

# **R E P O R T**

## **COMMEMORATION OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY “FIFTEEN YEARS OF BALTIC PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION”**

### **1. Time and venue of the Session**

14 December 2006, Vilnius (Lithuania)

### **2. Names of the presiding officers and participants of the Session**

**Presiding officers of the Session:**

**Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly, Head of the Lithuanian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

**Mrs. Ērika Zommere**, Vice President of the Baltic Assembly, Chairwoman of the Latvian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

**Mr. Andres Taimla**, Vice President of the Baltic Assembly, Head of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

### **3. Agenda of the Conference**

Fifteen year of the Baltic parliamentary cooperation

### **4. Speakers and the essence of their speeches**

- **H. E. Mr. Viktoras Muntianas**, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

In the opening speech, Mr. Muntianas underlined that Lithuania had benefited from 15 years of cooperation of the Baltic States and there are no doubts that forum of parliamentary socialization, exchange of ideas and declaration of trilateral objectives should be continued in future. Mr. Muntianas particularly highlighted necessity to continue cooperation of the Baltic States within the framework of the EU and NATO. Coordination of activities, lobbyism, and common position of the Baltic States in multilateral structures, is indispensable in order to make the Baltic States more prominent and influential internationally. Speaker of Lithuania's Seimas emphasized energy security and independence as main area of cooperation among the Baltic States, and expressed his support to the Baltic Assembly for its efforts addressing energy problems. In conclusion, Mr. Muntianas wished fruitful discussions during the summit of the Baltic Assembly and Nordic Council where parliamentarians would discuss different aspects of the energy in the Baltic Sea region.

- Video greeting speech of **H. E. Mr. Indulis Emsis**, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia

Mr. Emsis emphasized that fifteen years of cooperation is just an instant flow of history, but for the Baltic region this has been a time of significant and fundamental changes. Formed during the Singing Revolution at the beginning of the struggle for our statehoods, when a need for a united and strong force was decisive for our future, the Baltic Assembly has managed to survive and transform itself along with the times. Speaker of Latvia's parliament emphasized that it was difficult to remain isolated in a modern, closely interlinked global environment. Whether we like it or not, the world perceives Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as one whole – the Baltic States. And that is good because the story of regaining of independence and rapid development of the Baltic States is one of the world's success stories. Our achievements serve as an encouraging example for others. Diversity of our cooperation is based not just on geographical but also logical factors: our common history, development, growth and future goals. When analyzing the work of the Baltic Assembly it is necessary to admit that regarding many foreign policy issues and interparliamentary cooperation, the Baltic Assembly is the only institution which voices a joint position. In conclusion, Mr. Emsis stressed that while strictly respecting the national interests of each of our states and keeping in mind the fact

that we are competitors in some fields, we have to preserve, cultivate and subsequently seek to perfect our joint discussions and cooperation, because only through joint effort we will be able to draft and implement the most appropriate development strategy for our cooperation.

- Greeting letter from **H.E. Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves**, President of the Republic of Estonia

In the greeting letter, President of Estonia reaffirmed his sincere conviction that the Baltic Assembly had acted as the backbone of the unity of the Baltic nations. From the very establishment of the Baltic Assembly in 1991 members of parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have gathered to discuss the most important issues of trilateral cooperation that could serve the best interest of the Baltic States. As members of the EU and NATO, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania face new challenges in global, European and regional level. Nevertheless, a few rules should be bear in mind; first, we have to work closely with nations which share common values and similar traditions; secondly, we need to concentrate on a limited number of vital issues of common Baltic interest; and in doing so, we should never forget the spirit of the parliamentary. This would mean taking into account both common goals and also the differences in opinions when it comes to making joint decisions.

- **Mr. Ole Stavad**, President of the Nordic Council

In his greeting speech Mr. Stavad touched upon historical aspects of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation, as common history of our countries should never be forgotten. In late 1980's and early 1990's members of the Nordic Council were active participants in the founding of the Baltic Assembly, although official relations between the Baltic Assembly and Nordic Council were established in November 1991. Late 1980's was particularly active and challenging time both for Baltics and Scandinavians too, as Nordic countries took an active part in support of the independence of the Baltic countries. Back in late 1980's even many Scandinavians were sceptical about "intervention" in the Baltic countries' "internal affairs". However, Nordic countries were unanimous that Baltic people deserve to be free and didn't hesitated take a challenge and stand up for "rebels" in the Baltic countries. Ever since then the Nordic and Baltic cooperation is becoming stronger. In conclusion, Mr. Stavad reaffirmed that Nordic-Baltic cooperation was rooted in a strong sense of historical, cultural and political ties; therefore, joint experiences, joint

challenges, joint approaches and joint resources had always been traditional pillars of the mutual cooperation.

- **Mr. Frans de Nerée tot Babberich**, President of the Benelux Inter-parliamentary Consultative Council

As a representative of Benelux parliament, Mr. Babberich shared experience of Benelux countries in collaboration of three Benelux countries within the European Union. Benelux countries had gained many experiences in field of integration, and some of their experiences are relevant to the Baltic countries. Mr. Babberich pointed out that Benelux countries have always supported Baltic States in their aspirations to join the European and Euroatlantic structures, and pursuing further cooperation of countries within the EU and NATO. Mr. Babberich highlighted that Benelux countries had learned a lot from cooperation with Baltic States too. Initially, Benelux underestimated the sacrifices the Baltic States had to make for their integration. Rebuilding democracy and the economy, more specifically implementing the juridical and institutional frameworks, was a necessary condition to bring about integration. This had become an evident today. When speaking about future cooperation of countries, Mr. Babberich pointed out main cooperation areas. Firstly, attention should be given to collaboration in sub-areas of integration, so to speak, vertical rather than horizontal integration. For instance, parliamentarians could extend cooperation in fields like town and country planning, environmental and infrastructural policy. Secondly, there is a great potential of direct bilateral cooperation between individual institutes, public as well as private organisations.

- **Mr. Česlovas Juršėnas**, First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Chairman of the Seimas delegation to the Assembly of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland

Mr. Juršėnas congratulated the Baltic Assembly on the festive event and highlighted that the Baltic Assembly as a parliamentary cooperation body could teach a lot to other parliamentary working groups, as during 15 years of cooperation the Baltic States have proved that despite diverse opinions now and then, there is something more essential in the cooperation - active dialogue and exchange of ideas. Mr. Juršėnas praised the Baltic Assembly for being a forum for ideas to understand better each other and bring closer Baltic nations. Referring to speech of Mr. Emsis, Mr. Juršėnas underlined that strength of the Baltic cooperation reveals not in the unanimity of opinions but in capacity to make a consensus and respect each others opinion.

- **Mr. Jonas Jagminas**, Chairman of the Assembly of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Referring to previous speaker, Mr. Jagminas noted that approach of the Baltic States in dealing with issues which often are politically sensitive, is a good 'lesson-to-be-learned' for other international organizations. As a representative of parliamentary cooperation Assembly between Lithuania and Ukraine, Mr. Jagminas outlined that the Assembly finds Baltic cooperation highly valuable and effective and wished all the best for further cooperation of three Baltic countries.

- **Mr. Bronius Kuzmickas**, Signatory the Resolution on the formation the Baltic Assembly, Lithuania

Mr. Kuzmickas, as a former member of the Baltic Assembly and signatory of the decision on establishing the Baltic Assembly, shared his memories from the very beginning of the Baltic cooperation. 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Nordic Council was the first time when the common voice of the Baltic States was raised at the international fora. A huge resonance in mass media and in Kremlin followed; nevertheless, the mechanism of the Baltic cooperation was activated. Mr. Kuzmickas remembered that support of the Nordic Council in the beginning of 1990's was indispensable. Despite carping criticism from Moscow the Nordic countries expressed firm support for the independence of the Baltic States. Mr. Kuzmickas once again reaffirmed necessity of the Baltic cooperation as an instrument to express common position in the European Union and internationally, and wished all the best in cooperation with the Baltics' counterparts in Nordic and Benelux countries.

- **H. E. Mr. Aurimas Taurantas**, former Head of the Lithuanian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

In his address, Mr. Taurantas underlined that one of the main characteristics of the Baltic cooperation is everlasting development and ability to undertake challenges. In order to retain the speed of the Baltic cooperation in future, it is necessary to answer the question where we are and what we should do in future. Nowadays, cooperation context is totally different as it was 15 years ago; therefore, it is essential to adjust the situation and new challenges. However, Mr. Taurantas disagreed that along with the changes of international context the forms of cooperation should be changed. He noted that there

are two different views on Baltic cooperation, optimistic and pessimistic; nevertheless, the one should never forget that in a long term perspective the cooperation of the Baltic States is necessary. Because, failure of one state is a failure of all states and success of one state is a success for others too. 15 years of the Baltic cooperation has proved that even small countries like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania together can reach great aims.

- **Mr. Ülo Nugis**, former Head of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly  
Mr. Nugis in his greeting speech recalled trials Baltics went through together and how the idea of an interparliamentary assembly of the three states became real. “There is the right time for everything, and all politicians have to do be aware of the development of the society and recognize right conditions for future decisions”, with those words Mr. Nugis addressed parliamentarians 13 years ago at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly, and repeated those words today. “Importance of right long-term decisions is still the most important prerequisite for successful and mutually rewarding cooperation”, he stressed. He also expressed his belief that the Baltic Assembly has made right decisions up to now. It was first proved during the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States. Secondly, members of the Baltic Assembly made right decision to joint their efforts in meeting the EU requirements and harmonizing legislation of the Baltic States with the *acquis communautaire*. However, there are many important decisions to be taken in near future. Namely, what strategy will they choose in an enlarged Europe and what is the role of the Baltic Assembly in it. The right time has arrived!

- **Mrs. Ērika Zommere**, Chairwoman of the Latvian delegation to the Baltic Assembly  
Mrs. Zommere thanked all previous speakers for their outstanding contribution in the cooperation of the Baltic States. If looking back to 1980’s and beginning of 1990’s the one might see number of examples of joint trilateral cooperation in dealing with problems of utmost importance for the Baltic States, such as regaining of the independence and sovereignty, stopping the migration flow from the USSR, and demilitarisation of the Baltic States. At that point the Baltic States were unanimous that only by joint efforts we could solve our problems and achieve our goals. Apart from different international context, nothing much has changed since then. The Baltic States still have to act jointly in dealing with various challenges, like being small countries in the EU, being an Eastern border of the EU, developing relations with new EU neighbour

states and other. Therefore, we still have to face our fears and show firm political will not only in the EU context but at the international level.

## **R E P O R T**

### **ANNUAL SUMMIT OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AND NORDIC COUNCIL “ENERGY ISSUES IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION”**

On 15 December the Baltic Assembly and Nordic Council held the joint summit on energy in the Baltic Sea region. Together with invited experts, Nordic and Baltic parliamentarians discussed different aspects of energy policy; however the main focus was sustainable and secure energy supply in the Baltic Sea region. The summit was also remarkable for adopting Joint Action Plan of the Baltic Assembly and Nordic Council. The overall aim of the document is to provide a framework and a general direction for the Baltic – Nordic parliamentary cooperation in 2007. The Action Plan is the basis for implementing the Report of the Joint Baltic Assembly – Nordic Council Ad Hoc Group, which was adopted during the 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting on 28 April 2005. As an outcome of the discussion, both organizations issued the Joint Press Statement. In the statement parliamentarians reassured their great interest in implementation of joint energy and infrastructure projects. It was unanimously agreed that the main aim of Baltic–Nordic cooperation on energy is to promote efficient, competitive, safe and sustainable supply energy. In regard to the planned Russian–German gas pipeline, parliamentarians recalled previous statements from the Baltic Assembly in Tallinn of 26 November 2005 and that of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 5 September in Reykjavik. They reaffirmed that that the construction of the gas pipeline must not damage the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea and cause irrecoverable environmental problems to separate states of the region.

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## **1. Time and venue of the Session**

15 December 2006, Vilnius (Lithuania)

## **2. Names of the presiding officers and participants of the Session**

### **Presiding officers of the Session:**

**Mr. Donatas Jankauskas**, Chairman of the Environmental Protection and Energy Committee of the Baltic Assembly

**Mr. Asmund Kristoffersen**, Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee of the Nordic Council

## **3. Agenda of the Session**

Energy in the Baltic Se region

## **4. Speakers and the essence of their speeches**

- **Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly

In the opening of the summit, President of the Baltic Assembly addressed the main objective and cooperation priorities of both organizations. He highlighted that overall objective of Baltic–Nordic parliamentary cooperation is to promote democratic, socio-economic and cultural development of the Baltic Sea and Northern European regions and to act as a vocal advocate for specific challenges in both regions as well as to maintain a cooperation network in the Baltic–Nordic region. There are three overarching areas in Baltic–Nordic parliamentary cooperation: firstly, strengthening socio-economic integration in the Baltic Sea region; secondly, contributing to bridge-building to EU's new neighbours; and thirdly, promoting a comprehensive approach to the challenges of the Northern region. As to concrete cooperation priorities, Mr. Simulik introduced five main issues both organizations will jointly discuss next year: 1) sustainable, safe energy supply in a European perspective, 2) labour market relations and mobility of people in Europe, 3) preservation of the cultural heritage and the correlation between cultural heritage and innovation, 4) fight against trafficking in the labour force, illegal and legal migration, abuse of the labour force, 5) family and children policy and fight against domestic violence.



- **Mr. Ole Stavad**, President of the Nordic Council

Year 2006 was this first year we tried to figure out how to implement the agreement of both organizations signed two years ago at the 5<sup>th</sup> joint meeting aiming at developing the Nordic – Baltic cooperation in a more target oriented and operational manner, finding out where it is to a use and benefit of all of us to deal with specific issues. And in those areas we will have much more direct dialogue in our future cooperation. Looking back at the joint action plan for 2006 the one can see that level of activities is different if looking at the joint cooperation of the committees of Nordic Council and Baltic Assembly. New cooperation format of both organizations also involves cooperation in a larger format. For instance, an issue of drugs and labour market have been discussed together with the colleagues from Benelux countries. Mr. Stavad particularly emphasized problem of labour force shortage and trafficking in human beings which is a huge problem for Baltic and Nordic countries today. For this reason, it is necessary to unite resources and experience in order to fight the problem. He also highlighted that organizations have to collaborate with other countries around the Baltic Sea such as Germany and Russia. Moreover, Nordic and Baltic countries together must find a strategy to improve the dialogue with Russia. Mr. Stavad expressed that ambitions increasing dialogue with Russia have not been fulfilled so far.

- **Mr. Donatas Jankauskas**, Chairman of the Environmental Protection and Energy Committee of the Baltic Assembly

Historically our countries were in different situation but the problems regarding energy and energy strategy are very similar which means that Baltic and Nordic parliamentarians have to solve common problems to solve and to find common solutions. Energy policy is a very topical issue since it involves important matters of sustainability in production and consumption, on supply security and safety, on common energy markets. The energy policy is a matter of national concern as well as important aspects of regional cooperation. Safe and sustainable energy network is a European priority. By reinforcing mutual cooperation among nations it will be possible to create a basis and opportunities for initiatives. Therefore, parliamentarians have to ask the governments to show ambition and to implement safe and sustainable energy policy, which means exploring new knowledge, exchange best practices and overcome obstacles for cooperation.

- **Mr. Asmund Kristoffersen**, Chairman of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee of the Nordic Council

Mr. Kristoffersen on his part outlined that more active dialogue on energy safety and independence between the Nordic Council and Baltic Assembly started after the trilateral Baltic-Nordic-Benelux conference on sustainable and safe energy supply in December 2004. It was a successful conference and the Nordic Council benefited from it on a great deal in its work since then. Today in our meeting we are continuing discussion on highly complex energy issues. Mr. Kristoffersen highlighted two main dilemmas Baltic Sea region countries have to deal with. Firstly, energy based upon for-sail fuels generates great emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> which affects climate; therefore, it is of particular importance bear in mind that economic impact of climate change can be very serious indeed. It might turn out being more expensive to us not doing anything in reducing harm. Second dilemma concerns the use of nuclear power in energy production and nuclear waste storage, which a huge problem nowadays. Nuclear technology has not been yet efficiently developed and it might cause great concerns for future generations. Mr. Kristoffersen outlined that those are two main issues both organizations should focus on in future efforts, as energy issues are on of the main discussion points at the Nordic- Baltic dialogue in 2007.

- **Mr. Jonas Kazlauskas**, Lithuanian Representative at the Energy Committee of the Senior Officials of the Baltic Council of Ministers, Deputy Director of the Energy Agency

Mr. Kazlauskas in his presentation introduced situation in the energy sector in the Baltic States. He informed that situation of the Baltic States differs from other European countries as we are totally dependent from energy supplies from Russia and Baltic States do not have energy supply links with other European countries. The Baltic States do not have natural energy resources; therefore, nuclear energy is a crucial energy resource in those states. However, intensity of economical activities is increasing rapidly in the region; therefore, it is necessary to find additional sources of energy. In this regard, Mr. Kazlauskas underlined the European perspective of energy issues in regard with the Green Paper, as a step towards sustainable and safe energy policy. After decommissioning Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, serious problems with energy capacity might rise in the Baltic States, therefore it is of particular importance creating a sustainable and efficient energy strategy, in order to avoid total dependence on energy import. The Baltic States are now at the threshold of new energy strategy of the Baltic

States. Great efforts have been carried out in integration in the energy system of the Nordic countries. Mr. Kazlauskas outlined concrete tools and strategies the Baltic States should implement jointly. First, it is necessary to integrate Baltic energy infrastructure in the European joint energy system. Second, it is necessary to increase renewable resources and improve safety of energy transit. Third, it is necessary to adjust relations with Russia in order to improve safe energy supplies and transit across the region. Fourth, the new nuclear power plant should be launched by 2015. Fifth, we also have to create optimal underground natural gas storage facilities. Terminal of liquid gas would facilitate the alternative of a gas supply from Russia. Poland is intended to build similar storage; therefore, the Baltic States could cooperate with Poland in this area. And last, but not the least it is of particular significance creating professional energy sector, therefore lot of efforts have to be contributed in training and research improvement in the region.

- **Mrs. Gudrun Knutsson**, Representative from Climate Change Section of the Swedish Energy Agency

Mrs. Knutsson in her presentation touched upon the main areas and responsibilities of the Swedish Energy agency, bilateral and international energy and energy related climate activities in particular in the Baltic region, and regional cooperation in regard to energy and climate, in particular, concerning bioenergy. In Sweden all energy resources excepting nuclear energy are used. Regarding to bilateral activities, the Swedish Energy Agency have carried out more than 70 projects in the district heating sector in the Baltic States, Russia and Poland, out of which 45 are fuel conversion projects in the Baltic region including Russia since 1993. As to cooperation with the Baltic States, Mrs. Knutsson outlined that particularly successful cooperation have been developed among Baltic and Nordic producers of equipment for biofuel combustion, and between Swedish and local consultants for project development. Moreover, Biofuel Associations have been established in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Mr. Knutsson emphasized that that Nordic and Baltic countries should focus on usage of renewable resources. In order to strengthen bioenergy market, Nordic and Baltic parliamentarians should jointly develop bioenergy market. As to challenges for the future work on bioenergy in the Baltic Sea region with reference to the EU Bioenergy Action Plan, the Nordic and Baltic countries should: 1) create common knowledge on the use of bioenergy in the region, 2) combine the use of bioenergy with energy efficiency measures, 3) intensify work on common standards, 4) increase cooperation between energy sector and forest and agriculture

sectors, and 5) develop the production of energy crops in the agricultural sector including liquid motor fuels and biogas.

**Full text of the BA – NC Joint Action Plan 2007**

*See Annex No. 2*

**Full text of the BA – NC Joint Press Statement**

*See Annex No. 3*

# M I N U T E S

## 25<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY 12<sup>TH</sup> BALTIC COUNCIL

### 1. Time and venue of the Session

14 – 17 December 2006, Vilnius (Lithuania)

### 2. Names of the presiding officers and participants of the Session

#### Presiding officers of the Session:

**Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly, Head of the Lithuanian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

**Mrs. Ērika Zommere**, Vice President of the Baltic Assembly, Chairwoman of the Latvian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

**Mr. Andres Taimla**, Vice President of the Baltic Assembly, Head of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

### 3. Agenda of the Session

1. Support for the Cooperation between Baltic States and New EU Neighbour States by Sharing Experience in Improving Parliamentary Democracy;
2. Terrorism Threats and Challenges, Measures to Pre-empt Terrorism.

### 4. Speakers and the essence of their speeches

#### Opening of the Session

#### Opening speech:

- **Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly

Mr. Simulik emphasized the significance of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session because of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Baltic Assembly. He informed about the main issues that would be discussed during the Session; namely, support for the cooperation between Baltic States

and new EU neighbour states by sharing experience in improving parliamentary democracy and terrorism threats and challenges, measures to pre-empt terrorism. He highlighted the importance of exchanging views and opinions with colleagues from Nordic Council and Benelux Parliament.

### **Greetings by the guests of the Session:**

- **Mr. Ole Stavad**, President of the Nordic Council

In his speech Mr. Stavad told about topical discussions in Nordic countries which reflect the discussions that take place in most of the countries in the developed part of the world. He stressed that big challenge for Baltic States and smaller problem for Nordic countries is demographic development. Many people are living labour market, more than entering labour market; birth rate is very low; therefore that is a problem for Baltic and Nordic countries. In conclusion, Mr. Stavad stressed that Nordic and Baltic countries share a lot of interesting and big challenges; therefore it is very necessary that countries around the Baltic Sea are able to solve these challenges together.

- **Mr. Ben Hennekam**, Honorary President of the Benelux Inter-parliamentary Consultative Council, Secretary General of the Benelux Economic Union

Mr. Hennekam stressed that Benelux countries in particular, and the rest of European countries, have to show an attitude of modesty vis-à-vis three Baltic States, and also towards the Visegrad countries. At crucial moments in history Europe and also Benelux countries has not taken their fully responsibility nor has shown the necessarily courage towards Baltic States. Those mistakes of the past pointed out Mr. Hennekam may never happen again in the future. Mr. Hennekam stressed that time has come that Europe and Benelux as a forerunners has to show their full solidarity with Baltic States and with Visegrad countries on topics like the free movement of persons, energy policy, etc. Mr. Hennekam showed his delight that Benelux has helped Baltic States to become members first of NATO and later of the EU. In conclusion, Mr. Hennekam congratulated Baltic Assembly with its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and with 15 years of Baltic parliamentary cooperation. Mr. Hennekam stressed that it is very important that Benelux- Baltic cooperation together with Nordic Council and the Visegrad countries continues in a fruitful and concrete way in the future.

- **Lord Russel Johnston**, Chairman of the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee of the Assembly of the Western European Union

Lord Russel Johnston congratulated Baltic Assembly with its 15 years of cooperation. He stressed that being here at the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly is a great experience. He highlighted the Baltic States great contribution to stability, democracy and cooperation not only in Baltic States but in European Union as well. He stressed that the Baltic States has a great moral force and ability to work together.

- **Mr. Freddy Deghilage**, Parliamentary Assembly of Francophonie, Representative in Charge of the Mission in Europe

In his address, Mr. Deghilage outlined that despite history of parliamentary cooperation of French speaking countries differs from the Baltic parliamentary cooperation, there are some similarities too. For instance, all countries worldwide are influenced by globalisation processes and therefore, parliamentarians should find news ways of effective cooperation. Mr. Deghilage underlined cooperation in local level as one of the areas where parliamentarians could focus on, because in the age of globalization destiny of small nations are sometimes neglected.

- **H.E. Mr. David Aptsiauri**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to Lithuania

Mr. Aptsiauri told that last 15 years have been very dynamic and target oriented for the Baltic cooperation. Mr. Aptsiauri praised Baltic parliamentarians for their contribution in democratization of neighbouring countries, particularly, Georgia. Moreover, NATO Summit in Riga showed that international community was interested in Georgia's affairs and integration in Euroatlantic structures On behalf of the parliament and government of the Georgia, Mr. Aptsiauri expressed gratitude and appreciation to Baltic Assembly for support by issuing statement regarding pressure of the Russian Federation against Georgia. Mr. Aptsiauri told that Georgia was very interested in further cooperation with the Baltic Assembly, and exchange of experience in promotion of democratic reforms and integration in Europe community. He also told that involvement and active participation of the Nordic countries in the dialogue with Georgia would enhance economic and political reforms carried out in the country.

## Report of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly

- **Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly

In his speech Mr. Simulik stressed that this year has been very busy and intense not only for Baltic States and Nordic Countries but for all European countries as well. Mr. Simulik emphasized that being a member state of the European Union is different from being an applicant country. He highlighted the biggest changes concerning integration in the EU; namely, national governments and parliaments cannot decide on national policy as it was before membership in the EU. Baltic States are clearly realising mutual cooperation, possibilities and exerting political influence in the wider European context. Mr. Simulik expressed his delight that within the Baltic Assembly there are no doubts on a role and meaning of Baltic regional cooperation; Baltic voice together with Nordic and Benelux voices is very influential and gives us additional power to achieve foreign and domestic goals. In his speech Mr. Simulik emphasized the fruitful work of the Committees of the Baltic Assembly in 2006. The main issues that were discussed during the internal meetings of the committees and together with Nordic and Benelux partners were: energy sector, eutrophication and environmental protection of Baltic Sea, preservation of cultural heritage, correlation between labour market and education system. Mr. Simulik expressed his delight about Baltic Assembly's achievements in strengthening and deepening of cooperation with Nordic Council and the Benelux Parliament. Cooperation with Nordic Council and the Benelux Parliament has taken decisive development. From the Baltic perspective it is clear that Nordic and Baltic – Benelux cooperation is taking place on different levels, on different issues and on different scopes. In conclusion, Mr. Simulik thanked members of the Baltic Assembly for joint efforts and active contribution to cooperation.

- **Mr. Andres Taimla**, Vice President of the Baltic Assembly

In his speech Mr. Taimla talked about two issues. First issue was cooperation between the European Union Affairs committees of the parliaments of the Baltic countries. Mr. Taimla stressed that these institutions work under different names in various countries but every parliament has a committee dealing with those issues. Mr. Taimla proposed that the EU Affairs committees of Estonia's, Latvia's and Lithuania's parliaments meets to discuss how to get the approval of the European Union to many issues that Baltic



politicians discuss and that for being discussed on national levels. This would help synchronize joint position of the Baltic States in the EU ‘corridors’ and thus fulfil the main aim of the Baltic States within the EU – to become a power to reckon with. Second issue that Mr. Taimla talked about was Belarus. He stressed that the Baltic Assembly had expressed solidarity with democratic intentions of Belarus society. In the recently adopted statement the BA Presidium regretfully recognized that the presidential elections of 19 March in Belarus were not held in compliance with internationally recognised standards for democratic elections and appealed to the Belarusian government authorities to respect these expressions of civil society. Mr. Taimla informed that a special support group in Estonia was recently established in order to raise public awareness in Estonia about what kind of problems Belarus citizens are facing.

- **Mr. Vincuk Viačorka**, Chairman of the Belarus Popular Front Party

Mr. Viačorka congratulated the Baltic Assembly with its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and wished further success in strengthening democracy, effective governance and economy, creating a new path of Baltic cooperation. Mr. Viačorka stressed that unfortunately the same scenario was not implemented in Belarus - there were still political prisoners, no TV or radio channels independent from ‘official position’, and there was still no free and fare elections, no parliamentarism and no local self governance in Belarus. All democratic relations in state sector are replaced by so called vertical system of power. Mr. Viačorka pointed out that authorities continue a consistent destruction of national identity, historical memory, national symbols and Belarusian language. Mr. Viačorka stressed that a key matter for democratic prospects of Belarus is information – the specific instrument may be the Belarus minority in Baltic States, it may serve as a bridge to send positive messages to the Belarus about advantages of the democratic way of life. In conclusion Mr. Viačorka expressed the necessity for Baltic States to continue supporting democratic changes in Belarus.

## Theme I:

### **Support for the Cooperation between Baltic States and New EU Neighbour States by Sharing Experience in Improving Parliamentary Democracy**

- **Mr. Egidijus Vareikis**, Member of the European Affairs Committee of the Seimas, Lithuania

Mr. Vareikis, in his address, talked about implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy of the Baltic States, advantages and disadvantages of the policy implementation. He told that experience of the Baltic States in recent years had turned out very successful – development of the Baltic States is remarkable in all areas. Key prerequisites for such rapid development, first of all was clear strategic goals the Baltic States stated right after regaining independence. Concerning the European Union Mr. Vareikis stressed that individually the Baltic States would hardly join the EU, however, by joint efforts the Baltic States succeeded, and today story of the Baltic States is regarded as a geopolitical success story in world's history. In his address Mr. Vareikis also touched upon about cooperation models of the Baltic States. As first he mentioned model '3+3'. Mr. Vareikis stressed that the Baltic States were regarded as a good example for three Caucasus countries in their efforts developing regional parliamentary cooperation. The second model that Mr. Vareikis spoke about was '5+3' model, which also includes Nordic countries. This model would serve as an example for such countries as Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova. In conclusion, Mr. Vareikis highlighted that the Baltic countries have great experience it could transfer to other countries, especially in sphere of democratization and integration in the Euroatlantic structures.

- **Mrs. Vaira Paegle**, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee of the Saeima, Latvia

Mrs. Paegle underlined that the EU Neighbourhood Policy actually was the dimension of EU and Baltic States; therefore Baltic States could contribute in the implementation of the neighbourhood policy from historical and practical experience of new EU member states. Mrs. Paegle told that Latvia's accession to the EU Neighbourhood Policy could be considered as one of the main goals of Latvia's foreign policy, since parliament of Latvia at the moment is the most active institution in development and cooperation in this area. With regard to concrete activities in cooperation between Baltic States and new EU

neighbour states, Mrs. Paegle highlighted fruitful cooperation with parliament of Georgia. In 2004 committees of EU Affairs of both parliaments signed the memorandum of understanding, however, in 2005 the new project on Latvian – Georgian parliamentary cooperation was launched with the support of EU funds. Within the framework of project conferences and seminars were held both in Georgia and in Latvia and next year it is planned to sign a trilateral memorandum between parliaments of Sweden, Latvia and Moldova. Number of cooperation activities has been launched with the parliament of Ukraine as well. In 2007 Latvia plans to enhance parliamentary cooperation with those countries in different areas.

- **Mr. Inge Lønning**, Member of the Presidium of the Nordic Council, Norway

In his address Mr. Lønning stressed that development of democratic society takes time because it's a long and difficult process. He told that Norway has spent almost 200 years since first democratic constitution and still the work on constitutions is not finished. Mr. Lønning expressed hope that EU neighbour policy will continue to provide initiatives to convince other neighbour who are still hesitating towards the development and more open democratic political system. Mr. Lønning highlighted that Baltic States are in the Europe excellent example of speeded transition to functioning parliamentary democracy. Regarding Russia and Belarus Mr. Lønning stressed that in these two countries political, social and political changes has began. In Belarus the process has backtracked since 1996 and for the moment the transformation process must be considered to have failed; therefore, it is an important challenge to the Nordic Council and Baltic Assembly to try to find out how it is possible to assist in the development of Belarus. In conclusion, Mr. Lønning stressed the need for Nordic Council and Baltic Assembly to organize a joint NC – BA seminar on social and economic development and on possible development towards economic prosperity.

- **Mr. Trivimi Velliste**, Member of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, Deputy Chairman of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

Mr. Velliste noted that when speaking about the EU Neighbourhood Policy it is inevitably necessary to speak about relations with Russia as well. In 15 years there has not been a single year when Kremlin would not blame Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania in violation of human rights in relation to Russian speaking minority in Baltic countries. At the same time three Baltic States are full-fledged members of the EU and NATO;

nevertheless, it does not mean 'per sei' that relations with Russia would improve remarkably. There are still number of challenges Baltic States have to face and for this reason, it is particularly necessary to raise one voice and defend national interests of the Baltic States internationally. Mr. Velliste congratulated Latvia with its triumph organizing the NATO Summit. He also told that in Latvia the last drafted soldier has left Latvian army and Latvian army has introduced professional army. Mr. Velliste told that members of the parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania should do everything that is possible for the future and defence of their land.

- **Mr. Jean-Marie Happart**, Chairman of the Belgium delegation to the Benelux Inter-parliamentary Consultative Council

At the beginning of his address Mr. Happart stressed that Baltic States are developing and modernizing very rapidly and Baltic States are representatives of changing world. Concerning Schengen area Mr. Happart told that it is an area that unites Germany, Luxemburg and France. The Schengen area was created not for EU to have a field or for EU to have a closed area the aim for creating Schengen area was to ensure better mobility within the area and to make shore that the economy can develop better and the main aim is to work with principles of Baltic States because Baltic States are members of the EU. Baltic States entering the Schengen area will become an external border. Mr. Happart stressed that 15 years is a number of changes in the EU there are now 25 members of the EU which effects changes of internal borders. Not only geographical borders are important but political as well, both have changed in view of economical and political situation. Mr. Happart emphasized that aim of politics in general is to have new relations and to open new possibilities and opportunities. On the other hand it is important to make use of things that are already achieved and the future is not an easy thing to decide on. In conclusion, Mr. Happart expressed respect to Nordic Countries and to experience of Nordic Council. Mr. Happart stressed that it is very important for all countries to cooperate, if all Nordic countries would be members of the EU that would make Benelux – Baltic – Nordic cooperation closer not only economically but culturally as well as politically and financially.

## Question and answer session

- **Mrs. Vaira Paegle**, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee of the Saeima, Latvia

Mrs. Paegle told that each country chooses its defence model and as the member states of the EU and NATO Latvia has chosen collective defence and Latvia implement defence by forming a professional army which is practice of many other EU and NATO member states. Mrs. Paegle did not agree to the statement that to some extend professional army will make Latvia as a Baltic State which will be the weakest part of Baltic chain on the contra as stressed Mrs. Paegle Latvia will be strengthening part of the chain. The question of Mrs. Paegle was as following; if there is there mistrust to NATO and to collective defence?

- **Mr. Trivimi Velliste**, Member of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, Deputy Chairman of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

Mr. Velliste told that in his address he referred to some of the basic illusions of the well known expert on military matters Edvard Ludvak. Mr. Velliste told that Mr. Ludvak has pointed out that Latvia is a NATO member but in case of serious crisis not only in Latvia but in the world means that there will be a need to invite other NATO member states to rescue and it may take many, many weeks not just days but weeks. Mr .Velliste emphasized that this is an opinion also of Estonian military expert's not only American ones.

- **Mrs. Vaira Paegle**, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee of the Saeima, Latvia

Mrs. Paegle answered that she had never heard of Mr. Ludvak and she stressed that there are very many other experts around and one of the conclusions of other experts is that conventional forces will never be able to protect from attacks because they are much more technological and the only response is CNN response.

- **Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly

Mr. Simulik told that the issue of the army's and any other military matters is not the main subject at session. The main subject is neighbourhood policy. Mr. Simulik stressed that Baltic States have many problems and many challenges but Baltic States also have a

lot of good contacts, good positive examples. Baltic States should be friendly and talk to each other with debates and discussions that would lead to positive results.

- **Mr. Jean-Marie Happart**, Chairman of the Belgium delegation to the Benelux Inter-parliamentary Consultative Council

Mr. Happart in his address told about what happened 15 years ago when Baltic Assembly was set up. He told that Benelux experience associate with the idea of Danish Prime minister who spoke about Baltic States and necessity of the Baltic States to shed the Soviet Union. Mr. Happart told that Danish Prime minister was not against Soviet Union but he always believed in Baltic States independency.

## **Theme II:**

### **Terrorism Threats and Challenges, Measures to Pre-empt Terrorism**

- **Mr. Jānis Garisons**, Deputy Director of Crisis Management and Mobilisation Department of the Ministry of Defence, Latvia

In his address Mr. Garisons told about Latvia's experience with fight against terrorism. Mr. Garisons stressed that the most experience was gained by organizing NATO Summit in Latvia since it was one of the largest antiterrorism operation in the history of Latvia and it was unique possibility and opportunity. Mr. Garisons thanked Estonia and Lithuania for helping in organization of NATO Summit. Regarding to terrorism Mr. Garisons emphasized that it is important to distinguish between two things; firstly, perception of society and secondly, cooperation between public institutions within the country. Measures to prevent terrorism are very important. In financial sector it is important to pay attention checking what kind of goods cross Latvian border. Mr. Garisons stressed that the main responsibility in Latvia and other countries regarding antiterrorism measures lies on the Ministry's of Defence and security police since they are the main coordinators. Mr. Garisons highlighted that the most important challenge is to make shore that people are informed about terrorism and prevention of terrorism and another very important thing is to cooperate and to harmonize the activities in case of crisis. Mr. Garisons stressed that one of the most important lessons that Latvia learned form NATO Summit was that cooperation is needed between the Ministry of Defence,

institutions of National Armed Forces and civil sector. Mr. Garisons told that Latvia has gained experience already in 2006 in April when in Latvia was held international antiterrorism training. Several scenarios and simulation models in case of terrorist attack were played. Mr. Garisons told that great attention was paid to communication aspects and to coordination related matters. Mr. Garisons emphasized that from perspective of Ministry of Defence and from perspective of Armed Forces it is very difficult to draw a line or the way how it is possible to distinguish were are the military threats from inside and were are the military threats from outside. It is hard to clarify were ends authority of Ministry of Defence and was starts authority of other military institutions.

- **Mr. Juozas Olekas**, Minister of National Defence, Lithuania

In his address Mr. Olekas stressed that in order to face challenges pressed by terrorism there is a need for complex efforts not only by civil police but also by army force. It is essential to discuss main tendencies of terrorism. Mr. Olekas stressed two main issues that needs to be discussed; firstly, army's activities in international operations and secondly, role of army in combating terrorism. Mr. Olekas emphasized that terrorism is a specific threat it is multifaceted and diverse phenomena it has no rules of a fair war no borders and no countries can be aware of future attacks; therefore, it is important to do everything it takes to prevent these attacks. It is necessary to fight not only with consequences of terrorism but with roots of terrorism as well. No country is able to fight against terrorism individually it is important to cooperate and fight together. Mr. Olekas told that when Baltic States become members of the NATO they also become part of common security area and on one hand it means that Baltic States are more secure but on the other hand Baltic States maybe become more attractive to terrorist. Mr. Olekas highlighted that Lithuania puts all efforts to fight against international terrorism taking part in international operations Lithuania helps to stabilize region. Mr. Olekas told that civil force is essential factor for re-establishing state. He also told that Afghanistan and Iraq are two very good examples of fighting terrorism and Lithuania takes part at these international operations as well as ensures security in state. Mr. Olekas told that in Lithuania methods of fighting against terrorism has changed – the main role go to legal institutions and military sphere. Military force in Lithuania is well prepared and able to carry out specific tasks and provide specific aid for civilian institutions. Mr. Olekas highlighted that the best evaluations for preparedness to fight terrorism can be carried out by international exercises. In 2006 exercise took place in Lithuania. Mr. Olekas told

that for Lithuania it was a test and great opportunity to evaluate Lithuania's preparedness to combat terrorism and combating terrorism is done by improving legislative basis. In regarding legislative basis Mr. Olekas told that Lithuania has drafted law on fight against terrorism and there are also other activities in Lithuania to improve capacities in the sphere of fighting terrorism.

- **Mr. Meelis Ratassepp**, Deputy Director of Department, Security Police Board, Estonia

Mr. Ratassepp pointed out that there are four main tasks in fight against terrorism: prevention, protection, pursuit and respond. He also told that it is very essential to unite to cope with terrorist attacks and minimize the consequences. Mr. Ratassepp told that in Estonia there are many institutions dealing with antiterrorism fight. To coordinate activities to fight against terrorism Estonia has Security Committee headed by Prime minister and the Security Committee analyzes and evaluates national security situation in regard to terrorism. The emergency situation is coordinated by Crisis Committee of the Republic of Estonia. The Foreign Ministry has a Strategic Goods Committee which controls the import, export and transit of strategic goods. The Ministry of Communication and Economic has an Aviation Security Committee. Mr. Ratassepp also told that this year government has formed a Committee on money laundering and prevention of terrorist financing. The Internal Ministry is the leading Ministry in protecting citizens against terrorism. The security police board deals with several issues and also has a right of a police force. Threats of terrorism in Estonia are minimal however Estonia participates in military missions. Mr. Ratassepp emphasized that the main objectives of fight against terrorism are international and national cooperation enhancing prevention of radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations, terrorist financing, strategic goals and preventing of smuggling and removal of explosive. Mr. Ratassepp stressed that training is very important but most important is prevention of the attacks and it is essential that information is forwarded and exchanged. It is also very important that all the agencies involved in the issue of combating terrorism have common understandings of goals and how to achieve them. Mr. Ratassepp also stressed that the framework of fight against terrorism in Estonia is very simple; institutions related with preventing of the terrorism don't obstruct each other.



- **Mrs. Maya Detiège**, Chairwoman of the Culture, Education and Public Health Committee of the Benelux Inter-parliamentary Consultative Council, Belgium

In her address Mrs. Detiège analyzed fight against terrorism in Belgium and she told that there are many institutions working on combat against terrorism; namely, federal police, administrative police, Europol and other institutions. Mrs. Detiège told that in Belgium on political level fight against terrorism is coordinated by special ministerial Security and Defence Committee and it means that all ministers related to terrorism in any way are meeting in the framework of the Committee. Mrs. Detiège stressed that government also has crisis control centre which works with the aim of prevention of terrorist acts. Crisis control centre analyzes threats of terrorism. Mrs. Detiège also highlighted that since 2006 a new structure OCAM structure has been developed for coordination and analyzes of threats. Mrs. Detiège told that in Belgium there are judges that are specified in cases of terrorism. Mrs. Detiège pointed out that unfortunately the work of all services is fragmental and exchange of information between services is lacking. Exchange of information is very important and in order to ensure good exchange of information as well as to monitor exchange of information between institutions contractual centre is much needed. The centre would communicate with all the services on regular basis including the police and also experts because experts can be very useful and crucial in learning about terrorism.

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### **Question and answer session**

- **Mr. Trivimi Velliste**, Member of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, Deputy Chairman of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly

Mr. Velliste asked to Mr. Olekas what part of the human resources as well as finance resources is elicited by Lithuania for the asymmetric threat liquidation which is connected to terrorism. Mr. Velliste also asked to Mr. Olekas what share of the resources is planned to combat threats and is Lithuania devoted to spend 2% GDP to these issues that were discussed. Mr. Velliste asked the opinion of Mr. Ratassepp. Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian society have to consider which is more important; whether the people will have free entry in Estonia and other countries and have a higher security threats or to prevent movement as such.

- **Mr. Juozas Olekas**, Minister of National Defence, Lithuania

Mr. Olekas told that in Ministry of National Defence in Lithuania has a crisis management centre and it has one of the functions to prepare plans for possible acts of terrorism in Lithuania. The work is concentrated not only within Lithuania but Lithuania also participates in international operations for localizing the hot spots of terrorism. Mr. Olekas also told that at the present the budget for the next year will be 1.3% of the GDP but there is a political decision to increase for 2% and there is also another decision to increase the budget each year for 0.5% in order to reach 2% level.

- **Mr. Meelis Rataspepp**, Deputy Director of Department, Security Police Board, Estonia

Mr. Rataspepp stressed that free movement of persons is one of the basic freedoms of European citizens and Schengen convention forced more effective measures in cooperation between police agency's and security institutions. All countries that have joined Schengen information system have very effective information exchange and radicalized person can be trucked very easily.

- **Mr. Leopolds Ozoliņš**, Member of the Baltic Assembly

Mr. Ozoliņš told that Latvia had very hot and dry summer and it was almost a disaster – there were many forest-fires and fireman and army did not act properly. Mr. Ozoliņš stressed that in case of such disasters video cameras and towers would be very necessary to recognize fire before it has made unstoppable disaster. Mr. Ozoliņš asked to Mr. Garisons how Latvia will act in case of large disasters like floods or terror acts? Dose institutions of Latvia now how to coordinate work of sever unites and will the Baltic States cooperate in case of disaster?

- **Mr. Jānis Garisons**, Deputy Director of Crisis Management and Mobilisation Department of the Ministry of Defence, Latvia

Regarding to national armed forces and there involvement in fire disasters Mr. Garisons told that fire service will always be the institution which is responsible for fire distinguishing but in terms of Ministry of Defence armed forces have done everything in order to elevate the involvement of national armed forces in rescue work and distinguishing fire. Mr. Garisons told that Ministry of Defence has drafted special regulations how armed forces are involved in fire distinguishing. Regarding to cooperation with neighbour countries in case of disasters Mr. Garisons stressed that this cooperation is very important in order to support neighbour countries.

## Reports by the Chairpersons of the BA Committees

- **Mr. Donatas Jankauskas**, Chairman of the Environmental Protection and Energy Committee

Mr. Jankauskas reported on the performance of the Environmental Protection and Energy Committee. He outlined that this year the Committee have had four meetings during which members of the Committee mainly discussed two themes: firstly, environment problems of the Baltic Sea; secondly, energy problems. Mr. Jankauskas told that together with Nordic and Benelux colleagues the Committee discussed problems that involves energy resources and their needs not only in present situation, but in future as well. Mr. Jankauskas stressed that within the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference the Committee took part in the work of the parliamentary working group on eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The main goal of the Working Group is to address the eutrophication, its caused consequences and effective means of combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea. Mr. Jankauskas reported that during the Committee meetings members of the Committee identified the following development problems in the energy sector: 1) firstly, energy legislation needs to be streamlined; 2) secondly, energy deliveries need to be more reliable; 3) thirdly, energy efficiency must be increased. As a result of discussions the Committee elaborated draft resolutions in which the Committee urge the governments of the Baltic States to solve problems related to energy sector.

- **Mr. Bronius Pauža**, Chairman of the Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee

Mr. Pauža informed that in 2006 Economic Affairs, Communications Informatics Committee mainly focused on status of the fish stocks in the Baltic Sea and problems of their preservation. Mr. Jankauskas stressed that fishery was traditional occupation for many Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians; therefore the Committee stressed the necessity to create a modern, competitive and sustainable fishery sector in the Baltic coastal states. Mr. Jankauskas outlined that for members of the Committee it was very interesting to exchange views with Benelux parliamentarians who gave very wide insight into different aspects of fishery industry.

Mr. Jankauskas stressed that as a result of fruitful discussions of the Committee two draft document where prepared. The first one focuses on the situation in the management of fish stocks of the Baltic Sea. The second resolution concentrates on cooperation in the

field of fishing control. Mr. Jankauskas told that members of the Committee agreed also on priority issues for 2007 which will be development of rural tourism, mobility of labour forces in European perspective, VIA Hansaetica.

- **Mrs. Rima Baškienė**, Chairwoman of the Social Affairs Committee

Mrs. Baškienė informed about the main activities of the Social Affairs Committee in 2006. She started with the main themes discussed at the Committee meetings, which were the following: family policy and movement of labour forces and services. Mrs. Baškienė highlighted that together with colleagues from Benelux Parliament the Committee had very productive discussions on problems concerning family policy. The family is a basis for society and state. Therefore family policy is an important cooperation issue for the Baltic States because tendencies and problems are similar for all these countries. Mrs. Baškienė stressed that it is very important that in discussions the Committee analyzed different problems of family policy not only in the Baltic but also in the Benelux Countries. The Committee together with Benelux colleagues realised that one of the biggest problems for the Baltic States after accessing to the European Union is a process of migration of the labour forces. Mrs. Baškienė outlined that it is for great importance that parliamentarians do all the possible in the framework of the legislation in order to strengthen the role of the family in the society. Mrs. Baškienė presented the main priorities of the Committee for the forthcoming year; firstly, family policy; secondly, domestic violence.

- **Mrs. Irena Šiaulienė**, Chairwoman of the Education, Science and Culture Committee

Mrs. Šiaulienė reported on the activities of the Committee. She told that together with Baltic governmental representatives, Benelux and Nordic parliamentarians the Committee discussed several significant issues: preservation of cultural heritage and system of vocational training and its current development issues. Mrs. Šiaulienė stressed that to investigate the most important problems is the first step towards problems solution. Construction activities in the Baltic States had intensified rapidly during the last years. She stressed that for this reason the Committee during the meetings considered perspectives of cultural heritage integration in the modern architecture and infrastructure of the cities, in order to preserve the cultural values and provide sustainable development of the cities at the same time. Mrs. Šiaulienė told that another important theme which

was discussed together with Benelux and Nordic colleagues was system of vocational training and its current development issues. All three sides: Baltic, Benelux and Nordic, agreed that educational system should be connected with the labour market and with the society on the whole. The long-term goal of vocational education is to create the system of vocational education which could flexibly adapt to the demands of the labour market, promote employment, conform to EU conceptual approach of development of human resources and promote training of labour forces on EU level. Mrs. Šiaulienė outlined that for the next year the Committee decided to discuss vocational education and labour market relations as well as to pay more attention to the issues of preservation of cultural heritage.

- **Mr. Raimondas Šukys**, Chairman of the Legal Affairs and Security Committee  
Mr. Šukys informed about the performance of the Committee in 2006. He told that the main issues for discussions for the Committee were: free provision of legal assistance; and illegal migration. Mr. Šukys stressed that together with colleagues from Benelux parliament and experts from Baltic governmental institutions the Committee exchanged information on free provision of legal assistance. Mr. Šukys told that this was a good format of discussions during which the Committees exchanged information and opinions on legal assistance in Baltic and Benelux countries. Mr. Šukys stressed that another theme which was discussed by the Committee was illegal migration. This is a very important theme for all the countries of the EU therefore it was a very good praxis that such an important issue was discussed together by parliamentarians and experts from the Baltic and Benelux countries. Mr. Šukys reported on Committees activities for the next year. The Committee members agreed that main priorities will be: legal and illegal migration, protection of the airspace of the Baltic States and energy security issues.

- **Mr. Raimundas Palaitis**, Chairman of the Budget and Audit Committee  
Mr. Palaitis in his report told about the main activities of the BA Budget and Audit Committee 2006; namely, implementation of the BA Budget. Mr. Palaitis stressed that the Committee also worked on preparation of the budget for the forthcoming year. Mr. Palaitis reported that as a result of the work of the Committee are draft report of the Budget of the Baltic Assembly 2005 and draft Budget of the Baltic Assembly 2007.

**All documents were adopted in conformity with the principle of consensus.**

**Full texts of the decisions adopted in the Session**

*See Annex No.1: Documents and decisions of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly.*

- Address by **Mrs. Ērika Zommere**, new elected President of the Baltic Assembly  
In her speech Mrs. Zommere stressed the importance of Baltic regional cooperation and told that it is very essential to seek for more flexible mechanisms for regional cooperation. Mrs. Zommere emphasized that the role of Baltic cooperation organizations depend not only on short-term political declarations on the need for cooperation but rather on a long-term strategy among the Baltic countries and Baltic Assembly is an organization which by its nature is oriented towards the future and those main objective is to develop long-term policies. Mrs. Zommere emphasized that the involvement of members from Nordic Council and Benelux parliament in the activities of the Baltic Assembly, as well as their initiative to organize joint events, is valuable and confirms the role of cooperation among small countries in the EU context; therefore, long-term and successful cooperation between the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council and the Benelux parliament is an advantage. Regarding to the Baltic Council of Ministers Mrs. Zommere stressed the necessity to strengthen the bonds between Baltic Assembly and Baltic Council of Ministers. In conclusion, Mrs. Zommere emphasized that the strength of a small country lies in its ability to find allies and together with them to protect one's interests.

## Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council

The 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council took place on 16 December 2006, in Vilnius, and was chaired by Mr. Valerijus Simulik, President of the Baltic Assembly and H.E. Mr. Petras Vaitiekūnas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Chairman of the Cooperation Council.

- **Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly

During his opening speech Mr. Simulik welcomed everyone at the 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council meeting. He stressed that Baltic Assembly and Baltic Council of Ministers during the Session will discuss issues of mutual importance of the Baltic States as well as will exchange views and positions between parliamentarians and governmental representatives of the Baltic States on regional goals and tasks to evaluate cooperation progress on defined joint priorities of cooperation for 2006.

- **H. E. Mr. Valdas Adamkus**, President of the Republic of Lithuania

Mr. Adamkus expressed his pleasure to participate at the Baltic Assembly's Anniversary Session. He congratulated Baltic Assembly members and former members for their efforts of strengthening the Baltic State cooperation. He stressed that 15 years is a relatively short period of time but Baltic Assembly has created a stage of common experience and created a free society of the Baltic States. This cooperation explained the ideas and promoted political elites to be active implementing political goals. Common voice and common interests gives a possibility to promote unity of the Baltic States and it means more than cooperation. Mr. Adamkus stressed that Baltic Assembly is a place to exchange views and ideas. Mr. Adamkus expressed his belief that trilateral parliamentary cooperation will contribute much in future to strategic initiatives it will help to define priorities of the region which are relevant to such topical issues as energy policy and environment. Experience of Nordic and Benelux proves that only speaking and working together we will be heard in Europe and in the world. Today a common goal of the Baltic Assembly is to deal with energy problems and to ensure the effective response for crisis. Mr. Adamkus expressed his gladness that Baltic States have agreed to deal energy issues together. In the end of his speech Mr. Adamkus wished to the Baltic Assembly to continue to implement common interests not only to strengthen the contacts of politicians but also to raise the awareness of public.

Mr. Valerijus Simulik, President of the Baltic Assembly, awarded H. E. Mr. Valdas Adamkus with Baltic Assembly medal.

- **H. E. Mr. Petras Vaitiekūnas**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Chairman of the Cooperation Council

Mr. Vaitiekūnas congratulated Baltic Assembly with its 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He stressed that within the 15 years Baltic Assembly has reached many goals in cooperation between the Baltic States and this cooperation has led to great challenges and great success. Today the name of three Baltic States is well known in the Baltic Sea region. He emphasized that cooperation between the Baltic States is value established trough consistent and hard work and improvement of trilateral cooperation and strengthening of this cooperation is useful for all three Baltic States. During his speech Mr. Vaitiekūnas highlighted the work of Baltic Assembly in 2006. He stressed that in 2006 Baltic Assembly mostly focused on energy issues because it is clear that energy issues are and will be strategically important for Baltic States and for national security. Mr. Vaitiekūnas stressed that in 2006 the energy cooperation between the Baltic States was successful. On 27 February 2006 three Baltic States agreed to continue cooperation together in implementation of Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania and draft joint strategy for Baltic States energy sector. Guidelines for strategy where presented on 8 February 2007 in Vilnius at the Session of Baltic Council of Ministers. The Baltic States energy experts proposed to set three priorities for cooperation: supply, sustainable development and competitiveness. Mr. Vaitiekūnas outlined the importance of the project Rail Baltic. The implementation of the project will include Baltic States into European rail networks. He stressed that Baltic States are very strong and when Baltic States manage to cooperate they play a very important part in the region.

- **Mr. Ēriks Zunda**, Parliamentary Secretary of the Foreign Ministry of Republic of Latvia

At the beginning of his speech Mr. Zunda congratulated Baltic Assembly with its 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He stressed that Baltic Assembly has promoted spirit of solidarity and unity during the years of cooperation. Baltic Assembly has helped Baltic States to achieve common policy goals – EU and NATO membership. During his speech Mr. Zunda highlighted the main priority issues for 2007: 1) energy issues; 2) transport issues; 3) home affairs; 4) security and defence issues; 5) environmental issues; 6) foreign policy.



1) *Energy issues*

Latvia during its presidency will continue work on energy issues it is for great importance to finish energy strategy drafting.

2) *transport issues*

In the area of transport in 2007 Latvia is planning to focus on the development of the project Rail Baltica. According to the agreement achieved by the ministers by the 4 of July 2007 each country will prepare on national level the action plan for the project Rail Baltica 2007-2013.

3) *Home Affairs*

In the area of home affairs one of the priorities of the Baltic States will be completion of technical works so by the end of the year it would be possible to drive a Schengen area. Experts of the home affairs will have to cooperate within the framework of Schengen working group of the Internal Affairs Ministry.

4) *Security and defence issues*

Latvia during its presidency has planned to harmonize development of long term priorities in the area of defence. Analyzes will be made for joint actions of the Baltic land forces in the rapid response forces of NATO. There will be continuation in the area of air policing.

5) *Environmental issues*

In the area of environment there will be further cooperation on issues related climate changes.

6) *Foreign policy*

The priority of Foreign policy will be cooperation of the Baltic States with their new neighbours.

Mr. Zunda told that the agenda of Latvian presidency of the Baltic Council of Ministers has included several new cooperation areas taking into account that there is a problem of increased traffic accidents. It is planned to focus on trilateral cooperation in regard to security and safety of road traffic. He informed that Latvia has planned to set up a new trilateral form of cooperation concerning prevention of illegal migration.

In the conclusion Mr. Zunda stressed that cooperation between the Baltic Council of Ministers and Baltic Assembly will be also dedicated to development of human resources in the Baltic States.

Mr. Valerijus Simulik, President of the Baltic Assembly, awarded H. E. Mr. Petras Vaitiekūnas with Baltic Assembly medal.

**Mr. Valerijus Simulik**, President of the Baltic Assembly, introduced with Baltic Assembly's and Baltic Council of Ministers Joint Press Statement.

**Full text of the BA – BCM Joint Press Statement**

*See Annex No. 4*

Signing of the Joint Press Statement.

President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Valerijus SIMULIK**  
Republic of Lithuania

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Ērika ZOMMERE**  
Republic of Latvia

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Andres TAIMLA**  
Republic of Estonia

Head  
of the Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly

**Marika LAIZĀNE - JURKĀNE**

*Prepared by **Anete Ozoliņa***

*Consultant of the BA Secretariat*

*and **Kristīne Sprice***

*Senior Consultant of the BA Secretariat*

**25<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY  
FINAL DOCUMENT**

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**having convened** on 14-17 December in Vilnius, the Republic of Lithuania, for its 25<sup>th</sup> Session;

**having discussed** the co-operation policy between the Baltic States and European Union Neighbour States, the experience in improving parliamentary democracy, potential terrorism threats as well as measures to pre-empt terrorism,

**adopted** the following documents:

**Resolution** on Energy Policy of the Baltic States;

**Resolution** on Family Policy;

**Resolution** on the Situation on the Use of Fish Stocks of the Baltic Sea;

**Resolution** on Co-operation in the Field of Fishing Control;

**Appeal** regarding World Expo 2010 in Shanghai;

**Proposal** on Preparation of a Publication on History, Culture and Language in the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and English Languages;

**Statement** on the Relations between the Russian Federation and Georgia;

**Statement** on the Parliamentary Co-operation of the Baltic States;

**Statement** on Preparedness of the Baltic States for Natural Disasters;

**Statement** on Democracy in Belarus;

**Statement** on Fight against Terrorism Threats;

**Statement** on Cooperation of the Baltic States and New European Union Neighbour States by Sharing Experience in Improving Parliamentary Democracy,

**approved** the Baltic Assembly Budget Report for 2005 and the Baltic Assembly Budget for 2007;

**defined** the following priorities of the Baltic Assembly for 2007:

a common Baltic energy strategy policy (strengthening the reliability of the energy production and supply); protection of the Baltic Sea environment and preservation of the cultural heritage (prevention of sea and coastal pollution, safe transportation of oil and its products and co-ordination of joint actions when responding to accidents, protection of the cultural environment and preservation of the cultural heritage in modern architecture);labour market and migration policy (regulation of the labour market, resolving social and law enforcement issues);parliamentary contribution to forming democratic relations with the European Union neighbours;

**defined** the following priorities for co-operation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers in 2007:

the role of the Baltic States in implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy in Eastern European countries;

the development of human resources in the Baltic States;

**decided** that the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly will take place on 22-24 November 2007 in Riga, the Republic of Latvia.

President of  
the Baltic Assembly

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Valerijus SIMULIK**  
Republic of Lithuania

**Ērika ZOMMERE**  
Republic of Latvia

**Andres TAIMLA**  
Republic of Estonia

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## RESOLUTION

### ON ENERGY POLICY OF THE BALTIC STATES

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**taking into consideration** that although being the member states of the European Union, the Baltic States – the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania – are still separated from the energy supply system of the European Union due to the historical circumstances and remain directly dependent on Russia's supply of natural gas, oil and in part electricity;

**drawing attention** to unpredictable energy supply disruptions from Russia to the neighbouring countries;

**being aware** that security of energy supply is essential for all Baltic States and the Baltic Sea Region,

**approves** of the actions of the governments of the Baltic States aimed at improving the reliability of energy supply and of the Communiqué signed on 27 February 2006 by the heads of the governments as well as of the agreement to prepare an energy strategy of the Baltic States;

**urges** the governments to make all efforts to diversify the energy resources by geographical origin and type, to consider building a LNG terminal in one of the Baltic States or gas pipeline connecting them with European gas grids, to increase energy efficiency as well as use of local resources and renewable energy sources, to prepare a common energy strategy of the Baltic States and to submit it to the parliaments of the Baltic States for approval;

**calls on** the European Commission to prepare effective measures aimed at integrating the individual regional energy markets of the Baltic States into a single European energy market based on the principles of solidarity and integration.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## RESOLUTION

### ON FAMILY POLICY

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**drawing attention to the fact that:**

the birth rate has decreased significantly and this does not ensure the change of generations;

there is an increase in numbers of cohabitating couples or marriage and childbearing are postponed to an older age;

the number of divorces and incomplete families is increasing;

more and more children are deprived of parental care: children are left at guardianship institutions or the parents go to work to other countries, failing to make arrangement about their children's safety and care;

families at social risk abuse alcohol, other psychotropic substances, commit acts of violence, do not take care of their children, live on social benefits;

moral and spiritual family-related values are being depreciated,

**notes** that the family institution is in the crisis and the social policy carried out by the state is not sufficiently effective;

**urges** the parliaments and governments of the Baltic States:

to strengthen a role of family as a value in the state;

to shape a family policy, seeking:

to increase possibilities for parents to adjust family and work relations,

to improve conditions of housing for families,

to ensure adequate services of upbringing of children and education of parents,

to improve support for families and enhance social services,

to form healthcare services suitable for families and to propagate a healthy lifestyle,

to introduce a course in the preparedness for family life in educational programmes of schools,

to develop a system of psychological help and legal aid to families,

to ensure protection of the rights of the child and implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,

to foster family-related spiritual values;  
to consolidate efforts of state institutions and non-governmental organisations,  
religious communities and the mass media to foster the responsibility, duty, honour  
and other moral values of members of society;

to co-operate at an international level when creating the welfare of families in  
their states..

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## RESOLUTION

### ON THE SITUATION ON THE USE OF FISH STOCKS OF THE BALTIC SEA

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**taking into consideration that:**

regulation of fishing in the Baltic Sea is the exclusive competence of the European Union;

following the accession of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to the European Union, the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC) ceased to function;

the European Union has coordinated a preliminary text of a bilateral agreement with the Russian Federation concerning fishing in the Baltic Sea, under which all issues regarding regulation of fishing will be solved by a joint committee of the European Community and the Russian Federation;

until now the issues pertaining to fishing in the Baltic Sea used to be solved through negotiations between all the countries fishing in this Sea,

**recommends** the Governments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania:

to sign a mutual agreement on fishing in the Baltic Sea;

to set up a consultative commission consisting of representative of the three States and to obligate it to prepare common positions on most relevant issues of fishing in the Baltic Sea, including preparation of long-term plans of the use of fish stocks; and

to achieve the signing of an agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation concerning fishing in the Baltic Sea as soon as possible.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006



## RESOLUTION

### ON CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF FISHING CONTROL

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**seeking that:**

fishing in the territorial seas and exclusive economic zones of the Baltic Sea States meet the requirements of international law as well as the interests of these States, while fish stocks of the Baltic Sea be preserved for future generations; and

the status of the Baltic Sea as a particularly sensitive sea area be taken into consideration when assessing threats to fish stocks of the Baltic Sea;

**assuming that:**

the state of stocks of some fish, especially cod, in the Baltic Sea is worsening; strengthening of co-operation in the field of fishing control is the key measure for ensuring compliance with the effective rules. Information exchange may help restrict fishing, landing and trade in undersized cod, prevent from selling unregistered fish catches in the neighbouring countries;

**draws attention** to the fact that the institutions of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania which regulate and control fishing do not have a proper inspection vessel to exercise control of fishing in the Baltic Sea. Unfitted vessels of other institutions are used for these purposes. Under the effective EU regulations it is prohibited to sell undersized cod for human consumption. However, the processing industry is highly interested in supply of such cod; and

**calls on** the Baltic Council of Ministers to set up a working group whose tasks would be as follows:

to develop common measures on co-operation in the field of fishing control, a procedure for mutual information exchange among the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania in order to prevent landing of unregistered fish catches and ensure effective implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## A P P E A L

### REGARDING WORLD EXPO 2010 IN SHANGHAI

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**taking into consideration** that World Expo 2010 will take place in the new centre of the global economic development and bring together cities and regions from nearly one hundred countries of the world, that the main theme of World Expo 2010 will be “Better City, Better Life”, and that this will allow the Baltic States to share their experience and introduce new development trends;

**emphasising** the importance and necessity of participation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in World Expo 2010 because of their economical and scientific development and in order “to see and to be seen”;

**understanding** that major expenses will be needed due to the holding of World Expo 2010 in a faraway country;

**bearing in mind** the striving of the Baltic States to improve mutual relationships in different spheres of life as well as the need for a better exhibition and presentation of the development of the whole region,

**calls on** the Baltic Council of Ministers to develop a common Baltic States’ strategy for joint participation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in World Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## PROPOSAL

### ON PREPARATION OF A PUBLICATION ON HISTORY, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IN THE ESTONIAN, LATVIAN, LITHUANIAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**pointing out** that it is necessary:

to provide more knowledge about the neighbouring countries to the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, especially to the younger generation;

in the process of globalisation, to enhance the perception that the people of the Baltic States have their own distinctive cultural and historical identity;

to seek more effective co-operation and communication among the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nations,

**proposes** that the governments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania summon a group of experts and allocate adequate funds for preparing a publication in the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and English languages which would present history, languages and culture of the Baltic States. Such publication would be useful for strengthening of the perception of national distinction and identity of the Baltic States, development of co-operation and tourism in our countries;

**invites** a group of experts and future authors of the publication to achieve that the publication provides extensive knowledge on culture, history, geography, economic and public development of the Baltic States and a possibility to learn the languages of these countries.

| Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## STATEMENT

### ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND GEORGIA

#### **The Baltic Assembly**

**expresses** its deep concern about the deterioration of the relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation and notes that recent statements of the Russian Federation in respect of Georgia have assumed an especially threatening form;

**urges** all democratic states and international organisations to give an open and clear evaluation of the actions of Russian Federation and express the conviction that such actions of the Russian Federation violate the principles of democracy and human rights and pose a threat to political and economic stability of the region;

**expresses** its particular concern about the campaign launched against Georgia by the Russian Federation, which may have a detrimental effect on the democratic development, political and economic stability, and welfare of the region;

**calls on** the Russian Federation to end psychological and political pressure on Georgia;

**urges** that all disputes between the countries should be solved through constructive dialogue based on good-neighbourly relations, a spirit of openness and universally recognised norms of international law.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## STATEMENT

### ON THE PARLIAMENTARY CO-OPERATION OF THE BALTIC STATES

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**evaluating** the positive development in the trilateral co-operation of the Baltic States during recent years and the role of the Baltic Assembly in the said process during past fifteen years;

**underlining** that political and structural reforms of the Baltic Assembly provided a possibility for Baltic parliamentary co-operation to adapt to the new international environment and to demonstrate flexibility and ability to adequately and efficiently meet the challenges that emerge over time;

**being deeply convinced** that parliamentary and governmental co-operation of the Baltic States has made progress in their integration into the European Union and NATO;

**noting** that closer co-operation of the Baltic States will contribute to the development of the whole region;

**recognising** that financial and human resources are limited and awareness of the Baltics as a region binds the Baltic States to reach an agreement and muster themselves to achieve common foreign and domestic goals,

**emphasises** that the Baltic Assembly is especially interested in promoting practical co-operation with the Baltic Council of Ministers, in expanding and deepening relations with the Nordic Council and the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council as well as in ensuring more efficient feedback from the parliaments of the Baltic States.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

**S T A T E M E N T**  
**ON PREPAREDNESS OF THE BALTIC STATES FOR NATURAL**  
**DISASTERS**

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**taking into consideration** that a scope of possible threats is widening and their consequences are assuming new dimensions;

**understanding** that major crises have a trans-boundary aspect resulting in threats of violent crime and terrorism;

**emphasising** that international co-operation in crisis preparedness, prevention and management is of utmost importance;

**confirming** readiness to support actions of the national governments aimed at solving the matters pertaining to co-operation and mutual assistance in the event of emergencies,

**recommends the Baltic Council of Ministers:**

to initiate inter-state agreements on the co-ordination of joint actions in the event of an emergency in the Baltic States;

to consider a possibility to set up a joint Baltic States' team of rapid response to emergencies with the purpose of participating in joint operations by providing assistance to each other as well as to other states;

**recommends the Governments of the Baltic States:**

to constantly inform each other on potential emergencies;

to prepare and co-ordinate joint action plans of mutual assistance with a view to solving potential social problems in the event of an emergency both in the Baltic States and in the neighbouring territories.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

**S T A T E M E N T**

**ON DEMOCRACY IN BELARUS**

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**expressing** sincere wishes to see Belarus developing into a flourishing and democratic state where all residents could enjoy the freedom to exercise their civil and political rights,

**notes** that the processes of formation of civil society based on democratic values and principles are intensifying in Belarus. The part of society which adheres to the said values and principles demonstrates its civil position by means of peaceful protest;

**appeals** to the Belarusian authorities urging to:

respect democratic expressions of civil society;

refrain from using force against peaceful protestors and participants in meetings;

release political prisoners;

not to undertake repressive actions against the opposition leaders.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## STATEMENT

### ON FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM THREATS

**The Baltic Assembly**

**highly appreciates** the results of the Riga NATO Summit and fostered sense of collective solidarity among NATO member states in fighting against terrorism;

**expresses** its solidarity with the international anti-terrorist coalition, readiness to strengthen peace and security in the Baltic Sea Region and neighbouring countries;

**pledges** itself to:

promote opposition to all forms of terrorism whatever its motivations or manifestations;

invite to fight it together within our power and in accordance with the provisions of international rules.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006



## STATEMENT

### ON COOPERATION OF THE BALTIC STATES AND NEW EUROPEAN UNION NEIGHBOUR STATES BY SHARING EXPERIENCE IN IMPROVING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**emphasising** that one of the priorities of the foreign policies of the Baltic States as well as of the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers is to support the European Neighbourhood Policy;

**being confident** that enlargement of the European Union must not lead to the emergence of new dividing lines in the new Europe;

**stressing** how vital it is for the growth, security and welfare of Europe that its neighbouring countries also enjoy stable development based on the principles of democracy,

**decides** to undertake political initiatives and provide political support in order to facilitate the practical implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Eastern European countries in political and economic fields such as good governance, legislative process, business development, environmental protection, infrastructure, health and social care as well as to strengthen the protection of citizens against the threat of organised crime and corruption.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## DECISION

### ON THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY BUDGET REPORT FOR 2005

The Session of the Baltic Assembly approves the Baltic Assembly Budget Report for the year 2005 in accordance with the attached Baltic Assembly Budget adjustments.

President of  
the Baltic Assembly

Valerijus SIMULIK  
**Republic of Lithuania**

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

Ērika ZOMMERE  
**Republic of Latvia**

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Andres TAIMLA**  
Republic of Estonia

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## *DECISION*

### **ON THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY BUDGET FOR 2007**

The Baltic Assembly approves its budget for the year 2007 in the amount of EUR 306 860 in accordance with the attached Baltic Assembly budget appropriations. The BA Budget for the year 2007 includes membership fees of all three countries in amount of EUR 100 087 for Estonia, EUR 98 547 for Latvia, EUR 98 547 for Lithuania. Deficient sum of the membership payments to the Baltic Assembly Budget 2007 in amount of EUR 3080 will be compensated from the funds of the Baltic Assembly Budget 2005.

**According to Article 44, paragraph 4, of the Baltic Assembly Statutes, the expenses necessary for ensuring the activities of the Baltic Assembly shall be shared equally by the parliaments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania.**

President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Valerijus SIMULIK**  
Republic of Lithuania

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Ērika ZOMMERE**  
Republic of Latvia

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Andres TAIMLA**  
Republic of Estonia

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

**JOINT ACTION PLAN 2007  
FOR BALTIC ASSEMBLY - NORDIC COUNCIL COOPERATION**

**Contents**

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- 5. Annual Summit 2007**



**1. Aim**

The overall aim of this Action Plan is to provide a framework and a general direction for co-operation between the Baltic Assembly (BA) and the Nordic Council (NC) in 2007. The Action Plan is a step in the implementation of the Report of the Joint Baltic

Assembly-Nordic Council Ad Hoc Working Group adopted during the 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting on 28 April 2005.

## **2. Guidelines for BA-NC Co-operation in 2007**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The overall objective of BA-NC co-operation is to promote a democratic, socio-economic and cultural development of the Baltic Sea Region and to act as a vocal advocate of its specific challenges and possibilities. There are three overarching areas of Nordic-Baltic parliamentary co-operation:

- **Strengthening of socio-economic integration in the Baltic Sea Region.**
- **Contributing to bridge-building to new EU neighbours.**
- **Promoting a comprehensive approach towards the challenges of the Northern region.**

### **2.2 Modes of co-operation**

The general drive should be towards flexible, targeted and result-oriented modes of co-operation. Practical co-operation activities should be feasible and have a reasonable chance of successful execution. The following criteria could be used when considering possible joint co-operation activities. The activities should:

- be based upon a joint analysis of possible co-operation issues;
- be agreed upon, prepared and carried out jointly;
- be of relevance for the regular work of committees;
- have a clear and agreed division of responsibilities;
- have a true joint ownership and be built upon a commitment by all participants;
- provide added value to Nordic-Baltic parliamentary co-operation;
- prioritise the issues that warrant cross-committee approaches;
- consider participation of MPs from a wider regional base.

The Presidiums and Committees of the BA and the NC regularly attend each other's sessions, meetings, conferences and similar events. Moreover, the Presidiums and Committees occasionally arrange their own meetings within the overall framework of such joint activities. It is common for representatives of both organisations to deliver a greeting speech or to make other contributions during the events. However, it should be emphasised that an invitation to attend a meeting should not in itself be understood as a request for more substantial contributions as regards planning, preparation or participation in the event. Such deeper commitments require prior discussions and agreements, in accordance with the criteria above.

### **3. Joint Seminars between the Committees of the Baltic and the Nordic Parliaments**

In addition to the planned co-operation between the BA and the NC in 2007, the BA and the NC will also promote co-operation between the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments. The project of launching a series of joint seminars between the committees of the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments was initiated by deliberations between the Speakers of the Nordic parliaments and the President of the Nordic Council. It is also founded on previous discussions between the Speakers of the Nordic parliaments and the Speakers of the Baltic Parliaments.

It is fundamentally important that the seminars are based on a genuine commitment from the national parliaments and their committees. Therefore, a decisive first step is to gather information from the national committees on what issues they would see as relevant to deal with in a joint Nordic-Baltic parliamentary context.

This process was initiated during the autumn of 2006. A “Group of 4” will meet in early 2007 to decide on the topics for the seminars. The group will include one representative each from the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council, the Baltic parliaments and the Nordic parliaments. The Nordic Council will be responsible for practical execution of the seminars.

The seminar series could start in the autumn of 2007. It is envisaged that the seminar attendance will be four participants from each of the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments together with four participants each from the BA and the NC, which is 40 participants in total for each seminar.

### **4. Priority Issues in BA-NC Cooperation in 2007**

The priority issues for joint activities of the Presidiums and the Committees during 2007 are listed in sub-sections 4.1 – 4.6 below.

#### **4.1 The Presidiums of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council**

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2007 is to maintain and develop long-term co-operation in the Baltic-Nordic region, and to develop the network of contact with other parliamentary actors in the Baltic Sea Region. The Presidiums should promote an intensified feedback between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council on the one hand, and the national parliaments of the Baltic and the Nordic countries on the other. The Presidiums will thus assume a leading and driving role in the preparation and execution of the Joint Seminar Series described in Section 3 above.

Moreover, the Presidiums have an overall responsibility for developing contacts with Russian parliamentarians and parliamentary bodies. This should primarily be carried out within the framework of larger structures, such as the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC). Possible topics to address in this context include (but are not limited to) environmental and marine issues in the Baltic Sea Region, good governance, NGO development and networking, security of citizens, and cultural issues.

#### **4.2 The Baltic Assembly Education, Science and Culture Committee and the Nordic Council Culture, Education and Training Committee**

For the past two years, the two committees have focussed on issues relating to the quality of education. The co-operation activities have included conferences on the quality of education, study visits and seminars, and the committees have significantly contributed to the establishment of the Baltic-Nordic area for education and research.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2007 is to maintain long-term co-operation in the entire field of education and research, and to focus more deeply on issues relating to the preservation of cultural heritage and the relationship between cultural heritage and creative/cultural industries. Other issues concerning how cultural industries are becoming important components of the economies in the region will be considered by the committees.

#### **4.3 The Baltic Assembly Environmental Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council Environment and Natural Resources Committee**

For the past two years, the two committees have focussed on a wide range of issues such as combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea, constructing of a gas pipeline, the Baltic Sea environment and shipping, etc.

In November 2006, the two committees started drafting a new Memorandum of Understanding supplementing the previous Memorandums of Understanding of 2003 and 2005. The new Memorandum of Understanding is expected to be adopted in January 2007 and will address energy and eutrophication issues.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2007 is to concentrate on sustainable energy production and consumption, including energy safety and energy supply security issues. These issues will also be discussed within a Baltic Sea Region perspective as well as a European perspective. A study visit to Denmark concerning energy efficiency issues is planned for 2007. Work on eutrophication of the Baltic Sea will be continued under the auspices of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group.

#### **4.4 The Baltic Assembly Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee and the Nordic Council Business and Industry Committee**

A natural and intended consequence of EU enlargement is a free movement of labour. This will, however, also exert pressure on the Nordic and Baltic labour markets, due to the migration of qualified and flexible labour force. It is also likely that it will generate increased cross-border movement of labour within the Northern European countries.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2007 is to concentrate on labour market relations and mobility within a European perspective (illegal labour, mobility and flexibility). The committees plan to elaborate two concept papers: one concerning a possible meeting between the Economic Affairs committees in the BA and the NC in April, and another one – the consequences of labour market mobility.

#### **4.5 The Baltic Assembly Legal Affairs and Security Committee and the Nordic Council Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee**

For the past two years, the two committees have focussed on trafficking in human beings, which is a complex crime rooted in poverty, marginalisation and ideas about the subordination of women and children, which makes them targets for traffickers.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2007 is to continue a discussion on the issues of trafficking in persons for the black labour market as well as illegal and legal migration. Under the European campaign against domestic violence, the BA Legal Affairs and Security Committee, the NC Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee together with the BA Social Affairs Committee and the NC Welfare Committee will focus on the issues of domestic violence.

#### **4.6 The Baltic Assembly Social Affairs Committee and the Nordic Council Welfare Committee**

For the last two years, NC-BA co-operation, under the flag of the two committees working in the field of social issues, has focused on alcohol policies in the Nordic and the Baltic countries and the movement of labour forces and services. The latter topic has been in co-operation with the Nordic Council Business and Industry Committee and the Baltic Assembly Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2007 is to focus on domestic violence, family policy, children's policy, and social institutions. Under the European campaign against domestic violence, the NC Welfare Committee together with the BA Social Affairs



Committee and the NC Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee and the BA Legal Affairs and Security Committee will focus on the issues of domestic violence.

**5. Annual Summit 2007**

In December 2007, the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly will hold a summit. On that occasion, reports on the activities during 2007 will be submitted, and priorities for the following year will be adopted. The purpose of the summit is twofold: to present reports from presidencies on the work and achievements of the work in 2007, and to discuss and adopt priorities for co-operation in the forthcoming year.

Vilnius, 17 December 2006

## **THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AND THE NORDIC COUNCIL**

### ***Joint Press Statement***

On 15 December 2006 in Vilnius the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council convened for an annual summit to discuss their co-operation development and experience, the priorities of the Baltic – Nordic parliamentary co-operation, as well as the issues relating to energy in the Baltic Sea region, which is utmost important not only for the Baltic and Nordic countries, but for all the states of Europe.

#### **Co-operation between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council**

- The Baltic Assembly (BA) – Nordic Council (NC) Annual Summit reaffirmed the continued need for common activities of the Baltic Sea Region. Baltic and Nordic parliamentarians noted that all co-operating countries would benefit from a deepened and intensified cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries.
- The overall objective of BA – NC cooperation is to promote democratic, socio-economic and cultural development of the Baltic Sea Region and to act as a vocal advocate of the specific challenges and possibilities of the states of this Region. The general drive should be towards flexible, targeted and efficient modes of cooperation.
- The BA and NC plan not only to continue their co-operation in future, but also to promote cooperation between the parliaments of the Nordic and the Baltic countries.

#### **Energy in the Baltic Sea region**

- Baltic and Nordic countries shall make the utmost of the possibility to act together both in the region and on the international arena when resolving immediate implementation of joint energy and infrastructure projects.
- The aim of Baltic – Nordic co-operation on energy is to promote effective, competitive, safe and sustainable energy production and supply. Energy resources are to be used in an economical and environmentally responsible way.

- Implementation of joint energy projects advances the integration of the regional energy markets in the Baltic – Nordic region into the common EU market. The project of the power cable *Estlink*, which unites the Baltic States with Finland, is a significant step for ensuring developing energy market in the Baltic Sea Region, and the European Union is approaching to its goal to establish a common European power system and extend secure power supply possibilities.
- In regard to the Russian-German gas pipeline which is planned to run under the Baltic Sea, the Baltic and Nordic parliamentarians stress that construction of gas pipeline must not damage the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea and cause irrecoverable environmental problems to separate states of the Region.

Vilnius, 15 December 2006

***Joint press statement of the 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council***

On 16 December 2006 in Vilnius, the Republic of Lithuania, the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers have convened for the 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council to discuss issues of mutual importance of the Baltic States, to exchange views and positions between parliamentarians and governmental representatives of the Baltic States on regional goals and tasks as well as to evaluate progress on joint priorities of co-operation for 2006.

Baltic parliamentary and governmental co-operation is founded on a strong sense of historical, cultural and political affinity. The 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council reaffirmed the continued need for a close and mutually fruitful regional co-operation. The political arena for Baltic parliamentary and governmental co-operation is expanding, and the patterns of political interaction are changing. New conditions and new opportunities for co-operation have emerged since the Baltic States became members of the European Union and the NATO. Baltic parliamentary and governmental co-operation has to aim at strengthening social and economic integration in the Baltic region, supporting bridge-building to new neighbours, strengthening of security and stability, both regionally and globally. The 12<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council underlines that energy sector and common Baltic energy strategy, enlargement of the Schengen area, environmental protection and sustainable development, education and research policy, development of the economy, particularly information technology; as well as transportation and communications are important areas of parliamentary and governmental co-operation of the Baltic States.

The Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers have defined the following priorities for co-operation in 2007:

the role of the Baltic States in implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy in Eastern European countries;

the development of human resources in the Baltic States;

and decided that the 13<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council will take place in November 2007 in Riga, the Republic of Latvia.

Vilnius, 16 December 2006