- **education & culture**, which may include the EuroFaculty concept, student and academic mobility, upgrade of science and research network capacity, cultural heritage, contemporary culture and the promotion of regional identity,
- **civil security & the human dimension**, which may include the fight against trafficking in human beings, the protection of children's rights, nuclear and radiation safety, civil protection, as well as consumer protection, youth affairs, people-to-people contacts and the promotion of tolerance,

2. that full account shall be taken of the work conducted in the Northern Dimension Policy Framework and of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region under preparation in the European Union, as the implementation of the aforementioned priorities will require a concerted effort by all relevant actors in the region,

3. that the Council shall continue to take overall political guidance from the Baltic Sea States Summits,

4. that CBSS Ministerial Sessions shall continue to be held on an biennial basis,

5. that the aforementioned priorities can be implemented by expert groups, including governmental and non-governmental experts, as appropriate, with clear and time-limited mandates and tasks. The existing three permanent CBSS Working Groups shall be discontinued or transformed into expert groups by the 15th Ministerial Session at the latest. Decisions on establishing expert groups shall be taken by the Committee of Senior Officials. Overlapping mandates with bodies outside the CBSS are to be avoided,

6. to restructure the Secretariat in order to better facilitate project identification, fund raising and project management. Staff members will be assigned to priority-related projects and initiatives, while continuing to provide advice and assistance to the Council, the Presidency and the Committee of Senior Officials,

7. to periodically review and evaluate the adopted long-term priorities and the methods of their implementation,

The Council also decided that:

8. the two categories of "special participants" and "strategic partners" in the CBSS be merged into a single category of strategic partners, with a view to enhancing mutual cooperation and coordination of activities,

9. consultations between the Committee of Senior Officials and the CBSS Observer States shall, as a rule, be held annually in Stockholm; the Observer States' appointed contact persons are to play a key role in this,

10. the CBSS website, coordinated by the Secretariat, shall provide the basis for a *one-stop-shop* giving an overview of the activities and projects implemented by the CBSS and its cooperation partners,

11. it shall continue to coordinate its activities and seek synergies with the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council and the Northern Dimension Partnerships,

12. it shall seek complementarity and synergy with other regional and subregional actors,

13. the CBSS will strive for increased cooperation with the relevant European Union programmes including the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and transnational programs. It notes that the membership of the European Commission in the CBSS ensures regular information exchange with the Commission regarding the emerging EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Finally, the Council decided:

14. to amend the Terms of Reference of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and its Secretariat, as well as the Principles and Guidelines for Third Party Participation in the CBSS and other pertinent documents in accordance with this declaration,

15. to present this declaration to the 7th Baltic Sea States Summit in Riga on 4 June 2008.