

4th Conference of the CBSS Ministers of Culture (Gdansk, 21 Sept. 1999)

### **Declaration**

The Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States met in Gdansk on the 20 and 21 September 1999 for their fourth Conference.

The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the ongoing cultural co-operation in the Baltic Sea region and the initiatives taken following the third Conference of Ministers of Culture in Lübeck on September 21-23, 1997.

At the Conference, the Ministers discussed questions related to the Baltic Sea regional co-operation infrastructure and the report from the working group on Heritage Co-operation.

The Ministers took note of the report from the working group on Cultural Heritage and agreed that further attention should be given to cultural heritage, and that cultural heritage as an essential part of the environment should be seen in a broader cultural context and be included in cultural co-operation in general. As a basis for future work in this field, the Ministers adopted the set of Framework Statements as appended to the report from the Working Group.

The Ministers agreed on further development along the lines presented in the plan for safeguarding and developing common cultural heritage in the Baltic Sea region under the guidance of a monitoring group, which should report back to the Ministers at their fifth meeting.

The Ministers noted with interest the development of the Baltic Interface Net project and stressed the importance of the new media for culture communication and co-operation in the region. The Ministers supported further extension of this cultural network and considered it to be an important aid to the promotion of cultural exchange and co-operation across national borders and language barriers.

In connection with the discussion on infrastructure, the Ministers took note of the work carried out within the framework of *Ars Baltica*, as an important multilateral body for cultural co-operation in the Baltic Sea region.

The Ministers stressed the need for strengthening cultural co-operation in the region, and agreed to look further into questions related to the restructuring of this co-operation.

The Ministers underlined the historical ties that bind the countries of the Baltic Sea region together. In order to revitalise this historical relationship, the Ministers stressed their wish to enlarge the scope of co-operation between their countries, to include a broader part of the cultural sector. In this context it was suggested that a seminar on cultural tourism should be held.

The Ministers took note of the need for adequate national and international funding of cultural co-operation in the Baltic Sea region.

The Ministers further noted with satisfaction the interest for cultural co-operation, expressed by the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Baltic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council of

Ministers, as well as the Union of the Baltic Cities, and encouraged the co-operation between the different organisations and networks in the area.

The Ministers also stressed their wish to relate cultural co-operation in the region to the work carried out in multilateral organisations, particularly in the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO.

The Ministers agreed that the fifth Baltic Sea Conference of Ministers of Culture would be held in Copenhagen in 2001 and a preparatory meeting shall take place in Vilnius in 2000.