



GERMAN PRESIDENCY
2022-2023

Declaration

20th CBSS Ministerial Session, Wismar, Germany

2 June 2023

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) – consisting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden, and the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy – met for its 20th Session in Wismar on 2 June 2023 at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany.

1. The Council condemned that Russia, with its unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against democratic and sovereign Ukraine, continues to flagrantly violate international law, including the UN Charter, and consequently the very foundation of the rules-based international order. Belarus, by allowing Russia to use its territory, infrastructure and military equipment, is an accomplice in this unjustified aggression. The Russian aggression is entirely incompatible with the cooperative model of international relations in the Baltic Sea Region and will have a long-term negative impact on regional security. The Council reiterated that its relations with Russia and Belarus will remain severed as long as they continue to violate the fundamental rules and principles of international law.
2. The Council underlined its unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, an observer state to the CBSS, as it exercises its right to defend itself against the Russian aggression, in line with the UN Charter. The Council expressed its support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and affirmed that it will never recognise the attempted illegal annexations by Russia of any parts of Ukraine's territory. The members of the Council reiterated their commitment to provide military, humanitarian, legal and financial support to Ukraine and their support for restrictive measures against Russia and Belarus for as long as necessary. The Council stressed that there cannot be impunity for any crimes, including the crime of aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and further expressed strong support for the international efforts to ensure full accountability, and welcomed the progress towards the establishment of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. The Council expressed willingness to engage with the international community in further developing a future international comprehensive compensation mechanism and in this context

welcomed the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine within the institutional framework of the Council of Europe.

3. In their determined resistance and fight for freedom, the people and Government of Ukraine have displayed exceptional unity, resilience, innovation and adaptation to critical challenges, which we recognise as a matter of invaluable experience and a lesson also for our own societies. The Council commended the solidarity and unity of the people of the Baltic Sea Region, their cities and municipalities, which have welcomed millions of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and provided assistance and support, and called for this support to be maintained.
4. The Council expressed its deep concern for the security of the Baltic Sea Region in the context of the aggressive, provocative and unjustified operations of Russia's Baltic Fleet and Air Forces, which violate generally accepted standards on sea and air safety. These operations constitute a threat to the security of aerial and marine navigation and communication.
5. Against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its regional security implications, the Council underlined the importance of further developing the resilience of societies in the Baltic Sea Region. The Council recognised the need to enhance societies' ability to resist and recover from shocks. This includes, but is not limited to, efforts to strengthen civil preparedness, counter disinformation and false narratives, protect and enhance the resilience of our shared critical infrastructure, and ensure energy security and security of supply.
6. The Council underlined the shared goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest. The Baltic Sea Region offers great potential for renewable energy, such as offshore wind. The environmentally friendly exploitation of this potential could make an important contribution to our endeavours to combat climate change, increase energy security and independence, and reduce energy prices.
7. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has highlighted the importance of reducing Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. The Council underlined that all member states had managed to reduce their dependence on coal, oil and gas from Russia. The Council reaffirmed the intention of its members to rapidly phase out imports of Russian energy and energy carriers.
8. In this context, the Council also welcomed the outcome of the Baltic Offshore Wind Forum of 9 May 2023 and recalled the attached Berlin Declaration on Offshore Wind.
9. The Council noted the environmental, human safety, security and economic risks emanating from the thousands of tons of conventional and chemical munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea. In addition, they can pose a risk to marine life, fishing and navigation, impede the installation of offshore energy infrastructure, and may negatively impact on aquaculture, tourism and other sectors of the blue economy.

10. The Council took note of the decision of the German Government to initiate a national immediate action programme to address salvaging underwater munition in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, including the development of a mobile platform for munitions clearance. The Council welcomed Germany's offer to share experience from this programme with regional partners.
11. The Council welcomed the initiation of a cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and macro-regional dialogue on underwater munitions and took note of the recommendations of the expert round table held in Kiel in December 2022, and the joint meeting of HELCOM and CBSS senior officials in April 2023. The Council acknowledged the significant role of HELCOM in this field. It encouraged the continuation of close cooperation with HELCOM and other relevant organisations with the aim of filling knowledge gaps, developing best environmental practices for risk assessment, and exploring financing options for developing and implementing best available techniques for environmentally sound and safe management, and invited the Director General to update the Council on the progress made.
12. The Council welcomed the presentation of the Joint Communication on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan, which includes proposals for measures on the topic of underwater munitions in the Baltic Sea, as well as ongoing discussions thereon at the EU level. The Council looked forward to the upcoming Our Baltic Conference 2.0 in September 2023 in Palanga.
13. The Council noted with satisfaction the launch of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum in January 2023, which aims to support meaningful youth participation on all levels in the Baltic Sea Region. The Council welcomed the active engagement of youth, both in the context of the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue held in Hamburg in November 2022 and the CBSS Youth Ministerial held in Berlin in May 2023.
14. The Council took note of the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue Engagement Roadmap with recommendations for a safe and secure region and of the outcome of the CBSS Youth Ministerial presented by youth participants in Wismar. The Council welcomed the ideas and proposals developed for strengthening and safeguarding societal resilience in the Baltic Sea Region. It encouraged all stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region to involve the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum as a platform for youth participation.
15. The Council highlighted the role of the CBSS as a valuable forum for political dialogue on topical issues of common interest to the region, as evidenced during the German Presidency 2022-2023, as well as its function as an instrument for practical cooperation. The geopolitical situation has even further increased the significance of regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.
16. The Council appreciated the efforts made to refocus the work of the CBSS. The Council called for continued cooperation and complementarity with other regional fora to avoid overlap and duplication. Stressing the relevance and interconnected nature of all three priority areas of the CBSS, the Council gave particular attention in the current circumstances to the priority area of Safe and Secure Region and

encouraged focusing practical cooperation on related topics. This includes exploring and developing the potential of cooperation with observer state Ukraine on issues of common interest.

17. The Council reaffirmed the commitment of its members to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement. It encouraged its members to contribute continuously to an ambitious, urgent and comprehensive implementation of these goals, through existing and future Baltic Sea Region mechanisms and platforms, including inter alia the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, and to seek synergies between future priority CBSS actions and the implementation of these goals.
18. The Council appreciated the cooperation between the CBSS and VASAB, including in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and noted the adoption of the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 by the 9th VASAB ministerial conference as an example of successful cooperation to tackle the challenges facing the region.
19. The Council noted the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Permanent International Secretariat in Stockholm and paid tribute to its effective contribution to achieving the CBSS priorities during this quarter century. It expressed its appreciation to the host country Sweden for its continued support.
20. The Council expressed its gratitude to Germany for its successful 2022-2023 Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The Council welcomed Finland as incoming Presidency from July 2023.