

RESOLUTION (BSSSC X Annual Conference in Lillehammer, NO)

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) was founded in 1993 based on the Stavanger declaration. In this declaration the participants expressed their readiness to expand subregional co-operation with the aim of supporting democracy and sustainable economic development. Much has been achieved to make co-operation in these fields work, but there still remain many challenges.

The conference expresses gratitude to the Eastern Norway County Network - the hosts of the 10th BSSSC annual conference - for inviting the regions of the Baltic Sea area to meet in Norway again completing a decade of successful BSSSC co-operation. The main topic the Lillehammer conference focused on is "Regions in partnership for the future."

BSSSC welcomes the annual progress report on enlargement launched by the European Commission. It calls on the European Union Council to finalise the enlargement negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2002. Representing the regional and local authorities in the Baltic Sea area, BSSSC points to three particular fields of action which need specific attention:

- * support for institution and capacity building in the new member states,
- * adaptation of financial instruments to the new situation when enlargement is completed,
- * development of a joint strategy to tackle the reform of Trans-European Networks in the Baltic Sea area.

In the enlarged European Union the borders between the old and new member states will pose a significant new challenge. In order to ease the problem, crossborder co-operation between those partners should be increased.

It is essential that during the new programming period after 2006 the Interreg programme continues in the entire Baltic Sea area as well as in the regions on the European Union's external borders with Norway, Russia and Belarus and in the regions on the internal borders.

A second Northern Dimension Action Plan, to be elaborated and adopted by 2003, needs to meet the challenges and demands that the European Union enlargement will bring to the whole Baltic Sea Region. With regard

to this, as well as to other policies of the European Union, the BSSSC points to the fact that implementation to a large extent is a task to be achieved by regional and local actors. They offer their capacities and expertise in areas such as cross-border co-operation, regional and business development, health care and social services, information society and other sectors. Thus, BSSSC calls for active involvement of the sub-national actors in the whole process, from development to implementation of the new Northern Dimension Action Plan - on the European Union level as well as within the states concerned.

In particular the BSSSC calls for:

- * the provision of constructive and valuable instruments to meet the need of "Capacity Building" at regional and local level in the new member states as well as in Russian border regions. This could be achieved by programmes like "twinning" arrangements,
- * the opening up of Interreg A cooperation as well for "tripartite" projects, facilitating multilateral cooperation across the Baltic Sea at the regional and local level and better co-ordination between INTERREG-A and TACIS by formulating regional sub-programmes for the Tacis programme.
- * The inclusion of measures to promote a sustainable development also for the Arctic areas.

BSSSC pays particular attention to the future development of the Kaliningrad Oblast as a pilot region for cooperation between the European Union and Russia. The Kaliningrad issue is crucial for the stability of the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC expresses its full support for the progress that has been made during the last days on this issue.

BSSSC welcomes the initiatives already taken by Baltic Sea Region countries and the European Union to secure the base of economic development in the Baltic Sea Region. However, BSSSC asks further work to be done in relation to:

- * developing the Baltic Sea Region infrastructure including "Sea-motorways",
- * improving the border crossing and especially securing access to the Russian regions with a focus on Kalinigrad,
- * improving the legal framework for economic co-operation,
- * securing the development of a sustainable economic environment in both urban and rural regions,

- * securing local and regional capacity to support economic development through the establishment and management of institutions needed to create a dynamic climate for further development,
- * improving maritime safety and security

The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg underlined the importance of an ambitious world wide process to implement Agenda 21 based on the concept of global justice. BSSSC presented its support to sustainable development through Baltic 21 at the summit. BSSSC will continue contributing to the implementation of Baltic 21. The conference underlines the importance of a cross-sectoral approach as shown during the BSSSC workshop in Kiel in January 2002 and calls upon Baltic Sea Regions to implement this framework through concrete projects and initiatives. BSSSC invites other organisations within the Baltic Sea region to participate in this work.

The Conference wants the Baltic Sea Region to be free from all forms of organised crime, corruption and terrorism.

At the 10th annual conference BSSSC has provided a forum for Baltic Sea youth leaders and has founded a BSSSC youth co-ordinators network. Youth representatives from Baltic Sea regions demand more attention and support for European youth policies. BSSSC calls for more support for international youth programmes by EU, national governments and regional authorities.

It is important for the future of the Baltic Sea region as a whole, as well as for European democratic development and integration, to strengthen European youth policy at local and regional levels. Providing young people and youth leaders with better opportunities of international exchange programmes and giving them the possibility of functioning actively in the decision making processes, will support them in taking over the responsibility as political, social and economic leaders within the Baltic Sea region.

In the enlarged Europe it is essential to increase the role of the subnational authorities, who will be partners in the decision making processes. Therefore the conference welcomes the increasing awareness of this need on the part of the European Commission and it supports plans for reinforced consultation and dialogue with those authorities as well as with the civil society, one aspect of which is also the involvement of the

subnational level in the work of the Convention on the future of European Union. The conference appreciates also the role of the Committee of the Regions when it represents the interests of the subnational level in the process. It supports the Committee of the Regions in its efforts to strengthen its role in the enlarged European Union.

In order to achieve a greater synergy of work aiming at supporting the Baltic Region, the conference asks all Baltic Sea Region organisations and structures:

- * to co-ordinate efforts,
- * to jointly articulate aims and intentions, and
- * to unite actions towards national authorities and Brussels.

It is necessary to strengthen the sub-regional voice in the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC affirms its important role and will continue to bring the Baltic regional interests into the work of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

The conference appreciates the invitation of the authorities of St. Petersburg to hold the BSSSC 11th annual conference in this city during its 300 year anniversary. The St Petersburg conference will address the perspectives of the BSR in the period after enlargement.