

# **BALTIC ASSEMBLY STATUTES<sup>1</sup>**

## **Chapter 1 Foundations of the Activities of the Baltic Assembly**

### **Article 1. Baltic Assembly**

1. The Baltic Assembly (BA) is an international organisation for cooperation among the parliaments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter also 'Member States'), founded on the basis of the Joint Decision adopted by the members of the Supreme Councils of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania in Vilnius on 1 December 1990. The Baltic Assembly functions on the basis of the Agreement of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania on Parliamentary and Intergovernmental Cooperation of the Baltic States signed in Tallinn on 13 June 1994, the present Statutes and other legal acts adopted by the Baltic Assembly and its bodies.
2. The Baltic Assembly shall be an entity under international law, with the headquarters of its Secretariat based in Riga, Latvia.
3. The Baltic Assembly shall have its own symbols and a flag, the use of which shall be governed by the appropriate regulations approved by the Session.

### **Article 2. Composition of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The parliament of each of the Baltic States shall appoint from 12 to 16 parliamentarians to the Baltic Assembly (national delegation, including its chairman and vice chairman), in accordance with the approved rules of procedure and the principle of proportional political representation in the national delegation. The number of delegation members shall remain unchanged for the entire term of office of the relevant parliament.
2. The parliament of each of the Baltic States, while forming the national delegation to the Baltic Assembly, shall be recommended to comply with the principle that at least one member of the relevant standing committees of the national parliaments are represented in the standing committees of the Baltic Assembly.

### **Article 3. Principles of Activities of the Baltic Assembly**

The Baltic Assembly shall consider issues and various projects which are of interest to the members of the national delegations and the member states; adopt decisions in compliance with the principles of equality, mutual benefit and unanimity; and develop cooperation with other regional, international, and inter-parliamentary organisations.

### **Article 4. Languages of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The official languages of the Baltic Assembly shall be Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian.
2. Other languages shall be used in the work of the Baltic Assembly in the cases specified by these Statutes or by agreement among the delegations.
3. Official language of the written materials and official correspondence is English. Translation from English to national or any other languages has to be ensured by the national delegations and is not covered from the BA Budget.

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<sup>1</sup> The BA Statutes adopted on 29 May 1999. The consolidated text of the Statutes contains the amendments adopted on 27 May 2000, 14 December 2002, 29 November 2003, 19 December 2004, 22 October 2010, 25 November 2011, 24 October 2014, and 10 November 2017.

## **Chapter 2** **Bodies of the Baltic Assembly**

### **Section 1** **Session of the Baltic Assembly**

#### **Article 5. The Session of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The highest body of the Baltic Assembly is its Session.
2. Sessions shall be regular and extraordinary.
3. Within the framework of the Session, an official meeting of the Presidents of the parliaments of the Member States shall be held.

#### **Article 6. Competence of the Session of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The Session of the Baltic Assembly shall be competent to adopt decisions on all issues pertaining to BA activities.
2. The following shall be within the exclusive competence of the Session of the Baltic Assembly:
  - 1) adoption and amendment of the Statutes;
  - 2) approval of the BA symbols and adoption and amendment of the regulations on their use;
  - 3) fixing the venue and time of a regular Session;
  - 4) approval and amendment of the agenda of the Session;
  - 5) approval of the leadership of the Presidium, standing and *ad hoc* committees;
  - 6) approval of the Secretary General of the Baltic Assembly;
  - 7) adoption and amendment of the Regulations on the Secretariat;
  - 8) hearing of the BA Presidium's report on the work accomplished in the period between sessions;
  - 9) approval of the BA budget and the report on its implementation;
  - 10) adoption of declarations, recommendations, resolutions, decisions and statements.

#### **Article 7. Quorum of the Session of the Baltic Assembly**

1. A regular or an extraordinary Session of the Baltic Assembly shall have the power to act if more than half of the members of each national delegation are present.
2. The registration of the members of the delegations shall be conducted before the opening of the Session and upon the request of the national delegations.

#### **Article 8. Regular Sessions**

1. A regular Session of the Baltic Assembly shall be held once a year in the presiding country.
2. The exact date of the next regular Session shall be fixed by a decision of the previous regular Session. When determining the date for the Session, the dates of national parliamentary elections shall be taken into account.
3. The term of presidency of the Baltic Assembly shall be one calendar year and the presidency shall be held alternately by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Not later than two months before the beginning of the Session, the presiding state shall set the exact venue of the Session, and the secretary of its delegation shall notify the Baltic Assembly Secretariat and the secretaries of other national delegations thereof.
4. When necessary, the Baltic Assembly Session may change the host country, venue and time of the Session; however, when the decision on holding the next Session is made, the principle of rotation should be applied equally to all BA member states.

### **Article 9. Extraordinary Sessions**

1. A proposal to convene an extraordinary Session may be submitted by each national delegation individually or jointly with other delegations.
2. The proposal to convene an extraordinary Session must be well founded, indicating the issues for consideration.
3. The decision to convene an extraordinary Session shall be made during a regular Session; in the period between sessions the decision shall be made by the Presidium on the principle of consensus.
4. The Session or the Presidium shall define the agenda, venue and time of an extraordinary Session.

### **Article 10. Agenda of the Session**

1. The Presidium shall submit a draft agenda of the Session to the delegations not later than two months before the beginning of a regular Session or two weeks before the convocation of an extraordinary Session.
2. The time allocated for speeches and answers to questions shall be set by the Presidium.
3. The Session, on the basis of consensus, may amend the agenda at any time.

### **Article 11. Chairing of the Session**

1. The work of the Session shall be chaired by the President of the Baltic Assembly or by one of the Vice Presidents.
2. The Chairman of the Session shall ensure its smooth functioning.

### **Article 12. Openness of the Work**

1. The work of the Baltic Assembly shall be open to the public.
2. The Baltic Assembly may declare the Session or a part thereof closed by a joint decision of the national delegations.

### **Article 13. Recording and Taking Minutes on the Session**

1. The work of the Baltic Assembly Session shall be tape-recorded, and the minutes of it shall be taken.
2. The minutes shall include the following: venue and time of the Session, names of the chairmen and participants, agenda, speakers and the essence of their speeches, full texts of the decisions adopted, and the results of voting.
3. The minutes of the Session shall be signed by the President and Vice Presidents, and by the Secretary General of the Baltic Assembly.
4. The minutes of the Session shall be taken in English.
5. After the minutes of the Session have been signed within two months after the end of the Session, they shall be published and entered on the BA website on the Internet.

### **Article 14. Adoption of Decisions at the Session**

1. The Session of the Baltic Assembly shall adopt its decisions by voting.
2. Each national delegation shall have one vote. A decision shall be adopted if all the national delegations have voted in favour of it.

## **Section 2 Presidium of the Baltic Assembly**

### **Article 15. Composition of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The Presidium shall be formed for organising the work of the Baltic Assembly.

2. The Presidium of the Baltic Assembly shall consist of the chairman and his/her deputy of each national delegation appointed by the parliament of the respective state.

#### **Article 16. President and Vice Presidents of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The work of the Presidium shall be chaired by the President and two Vice Presidents of the Baltic Assembly.

2. At the end of each Session of the Baltic Assembly, the chairman of the national delegation of the next presiding state shall become the President of the Baltic Assembly for the next calendar year. The incoming President shall perform his/her functions from 1 January.

3. The chairmen of the other two national delegations shall become Vice Presidents of the Baltic Assembly.

4. In the absence of the President of the Baltic Assembly, his/her duties shall be carried out by the Vice President from the next presiding country. When the latter is not available, the duties of the President of the Baltic Assembly shall be carried out by the other Vice President.

#### **Article 17. Tasks and Competence of the Presidium**

1. The Presidium shall direct the preparation of sessions; coordinate the work of the BA bodies during sessions and between them; supervise the implementation of the budget of the Baltic Assembly; represent the Baltic Assembly and maintain relations with international organisations, as well as with the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; and fulfil other tasks prescribed for the Presidium under the present Statutes and the documents adopted on the basis thereof.

2. It shall be within the competence of the Presidium:

- 1) to draw up the strategy and principal directions for the development of Baltic Assembly activities;
- 2) to coordinate the cooperation with the Prime Ministers and sectoral cooperation ministers who make up the Baltic Council of Ministers;
- 3) during the Session for solving conceptual issues and considering all draft documents, to convene the Consultative Council which shall comprise: the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly and the chairmen and vice chairmen of the standing committees of the Baltic Assembly. The work of the Consultative Council shall be chaired by the President and two Vice Presidents of the Baltic Assembly;
- 4) to set tasks and priorities for the Baltic Assembly activities;
- 5) to maintain relations of the Baltic Assembly with other international organisations;
- 6) to register the members of the Presidium, standing committees, *ad hoc* committees and interests groups;
- 7) to approve changes in the composition of the Presidium and standing committees in the period between sessions;
- 8) to hold a competition to select a candidate for the Secretary General of the Baltic Assembly and to present the selected candidate to the Session for approval;
- 9) to convene an extraordinary Session of the Baltic Assembly;
- 10) to present a draft agenda of the Session;
- 11) to appoint responsible standing committees for considering the submitted documents and topical issues;
- 12) to draw up a draft budget in conjunction with the BA Secretariat and to consider the draft report on the implementation of the budget to be presented at the Session by the Budget and Audit Committee;
- 13) to bring the documents adopted at sessions of the Baltic Assembly to the attention of the national parliaments;

- 14) to organise a meeting with the speakers of the national parliaments during the Session of the Baltic Assembly;
  - 15) in the period between sessions, to make decisions and release statements on behalf of the Baltic Assembly regarding topical/conceptual issues if there is a consensus among the national delegations; and
  - 16) resolve other issues which are within its competence.
3. The Presidium shall draw up a report on the work accomplished in the period between sessions and present it at the Baltic Assembly Session.

#### **Article 18. Meetings of the Presidium**

1. Meetings of the Presidium shall be held at least four times a year.
2. A meeting of the Presidium shall be convened by the President of the Baltic Assembly, who fixes the venue and time of the meeting and submits a draft agenda of the meeting.
3. The Presidium may invite standing committee chairmen, members of the national delegations and representatives of the Baltic Council of Ministers to attend its meetings to evaluate the activities of the current year and to set priorities for the next year.
4. The BA Secretariat shall ensure that minutes of Presidium meetings are kept. The venue and time of a meeting, names of the participants, issues considered, main viewpoints expressed and decisions adopted shall be entered in the minutes. The minutes shall be signed by the Chairman of the meeting and by the person who took the minutes.
5. Technical services for meetings of the Presidium shall be provided by the BA Secretariat.
6. Copies of Presidium meeting minutes in the English language shall be forwarded to the members of the national delegations not later than within two weeks after a Presidium meeting.

#### **Article 19. Decisions of the Presidium**

1. The Presidium of the Baltic Assembly shall have the power to act if its meeting is attended by one member of the Presidium from each BA member state, including the President of the Baltic Assembly.
2. Decisions of the Presidium shall be adopted by consensus. In the event of failure to reach a consensus, the President of the Baltic Assembly may make a proposal to put the issue on the agenda of the Session. In this case, the Session shall adopt a decision by consensus of the national delegations.

### **Section 3**

#### **Standing Committees of the Baltic Assembly**

#### **Article 20. Standing Committees of the Baltic Assembly**

1. BA standing committees shall be appointed for the preparation and consideration of issues which are of interest to the Baltic Assembly.
2. The standing committees of the Baltic Assembly shall be the following:
  - 1) Economics, Energy and Innovation Committee;
  - 2) Education, Science and Culture Committee;
  - 3) Health, Welfare and Family Committee;
  - 4) Natural Resources and Environment Committee;
  - 5) Security and Defence Committee.
3. The work of a standing committee shall be directed by chairman or vice chairmen of the standing committee.
4. For dealing with specific issues, the Session of the Baltic Assembly may set up *ad hoc* committees, defining their composition, scope and term of authority, and the procedure for reporting on their activities.

### **Article 21. Tasks and Competence of Standing Committees**

1. The tasks of the standing committees shall be to consider the issues which fall within their sphere and are of interest to the members of the national delegations and the BA member states, to work out joint positions on such issues, and to consider and prepare for adoption at sessions the documents which have been referred to them by the Presidium.
2. The standing committees of the Baltic Assembly shall:
  - 1) prepare the issues within their competence for consideration at sessions;
  - 2) initiate and prepare recommendations for the Resolution of the Session and drafts of the documents for consideration at sessions;
  - 3) oversee the implementation of the documents prepared by them and adopted by the BA;
  - 4) bring the relevant documents adopted at BA sessions to the attention of the appropriate standing committees of the national parliaments;
  - 5) resolve other issues which are within the competence of BA standing committees; and
  - 6) present reports on their work to the Session of the Baltic Assembly.

### **Article 22. Appointment of Members of Standing Committees**

1. Each member of the national delegation may be a member of one standing committee and, additionally, a member of the Budget and Audit Committee.
2. Each national delegation shall appoint its members to BA standing committees in compliance with the principle of equal representation of the national delegations in the standing committees and, as far as possible, by taking their interests into account.
3. When it is necessary to temporarily replace a standing committee member on a standing committee, a member of the national delegation, by the national delegation's decision, may be appointed to substitute for him/her. The substitute shall enjoy all the rights and responsibilities of a standing committee member.

### **Article 23. Budget and Audit Committee**

1. Each national delegation shall appoint to the Budget and Audit Committee two of its members who are neither the chairman nor vice chairman of the delegation.
2. The Session shall approve the composition of the Budget and Audit Committee and, when necessary, change its composition upon the recommendation of a national delegation.
3. The Budget and Audit Committee shall:
  - 1) have the right to examine and check financial documents at any time;
  - 2) to draft the procedure for the use of funds and other BA resources and present at the Session drafts of appropriate decisions;
  - 3) consider the draft budget of the next year, which has been drawn up by the Presidium and the Secretariat, make amendments thereto and present it with the mediation of the Presidium for adoption at the Session; and
  - 4) exercise control over BA expenses and at the Session make a report on the implementation of the Baltic Assembly budget for the preceding year and on the validity of the expenses.

### **Article 24. Chairman and Vice Chairmen of a Standing Committee**

1. At the end of each Session, the national delegation of the next presiding state shall appoint chairmen of standing committees from among its members. The national delegations of the other two states shall appoint vice chairmen of standing committees. Chairmen and vice chairmen for the next calendar year shall be approved at the BA Session. Chairmen and vice chairmen shall perform his/her functions from 1 January.
2. The standing committee chairman shall:

- 1) coordinate and organise the activities of the standing committee and draw up a plan of its work;
  - 2) convene meetings of the standing committee and draft their agendas;
  - 3) decide whom to invite to the discussion of issues and draft documents;
  - 4) preside over a standing committee meeting;
  - 5) when necessary, participate in meetings of the Presidium as a representative of the standing committee; and
  - 6) sign the documents of the standing committee.
3. In the absence of the standing committee chairman, the vice chairman from the next presiding state shall act as chairman of the standing committee. In case of his/her absence, the other vice chairman shall act as chairman.

#### **Article 25. Standing Committee Meetings**

1. Meetings of a standing committee shall be held at least once a year. Standing committees and *ad hoc* committees can meet as often as necessary.
2. Meetings of standing committees shall be convened by their chairmen, who shall make up the agenda and set the venue and time of the meetings. Standing committee meetings should be held in each BA member state insofar as possible.
3. The members of BA national delegations, representatives of the governments, experts may be invited to attend standing committee meetings; other persons may also be invited at the discretion of the standing committee chairmen. Standing committees may organise joint events, and chairmen of the relevant standing committees shall decide who will chair these events.
4. Minutes of standing committee meetings shall be taken by the Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly. The venue and time of a meeting, names of the participants, issues considered, main viewpoints expressed and decisions adopted shall be entered in the minutes. The minutes shall be signed by the presiding officer of the meeting and by the person who took the minutes.
5. Technical services for standing committee meetings shall be provided by the secretary of the national delegation of the state in which a standing committee meeting is being held.
6. Copies of standing committee meeting minutes in the English language shall be forwarded to the members of the standing committees not later than two weeks after the meeting.

#### **Article 26. Decisions of the Standing Committees**

1. A standing committee of the Baltic Assembly shall have the power to act if its meeting is attended by at least one member of the national delegation from each BA member state, including the chairman or vice chairman of the standing committee.
2. Decisions of a standing committee shall be adopted by consensus of the standing committee members who attend the meeting. In the event of failure to reach a consensus, the chairman of the standing committee may refer the issue to the Session for consideration.

### **Section 4 Interest Groups of the Baltic Assembly**

#### **Article 27. Interest Groups of the Baltic Assembly**

1. On basis of a joint decision, the members of the national delegations may form interest group consisting of at least three members one from each national delegation. Interest groups shall submit the decision about the foundation and goals of the interest group to the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly.
2. An interest group shall function in accordance with the Regulations on its Activities that are adopted by the Session of the Baltic Assembly and become an integral part of the Baltic Assembly Statutes.

## **Section 5**

### **Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly**

#### **Article 28. General Provisions**

1. The Secretariat shall supervise regular activities of the Baltic Assembly and its bodies.
2. The Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly shall comprise the Secretary General of the Baltic Assembly and the secretaries of the national delegations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (BA national secretaries). The BA Secretariat shall have its own staff.
3. Activities of the Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly shall be coordinated according to the present Statutes and other documents adopted on their basis.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Procedure for Submission of the Documents of the Baltic Assembly**

#### **Article 29. Documents That Can Be Adopted by the Baltic Assembly**

The Baltic Assembly shall express its position in the form of the following documents – resolution, declaration, recommendation, appeal, decision, statement, proposal, opinion or memorandum.

#### **Article 30. Right to Initiate Documents**

1. The Presidium, a member of the national delegation, a standing committee, an interest group or a national delegation of the Baltic Assembly shall have the right to initiate documents in any form.
2. Only the Presidium shall have the right to initiate documents in regard to organisational aspects of the work of the Baltic Assembly and in cases specified by these Statutes.

#### **Article 31. Submission of Draft Documents**

1. A draft of a document of the Baltic Assembly shall be submitted to the Presidium in English.
2. A draft document to be considered at a regular Session must be submitted to the Presidium not later than two months before the beginning of the Session.
3. In exceptional cases, the national delegation shall have the right to present a draft document at the beginning of the Session.
4. Draft documents to be considered at an extraordinary Session shall be submitted two weeks before the convocation of an extraordinary Session.
5. For a draft document submitted by way of exception by a national delegation at the beginning of the Session, the Presidium shall immediately forward the draft document to the Consultative Council.
6. Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly shall send out to national delegations in due time draft documents to be considered at the Session of the Baltic Assembly.
7. Standing committees, members of the national delegations and interest groups may propose amendments to the draft documents. Proposals for amendments shall be submitted in writing to the Presidium not later than two weeks before the beginning of the Session.

#### **Article 32. Final Document of the Session**

1. Presidium shall prepare the Final Document and shall present it to the Session for adoption. The Final Document shall list all the documents to be adopted at the Session, specify the most important issues discussed, indicate the priorities of the Baltic Assembly, priorities of cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers for the next year,



as well as indicate where and when the next regular Session and the Baltic Council will take place.

2. The Final Document, together with the documents adopted at the Session, shall be made available to the public and shall be entered on the BA website.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Property, Funds and Budget of the Baltic Assembly**

#### **Article 33. Property and Funds of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The activities of the Baltic Assembly shall be financed with the funds received as membership fees.

2. The Baltic Assembly, in accordance with the established procedure, may own and use for its activities the property and funds received as donations, inheritance or proceeds from economic activities relating to its objectives (selling of souvenirs bearing its symbols, publishing of printed matter, etc.).

3. Each national parliament itself shall cover the expenses related to the participation of its delegation to the Baltic Assembly at sessions, in meetings of the Presidium, the standing committees and the commissions, in the Baltic Council, as well as in the events held by the international cooperation partners of the Baltic Assembly.

4. The expenses necessary for ensuring the activities of the Baltic Assembly shall be shared equally by the parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

5. The Secretary General of the Baltic Assembly shall, in accordance with the Baltic Assembly Statutes, have the right to manage the property and funds of the Baltic Assembly.

6. Joint expenses relating to the Baltic Assembly activities shall be financed from the budget of the Baltic Assembly.

7. Immediately after the adoption of the decision on the budget, the Presidium shall inform the parliaments and the governments of the Baltic Assembly member states about the contributions that are to be made to the Baltic Assembly budget.

8. The funds of the Baltic Assembly shall be used pursuant to the Regulations on the Use of the Baltic Assembly Funds, which are an integral part of the Statutes.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Cooperation of the Baltic Assembly with the Baltic Council of Ministers**

#### **Article 34. Organisation of Cooperation**

The cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers shall be based on the 13 June 1994 Agreement on Baltic parliamentary and governmental cooperation between the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania, the 14 April 1996 Protocol on Cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers, these Statutes and other legal acts. The cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers shall be implemented by the Presidium and standing committees, and it shall be coordinated by the Secretariats of the Baltic Assembly and of the Baltic Council of Ministers.

#### **Article 35. The Baltic Council**

1. Each year the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers shall hold a joint meeting – the Baltic Council. The venue and time of the joint meeting and its agenda shall be coordinated through the appropriate secretariats on the basis of an agreement reached between the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic State presiding in the Baltic Council of Ministers.

2. At the annual joint meeting, the Baltic Council of Ministers shall present a report on the cooperation of the Baltic States, joint activities during the past year and plans for further cooperation. After hearing the report, the members of the Baltic Assembly may pose oral questions to the speaker. If the questions are not answered on the spot, the relevant ministries have to give a written answer to the question within one month after the Baltic Council.
3. During the period between them, members of the Baltic Assembly may submit to the Baltic Council of Ministers, personally or on behalf of the national delegation, individual standing committee or registered interest group oral or written queries regarding Baltic cooperation.
4. The Baltic Assembly may address the Baltic Council of Ministers with proposals and recommendations. The Baltic Assembly may request from the Baltic Council of Ministers a progress report on the implementation of Baltic Assembly resolutions.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Final Provisions**

#### **Article 36. Termination of the Activities of the Baltic Assembly**

1. The activities of the Baltic Assembly shall cease in the event of the termination of the validity of the Agreement on Baltic parliamentary and governmental cooperation between the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania.
2. The parliament of each Baltic State may adopt a decision to withdraw from the Baltic Assembly. In this event, the activities of the Baltic Assembly shall be deemed terminated in six months from the day on which the parliament of the Baltic State which made such a decision gave notice of it to the Presidium or the chairmen of other national delegations to the Baltic Assembly.

#### **Article 37. Texts and Interpretation of the Statutes**

1. The present Statutes have been drawn up in four languages: Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and English. All the texts shall be equally valid, but in the event of a dispute over them, the English text shall be regarded as the basic one.
2. If necessary, the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, on basis of the conclusions of the Security and Defence Committee, shall have the right to interpret these Statutes.

#### **Article 38. Coming into Force of the Statutes**

1. These Statutes shall come into force from the moment of their adoption by consensus at the Session of the Baltic Assembly (at a joint meeting of the delegations).
2. Upon the adoption of the present Statutes of the Baltic Assembly, the 8 November 1991 Regulations of the Baltic Assembly and the amendments made thereto shall be null and void.

Tallinn, 10 November 2017