

## **RESOLUTION** **of the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly**

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**having convened** for its 36<sup>th</sup> Session on 9–10 November 2017 in Tallinn, Republic of Estonia;

**having discussed** the achievements of the Estonian presidency in the Baltic Assembly, progress in regard to the implementation of the joint projects of the Baltic States, strengthening of security in the region, development of transport and energy infrastructure, domestic policy developments, support for the EU Eastern Partnership countries;

**highlighting** that Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union is reinforcing European growth and voicing the position of the entire Baltic region on the European level, and **reiterating** the necessity to encourage politically and economically strong and united European Union;

**welcoming** firm coordination of cooperation activities between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers leading to the implementation of strategically important partnerships for growth and welfare of the Baltic region, and **underlining** a need to continue further expansion of existing partnerships and development of new ones;

**stressing** that common positions, decisions and projects of the Baltic States send a strong message of Baltic partnership and cooperation to the rest of the world;

**stressing** the need to further develop a connected and competitive Baltic region by continuing target-oriented and irreversible integration into Europe's transport and energy networks;

**highly appreciating** signing of the Agreement on the Development of the Rail Baltica Railway Connection on 31 January 2017, **welcoming** ratification of the Agreement by the national parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and **firmly stressing** that Rail Baltica is a strategic infrastructure project not only for the Baltic States but for the whole Europe;

**underlining** the need to intensify joint measures to tackle security and defence challenges in a coherent and effective way, **reiterating** commitment to strengthen cooperation on external and internal security and defence and fully implement the NATO Warsaw Summit decisions to protect citizens and contribute to stability, and **reasserting** commitment to allocate a minimum of 2% of GDP for defence;

**sorely condemning** terrorism, extremism and radicalisation in all their forms and manifestations, and **affirming** our strong determination to cooperate to fight against terrorism and organised crime;

**emphasising** our strong support to the European Union choice and aspirations of the Eastern Partnership countries, and **expressing** consistent readiness to provide support to the Partner Countries;

**calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:**

**in regard to the cooperation in security and defence:**

- to coordinate actions of the Baltic States in implementation of the decisions of the NATO Warsaw Summit, continue target-oriented coordination of activities in defence

- planning and capability development and to ensure permanent and robust presence of the US and other NATO member states' troops in the Baltic States;
- to continue further cooperation in the areas of defence planning and capability development;
  - to facilitate smooth and rapid movement of Allied forces in the region and simplify related bureaucratic procedures among the Baltic States;
  - to develop an action plan for strengthening of the cross-border operational cooperation of the Baltic States;
  - to take coordinated steps to ensure our ability to effectively address the challenges posed by hybrid warfare and to develop a set of tools to deter and defend against hybrid warfare by using complex and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means;

**in regard to the coordinated border management:**

- to take coordinated measures for protection of the external border of the European Union;
- to finalise and sign agreements between the governments of the Republic of Latvia, Republic of Estonia and Republic of Lithuania on the maintenance of Latvian-Estonian and Latvian-Lithuanian borders and activities of border guard representatives;
- based on the signed agreement "Joint Patrol Agreement between the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the Police Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia and the State Police of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia", to continue preparation of practical instructions, ensure communication compatibility and remove organisational and bureaucratic obstacles;
- to ensure continuation of the operational cooperation of state border guard services of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in combating cross-border crime;
- to continue international cooperation in the framework of the joint operations related to the combatting of illegal immigration and preventing the activities of international organized crime groups;

**in regard to the joint military procurements of the Baltic States:**

- to continue negotiations of the Baltic States for synchronisation of procurements of military equipment, establishment of joint management and maintenance systems and repair services for military equipment in the Region;
- to coordinate plans for joint military procurements of the Baltic States in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral format for a time period of four years;
- to introduce Baltic standard and standardization for simple military procurements;

**in regard to strategic communication:**

- to develop joint measures in regard to strategic communication;
- to launch joint activities to strengthen cohesiveness of the Baltic societies and increase societal resilience;
- to start negotiations about establishment of a regional centre for monitoring and analysis of information space;
- to develop joint educational programmes and joint projects in regard to the strategic communication;

**in regard to the support to the Eastern Partnership countries:**

- to continue provision of political and economic support to GUAM countries;
- to promote strengthening of cooperation and coordinated efforts between the EU and the U.S. in regard to the Eastern Partnership policies which would give new impetus for development;

- to strengthen state and societal resilience and provide support for reform processes in the Eastern Partnership countries;
- to stress absolute support to the proposals to the Eastern Partnership Summit, which were listed in the Letter of the Leaders of the Baltic Assembly to Heads of State and Government of the Eastern Partnership Summit 2017 on 10 October 2017 ([http://www.baltasam.org/images/2017/Letter\\_Concl\\_EaP.pdf](http://www.baltasam.org/images/2017/Letter_Concl_EaP.pdf))

**in regard to the cooperation in admission and integration of asylum seekers and migrants:**

- to work on the elimination of causes of migration and on social economic integration of refugees for a short-term period, and promote return of refugees to countries of origins;
- to establish a format for regular discussions in the framework of the Baltic Council of Ministers on the reallocation and resettlement of asylum seekers to compare the approaches, policies, used funds and practical organisational procedures of the Baltic States;

**in regard to the introduction of automatic recognition of diplomas and degrees in the Baltic States:**

- to finalise and sign the agreement among the governments of the Baltic States on the automatic recognition of diplomas and degrees in the shortest possible time;

**in regard to cooperation in higher and professional education:**

- to elaborate an action plan for removal of administrative obstacles (coordination, accreditation, compatibility of systems, matriculation, cross-border financial settlements, research infrastructure etc.) for launching of expensive higher and professional education programmes such as medicine and veterinary medicine as well as to carry out measures to synchronise legislative basis;
- to continue work on launching of new joint programmes of the Baltic States in higher education in bilateral and trilateral format;
- with an active and targeted approach, to continue joint actions in the Baltic Science Network;

**in regard to the cooperation in vocational education and training (VET):**

- with an active and targeted approach, to implement the Declaration of Intent between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia on the Baltic Alliance of Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning;
- to continue consultations on expert level in regard to joint VET programmes in bilateral and trilateral format;

**in regard to the cultural cooperation of the Baltic States:**

- taking into consideration the valuable experience and outstanding contribution of the Nordic Culture Fund, to launch intergovernmental negotiations among relevant ministries of the Baltic States about foundation of the Baltic Culture Fund for promotion of cultural partnerships and strengthening of cultural ties among our countries, especially in the light of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of our countries;

**in regard to cooperation in health sector:**

- with an active and targeted approach, to continue implementation of the Partnership Agreement on Joint Procurements of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices and Lending of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices Procurable Centrally, and the Declaration on Cooperation in Organ Transplantation signed by the Baltic States;

- to urge Latvia and Lithuania to finalise and sign an agreement on cross-border cooperation in the provision of ambulance services in the Lithuanian-Latvian border area;
- to commence negotiations on expert level about the list of possible joint procurements and lending of medical devices;
- to start consultations on expert level about joint approaches towards producers of medicine and medical devices;
- to commence negotiations on expert level about the list of possible joint procurements for medical supplies for hospitals;
- to settle obstacles of logistics for exchanging organs for transplantation;

**in regard to the economic cooperation:**

- to coordinate joint measures to support digital infrastructure and apply modern technologies across different sectors as well as spread the practice of secure electronic signing, usage of e-signature and digital document exchange among the Baltic States;
- to start cooperation in regard to building of common innovation and industrial system of the Baltic States;
- to intensify trilateral consultations of the Baltic States about the next EU multiannual financial framework by defining and securing common interests;

**in regard to transport and infrastructure:**

- to speed up the implementation of Rail Baltica project thus securing timely realisation, respecting of set time-line and preventing increase of total expenditures of the project as well as ensuring continued EU support and funding at the highest permissible EU co-funding rates in the forthcoming EU multiannual financial frameworks;
- to continue to strengthen our partnerships with Poland and Finland in regard to the Rail Baltica project;
- to intensify negotiations about future transport and infrastructure projects in the Baltic States, including maritime and aviation sector, intelligent transport systems and modern traffic information systems;
- taking into account budgetary limitations by each state, to prioritise the development of the road network and agree on the Joint Action Plan for Development of road network in the Region;

**in regard to the synchronisation of the Baltic electricity networks with European networks:**

- taking into account results of the Joint Research Centre study, to make swift decision of the Baltic States about the best and the most cost-efficient scenario for synchronization of the Baltic electricity networks with the European networks;
- to agree on the timetable and concrete measures for implementation of synchronization project;
- to ensure that all the necessary measures are taken for the smooth execution of the tasks at hand in terms of preparation for the project;

**in regard to the regional gas and electricity market:**

- to continue work towards creating transparent regional gas and electricity market conditions in order to attract investments and new market participants, and facilitate competition;
- to implement Regional Gas Market Development Action Plan and to report the status of its implementation to the Baltic Assembly at least once a year;
- to continue putting effort on the decision about the economically viable long-term regional solutions and jointly seek the financial support of the European Union for the implementation of the agreed regional solution;

- to intensify the cooperation with Finland and Poland on their more active involvement and participation in the regional gas and electricity markets;

**in regard to the Astravyets nuclear power plant:**

- to take a unanimous position regarding development of Astravyets nuclear power plant;
- to represent a common request for an international audit of the Astravyets nuclear power plant in order to promote highest international safety standards;

**in regard to Nord Stream 2:**

- to take a unanimous position that the Nord Stream 2 project is not in line with the EU strategy of diversification of sources of supply and routes of transit of imported energy, as well as the EU's energy security strategy and foreign, security, and Eastern Partnership policy goals, reinforcing the EU's dependency on Russian gas supply;
- call therefore on the European Commission to thoroughly assess the compatibility of the Nord Stream 2 project with EU policy aims and ensure that all relevant EU legislation is fully respected.

Tallinn, 10 November 2017