

STATEMENT
ON THE FORTHCOMING BALTIC STATES' PRESIDENCIES OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the coming years, issues related to the European Union will be even more dominant on the agendas of the Baltic regional cooperation. Europe's economic difficulties and various efforts to regain economic growth will have an influence on all of us. In this unpredictable environment the Baltic States have to ensure that the national and regional interests are not lost during negotiations. In the current months it will be particularly important regarding the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework of the European Union where our interests in having fair direct payments and cohesion funding have to be respected.

The forthcoming Baltic States' presidencies of the Council of the European Union will be our first presidencies of the Council of the European Union, and we cannot waste this opportunity. Lithuania will be the first of the Baltic States to hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union during the second half of 2013. Latvia will follow in the first half of 2015, and Estonia – in the first half of 2018. For each of our countries this will be the first presidency of the Council of the European Union, and it is a huge challenge to have a successful presidency.

In order to change the traditional perception of the Baltic States as small countries that have no significant political and economic clout and are always at the mercy of major actors in the sphere of international relations, the Baltic States have to use their presidencies efficiently and strategically by acting jointly on the parliamentary, governmental and non-governmental level. Even if nowadays priorities are set by the EU presidency trio, a regional coordination can be significant and instrumental in defining national priorities. Our interests overlap in most cases, and more vigorous activities will certainly facilitate the process of ensuring a successful presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Baltic Assembly calls on the national parliaments and the governments, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers to increase regional coordination when planning the forthcoming presidencies of the Council of the European Union, thus ensuring continuity of the Presidency in order to better represent the national interests of the countries of the region.

Vilnius, 9 November 2012