

**MINUTES FROM THE 40TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE
BOARD OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES
Kristiansand, Norway, 16 May 2004**

The 40th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on the 16th of May 2004 in the City of Kristiansand, Norway, upon the invitation of Mr Jan Oddvar Skisland, Mayor of Kristiansand. On 17th of May the Board members participated in the solemn celebrations devoted to the National Day of the Kingdom of Norway.

The list of meeting participants is included as an annex to this report.

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.

The meeting was opened by Mr Per Boedker Andersen, the President of the Union. Mr Andersen expressed his thanks to the hosts of the meeting for the warmly welcome in the beautiful city of Kristiansand.

President Andersen emphasised this is a historical meeting for two reasons. It is the 40th jubilee meeting of UBC Executive Board and it is the first meeting after the historical EU enlargement. On 1 May 2004 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland joined forces with Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden in the European Union. The Baltic Sea became almost an inland sea of the European Union. The President stressed the enlargement will certainly bring benefits to the whole Baltic Sea region.

The meeting adopted the agenda attached as an annex to this report.

2. Election of two persons who, together with the President, will check the minutes.

Mr Jan Odegaard from Kristiansand and Mr Gunars Ansins from Liepaja, were elected to check the minutes.

3. Presentation of the City of Kristiansand.

Mr Bjarne Ugland, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand, welcomed all delegates and wished them fruitful discussions and a pleasant stay in Kristiansand. Mr Ugland made a slide presentation introducing the history, culture, traditions, industry, international contacts, leisure facilities and beautiful landscape of Kristiansand municipality.

4. Norway and EEA enlargement – two new financial mechanisms. (presentation by representative of Norwegian Association of Local & Regional Authorities)

Mr Knut Hjorth-Johansen, Senior Adviser in the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, made a presentation on new EFTA/EEA financial mechanisms.

Since the 1 May 2004 the European Economic Area (EEA) has grown up to 28 members - 25 EU members and 3 EFTA members. The EFTA states shall contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the EEA.

In the EEA financial mechanism the beneficiary countries are 10 new EU member states plus Greece, Portugal, Spain. Priority sectors are: environment, sustainable development, cultural heritage, human resource development, health and childcare, research.

In the Norwegian financial mechanism the beneficiary countries are 10 new EU member states. Priority sectors are: environment, Schengen, justice, regional policy, cross-border activities, implementation of *acquis communautaire*.

For both instruments the distribution key has been agreed with the European Commission. The steering committee (decision making body) will be established.

The two new financial mechanisms concern the period 01.05.2004 – 30.04.2009. However the launch of the initiative is already delayed. The EEA financial mechanism is 600 million € and Norwegian financial mechanism is 567 million €. The total annual allocation for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland is 142,45 million € per year.

The Beneficiary States have responsibility to make priorities, develop, propose and implement projects/programmes. Basis will be the National Development Plans. The secretariat for both instruments has been set up in Brussels.

The presentation of Mr Johansen is enclosed to the minutes. After the presentation the Board members raised several questions to Mr Johansen.

Mr Anders Engstrom, Kalmar, asked whether there is a maximum and minimum level of project funding. He said that some EU instruments are difficult to use by the municipalities because the minimum project budget is eg. a million EUR. He asked whether it is possible to submit project applications with the budget around 50,000 EUR.

Mr Johansen replied that up till now there is no restriction on the minimum or the maximum level. He agreed that it would be very difficult for NGO or small municipality to apply with a very big project. He said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway is aware of that and they want also the smaller ones to benefit from this financial program.

Mr Johansen added there is also a discussion whether there can be established programs within the projects. In his opinion it should not be so that all applications small and big should have to be sent to the secretariat in Brussels. For instance one country can decide that it should be established a program for human resource development on the local level. Then it should be established a decision body that can take care of such programs. He said that for example the Czech Republic is preparing a financial mechanism that way, and even the applications can be written in the national language (only summary in English). The decisions will be made by some program committee on the local level. Norway is very much in favour of establishing such programs which seems to be a better solution for small applicants than the projects.

President Andersen agreed that the minimum budget of the applications can be crucial for the small cities. He reminded some years ago there was an attempt to create a Nordic fund but Sweden and Finland were not in favour. He said it could have been a good instrument for development in small municipalities. Mr Andersen supported the idea to have the possibility to submit applications in mother tongue and to arrange local decision making boards. In this way the instrument would function more effectively.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, added that the city of Turku have been promoting the emerging civil society cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and organized last year the Baltic NGO Forum. This year the Forum was held in Parnu this month. The Forum discussed how to develop more permanent network of civil society organizations in the BSR. Mr Lohikoski said the Norwegian civil society organizations also participate in this network with organisations from Estonia,

Lithuania, Latvia, Poland etc. He hoped the funding from Norwegian instrument could be used not only for bilateral but also for multilateral cooperation. In this way the Norwegian fund would strengthen the emerging civil society cooperation.

Mr Johansen agreed with Mr Lohikoski and said that basically there should be no obstacle to use the money in that way, of course provided that the respective countries would agree on that. Mentioned organisations should lobby respective ministries in their countries to allow such use of funds.

Mr Gunars Ansins informed last week he participated in Oslo in the discussions between Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and Ministry of Finance of Latvia on the need to secure special amount of money as seed money for projects preparations. He said the seed money are especially important for smaller municipalities as they will enable to develop good project applications. Mr Johansen agreed the possibility to receive the seed money is very important.

Finally Mr Johansen informed that as cross-border co-operation is one of the priority sectors, partners from third countries eg. Russia can also take part in the projects financed by two new instruments.

5. UBC Action Plan 2004-2005.

President Andersen reminded that the first draft of the action plan was presented at the last Executive Board meeting in Vaasa. The Board in Vaasa authorised the President to appoint a working group consisting of persons working closely with the members of UBC Presidium to carry on the work on the action plan.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki informed that he received valuable comments from Ms Inara Marana, Riga, who was delegated to the working group by Vice-President Gundars Bojars. Ms Marana's comments were included into the action plan. Mr Zaboklicki made a presentation introducing the action plan. The Action Plan 2004-2005 refers to:

- the new Strategy adopted at the General Conference in Klaipeda
- action plans of the Commissions and Networks
- UBC action plan 2002-2003

The action plan includes guidelines and priorities for various UBC organs ie. Executive Board, Presidium, Secretariat, Commissions, Networks. Obviously all UBC activities in 2004-2005 will be significantly influenced by the EU enlargement makes the Baltic Sea region practically the European Union sub-region. UBC shall utilise the historical fact of the EU enlargement for the benefit of citizens living in our cities.

Other priority areas are:

- strengthening of UBC as an organisation for local level cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region
- further deepening of cooperation with Baltic and European organisations
- implementation of Agenda 21 locally through the UBC Agenda 21 Action program
- promotion of local authorities interests in the EU Northern Dimension policy

Decision:

The Board adopted the UBC Action Plan 2004-2005. The document is attached to the minutes.

6. UBC & Atlantic Arc Cities statement on EC communication on dialogue with associations of local authorities.

President Andersen emphasized that UBC has very good contacts with the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC). Representative of CAAC was present at the last UBC General Conference in Klaipeda. UBC representative will attend the CAAC General Assembly in July in Nantes.

President Andersen reminded that at the General Conference in Klaipeda 18 October 2003, UBC adopted the resolution appealing to the European Commission for regular consultations with local authorities associations, on EC policies which affect local authorities. In January 2004 Commissioner Michel Barnier sent a letter to UBC informing that on 19 December 2003 the Commission adopted a communication on "Dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of EU policy". In this communication the EC proposed to give the regional and local representatives an opportunity of expressing their views – via their associations – during annual hearings which will concentrate on the Commission's annual work programme, and the major policy initiatives that have a significant regional and local impact. UBC and our sister organisation Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities welcome the EC communication as continuation of the work began with the publication of White Paper on Governance. However CAAC and UBC are of the opinion that consultations between the EC and local authorities associations should take a form of a dialogue; it can not be only one-way communication.

Both organisations decided to send a joint statement to the EC expressing their views on proposed consultation procedures. In the statement UBC and CAAC underline that the communication, in outlining the purpose of the dialogue, makes absolutely no mention of the possibility for national and European associations to make their own priorities, concerns and proposals known to the European institutions. The presentation of the dialogue is limited to a description of the procedures for presenting the Commission's priorities and initiatives, to which the regional and local government associations are asked to react. A genuine dialogue can only be established if all various partners have the possibility not only to react to but also to initiate subjects for discussion. It is essential that regional and local authorities are able to obtain information and exchange points of view before decisions are taken. It is just as important for them to be able – via this dialogue – to introduce and debate questions concerning their own needs, to which the European Union has to find a response. The full statement is attached to the minutes along with the letter from Presidents of UBC and CAAC.

President Andersen also stressed that both organisations wanted to underline to the Commission that not only the national organisations should be heard in this dialogue (which is stated in the draft of the new EU treaty) but also organisations like ours.

Meeting of Presidents of local & regional authorities associations with Mr Romano Prodi, Brussels, 10 May 2004. 3rd Cohesion Forum in Brussels.

As mentioned above, in December 2003 the EC adopted a Communication aiming to institute a permanent and systematic dialogue with the European and National associations of local authorities in the European Union. In order to meet this aim and in agreement with the Committee of the Regions, the President of the Commission Mr Romano Prodi invited the representatives of local, regional and national authorities for an inaugural meeting of this dialogue, which was held in Brussels, 10 May 2004. UBC was represented at the meeting with Mr Prodi by Mr Maciej Lisicki, Gdansk, UBC Board Member.

Mr Lisicki informed that meeting with President Prodi was attended by 150-200 representatives of different local and regional authorities organisations. Mr Prodi made a short statement confirming the European Commission's will to establish a dialogue with local and regional organisations. Then a floor was given to few organisations, mostly to national organisations of regional authorities. The exception was made only for Eurocities. The President of Eurocities expressed his will to upgrade cities position in this dialogue.

Mr Lisicki stressed that this historical meeting was just a beginning of the dialogue and the future will show us in which direction the process will develop. He suggested that UBC should express its opinions together with partner organisations like CAAC to make our voice stronger, as the number of organisations participants in the dialogue is very high.

President Andersen stressed it is very important that UBC has been invited to this dialogue with the EC. He informed national organisations of local & regional wanted be the only ones invited to the dialogue, but fortunately President Prodi decided to invite and listen also to international organisations like UBC. Even if this event was more an information meeting than a dialogue, it is important for UBC to participate in these meetings.

As regards the 3rd Cohesion Forum in Brussels, 10-11 May, Mr Lisicki informed that over 1000 participants took part in the Forum including some Prime Ministers (Czech Republic, Hungary) and ministers of finance from a number of EU countries. The Forum warmly welcomed 10 new member states in the European Union.

The Forum broadly discussed the future EU cohesion policy for the years 2006-2013. Mr Lisicki informed there was a very strong voice of the regions who were the beneficiaries in the present period of the cohesion fund and who are afraid they will not be eligible for structural support in the next period. With the EU enlargement the European GDP has decreased and main stream of financial support will go to the new EU members. The conclusion from the discussion was that respective regions from Greece, Spain and Portugal should be also eligible for structural support, on certain conditions.

Cooperation agreement with Atlantic Arc Cities.

President Andersen presented the draft of the cooperation agreement between UBC and Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities. The document is attached to the minutes. The document will be signed by the Presidents of both organisations and officially announced at CAAC General Assembly in Nantes, 2-3 July 2004.

Mr Andersen stressed it is important to continue close cooperation with Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities as together we can get greater attention in Brussels. Mentioned above joint statement on EC communication on dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of EU policy, is a very good example of the need for such cooperation. We are also open for cooperation with other regional cities network eg. Adriatic Sea cities and Black Sea cities.

President Andersen proposed the Board members to send comments to the draft of cooperation agreement to the Secretariat before 15 June 2004. (after the Board meeting the CAAC Secretariat kindly asked UBC to send the approved text by 31 May 2004 because the CAAC General Assembly will be held on 2 July 2004 and the paper must be translated into four languages)

Decision:

The Board authorised the President to sign the cooperation agreement with the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities.

7. UBC EU-Coordination Network - the lead city.

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki reminded that last year the city of Aalborg informed that unfortunately is no longer able to lead the UBC EU-coordinators network. Since then the activities of the network have been suspended. The Board expressed an opinion that in the light of latest EU enlargement when the vast majority of UBC members belong to EU member countries, it would be useful to revitalise the EU-coordinators network. The Board asked the Board member cities whether one of these cities would like to chair the network. If no Board city is interested then all member cities will be able to apply to take the network leadership.

8. Task force on logistic corridors in the BSR, Turku, 10 May 2004.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, informed that in Vaasa the Presidium expressed an opinion that there is a need for some structure within UBC which would deal with the issues of transport / logistic corridors in the Baltic Sea area. Modern port and land transportation infrastructure coordinated with maritime transport is crucial for the development of the BSR. Two years ago UBC issued statements on EU white book on transportation and on Trans European Network (TEN), in order to get greater EU attention on the BSR transportation problems.

Presidium in Vaasa agreed that Turku and Riga would discuss this issue further and bring the conclusions at the Board meeting in Kristiansand. Mr Lohikoski pointed out that we have no proper structure within UBC to deal with this important issue. We have a Commission on Transportation but they focus on transportation matters within the city – public transport, cycling etc. The Business Cooperation Commission has not discussed these questions either.

On 10 May 2004 a working meeting was held in Turku. The meeting was attended inter alia by Mr Janis Butnors, Chairman of the Board of Riga Sea Line (delegated by Vice-President Bojars) and Mr Kristian Amberg, the Managing Director of the Turku Harbour (delegated by Vice-President Lahoniitty). The conclusion of the meeting was that we shall not create another Commission but we should create a task force to prepare UBC policies on this crucial issue which is the transportation (logistic) corridors system in the BSR. Mr Lohikoski also informed that during last months the European Parliament rapporteur on TEN was visiting Turku. He expressed an opinion that it would be a great value if UBC could present in the Parliament its positions on these issues.

Mr Lohikoski proposed to create Task Force on Logistic Corridors open to all member cities. Turku would be ready to convene the first meeting of the task force later on this year. He expressed hope that in addition to Riga also other cities including Stockholm (whose harbour chairs the Baltic Ports Organisation at the moment) would get involved in that work. Mr Lohikoski added that the transport network (corridors) in the BSR could be the key item for the forthcoming VIII UBC General Conference to be held in September/October in Turku next year. The first job for the task force would be to make a study presenting what have already been done in this field by different organisations. He stressed that we should involve political decision makers in the task force because much of “technical” work is done by the BPO.

Decision:

The Board decided to create the Task Force on Logistic Corridors led by Turku and Riga and encouraged all interested member cities to take active part in the first meeting of the task force to be held in Turku this autumn.

9. Application for membership from Slonim, Belarus.

President Andersen informed UBC has received an application for membership from Slonim in Belarus. He reminded that last year UBC received similar application from Grodno and Grodno was granted with observer status.

He informed he spoke to Danish diplomats and representatives of the Foreign Ministry and they were of the opinion that UBC could be a link to Belarus society as the state is expelled from European structures due to dictatorship. Mr Andersen suggested to treat application from Slonim in the same way as application from Grodno last year.

Mr Maciej Lisicki noted that the application comes from the county executive committee not from the city executive committee. He said he does not know how the local government is organised in Belarus (there is no self-government because the executive bodies are nominated by the presidential administration) but he proposed we should check whether it is application from the city or from the county.

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki informed that Slonim's application was delivered personally by the representative of Grodno who said that this is an application from the city. Possibly the county executive committee represents the municipality consisting of the city of Slonim and few communes around the city. President Andersen asked the secretariat to check whether the application comes from the city or from the county and the matter will be treated again at the next Board meeting.

Vice-President Arno Poeker expressed an opinion that UBC policy regarding application from Belarus cities should remain unchanged – they can apply for observe status only.

Mr Lisicki added in the beginning of this year he participated in Minsk at the conference organised by the OSCE. It was a seminar for scientists from the Science Academy of Belarus, for some presidential administration and for self-governmental activists. Of course, there is no real self-government in Belarus, there are some elected bodies without responsibility and almost no possibility to act, Mr Lisicki said. The seminar was closing the one year training performed by the head of the special committee established by the President Lukaszenko to reform self-government in Belarus. This person, the professor of the Belarus Academy of Science, said that Belarus will be prepared to reform its self-government in 10 years time.

Mr Lisicki added that the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also interested in some indirect contacts and different links with Belarus, contacts with the society not only with the government. The last opinions are that first of all independence of Belarus is very important, not really democracy, but independence. He stressed all contacts with Belarus at the very low level are very welcome and profitable for both sides.

Mr Christopher Odmann, Stockholm, put forward an open question whether Belarus cities are more interested in cooperation within the Black Sea area or within the Baltic Sea area.

Mr Andersen said that to his knowledge Belarus cities are not members of organisations operating around the Black Sea. He also said that we can not say that independence is more important than democracy. We can not set up democratic guidelines for our cities and at the same time accept opposite solutions in Belarus. He stressed now we can give Belarus cities an observer status, but no member status until the day when not only independence but also democracy is obvious in this country.

Mr Lisicki reminded that according to the UBC statute every city interested in development of the BSR can apply for membership. The city of Grodno for instance lies closer to the Baltic sea than Vilnius which is a member of UBC. He pointed that Belarus is using Lithuanian, Latvian and Polish ports. Belarus products, export and import come through Baltic sea ports not Black sea ones. Ukraine has some cities which belong to Black Sea cities organisation but Belarus belongs to the Baltic Sea region. Mr Vytautas Juodagalvis, Kaunas, expressed an opinion that citizens of Belarus identify themselves as citizens of the Baltic Sea region.

Mr Andersen concluded it is not so much a question of the situation, the position on the map. It is a question of democratic standards. As long as Belarus is a totalitarian country we can not accept them as full members.

10. Latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.

Founding Congress of United Cities and Local Governments, Paris, 2-5 May 2004.

President Andersen reported from the congress. He informed that the United Cities and Local Governments is the result of the unification of the two largest generalist international local government associations, the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the United Towns Organisation (UTO/FMCU). The new organisation brings together the national local government associations that formed the majority of IULA's membership, and the individual city members of UTO.

The inspiration for creating a new world organisation of local government came from the 1996 United Nations Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements. Here, international recognition was given to the importance of decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities. Therefore, at the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities (WACLA) in Istanbul, participants called upon the international local government organisations to strengthen their coordination and create the basis for a unified world organisation. Since then, IULA and UTO have been working together to create United Cities and Local Governments. In May 2001, the IULA-UTO Unity Congress took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the decision to unify the two organisations was formally taken. UCLG is now an international organisation recognised by the United Nations as representative of local authorities and cities of different sizes.

Mr Andersen stressed the congress was attended by local government representatives from all over the world and it was very interesting as all politicians could use the same words. We all knew what was important to the citizens, so the speeches touched similar issues, he said. Participants spoke about good governance, clean environment, social security and good health care. Problems in different parts of the world are similar but the scale and resources are different.

President Andersen also informed that Vice-President Gundars Bojars represented UBC at the conference “30 years of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the BSR”, Riga, 22-24 March 2004.

11. UBC input to the European policy-design on Sustainable Urban Development during spring 2004.

President Andersen noted that all Board members received written information on UBC input to the European policy-design on Sustainable Urban Development during spring 2004 prepared by Mr Risto Veivo, Head of the Secretariat of the Commission on Environment.

The paper describes the Commission on Environment input to:

- Thematic Urban Strategy within the 6th Environmental Action Programme of the European Union
- 4th Pan-European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns (Aalborg +10 Conference), Aalborg 9-12 June
- Future of European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign

The full document is attached to the minutes.

The Board praised the Commission on Environment for its active contribution to the design of the European policy on sustainable urban development and to the programme of the 4th Pan-European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Aalborg.

The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign was born at the first “Aalborg Conference” in 1994. Since 2002, the UBC has been a member of the Political Board and Steering Committee of the Campaign. Since the beginning of 2004 the Campaign is no longer receiving funds from the European Commission. Having this in mind there are plans to establish a new Campaign / Pan-European network of Sustainable Cities and Towns as a European association under the Belgian law.

Decision:

The Board authorised the President to decide whether UBC should be a part of the new Campaign.

12. Forthcoming meetings of the Commissions.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki informed about latest and forthcoming meetings of the UBC Commissions and Networks.

In April 2004 the following Commissions held the meetings:

- annual meeting of the Commission on Sport, Narva, 2-3 April
- seminar of the Commission on Urban Planning in the framework of the ABC project, Liepaja, 21-25 April
- UBC Environment and City Development Conference, Sundsvall, 22-24 April

On 14 May the task force meeting of the Commission on Health & Social Affairs was held in Riga.

The forthcoming meetings of the Commissions & Networks:

- meeting of the working group of the Network on Youth Issues, Kolding, 17-18 May

- seminar of the Commission on Transportation on “European Transport Projects”, Kaunas, 10-11 June and annual meeting of the Commission
- annual meeting of the Commission on Business Cooperation, Växjö, 11-12 June
- meeting of the Women’s Network, Turku, 14 August, in connection with the 10th Anniversary Seminar of the Nordic Forum in Turku
- bicycle workshop of the Commission on Transportation, Örebro, 6-7 September
- seminar of the Commission on Urban Planning in the framework of the ABC project, Viljandi, 22-26 September
- meeting of the Commission on Tourism, Jurmala, September

The Board took note of the information and praised mentioned above Commissions and Networks for their active work. Brief information about forthcoming meetings is also attached to the minutes.

Mr Gunars Ansins, Liepaja, asked if the Commission in Information Society is planning to have a meeting open to all member cities. Mr Zaboklicki replied that according to his knowledge, the Commission is planning to hold such a meeting/seminar but the dates are not set yet.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, informed that Tampere and St.Petersburg are jointly working on the implementation of the Commission action plan presented at the last Board meeting in Vaasa.

Vice-President Arno Poeker informed about revitalisation of the Commission on Health and Social Affairs. The Commission’s task force had two meetings this year, the last one in Riga the day before the Board meeting. The Commission plans to organise in autumn an annual meeting open to all member cities. Member cities interested to host this meeting are requested to contact the Commission secretariat in Rostock.

13. LVRLAC project – update.

President Andersen informed that LVRLAC (Lake Victoria Region Local Authorities Co-operation) project phase two will end in summer 2004. SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) who finances the project expressed an interest to continue the project. The Board discussed whether UBC shall continue the LVRLAC project. Mr Anders Engstrom, Kalmar, introduced the potential themes for the project continuation. One of the themes could be the environmental protection. Mr Mikko Lohikoski stated that Turku and UBC Commission on Environment has to consider whether it has the capacity to coordinate the African project.

Decision:

The Board decided that the project in Africa can be continued provided that the EnvCom is capable and interested to coordinate the project. The Board authorised the President to decide about the project organisation.

14. Other matters.

Cities declaration against terrorism.

President Andersen informed that in Paris he was approached by the representative of Dunkerque who proposed him to sign the cities declaration against terrorism in Europe. Mr Andersen underlined that in Denmark the cities are not allowed to make foreign policy statements but of course cities in other countries may sign such declaration.

Vice-President Arno Poeker informed that Dunkerque is a twin city of Rostock. The declaration was initiated by the cities from France, Italy, Spain after the bomb attack in Madrid. Rostock is considering to sign this declaration.

President Andersen said that he can not sign such declaration as the President of UBC, but particular UBC member cities may of course sign this declaration if they wish so.

15. Next meeting of the Executive Board.

President Andersen presented an invitation from the UBC Vice-President Gundars Bojars, Mayor of Riga, to hold the next Executive Board meeting in Riga on 15-16 October 2004.

Decision:

The Board accepted the invitation from Mr Bojars and decided to hold its 41st meeting in the City of Riga, Latvia, on 15-16 October 2004. Part of the meeting including the annual reports from the Commissions and Networks will be open to all member cities.

16. Date of the VIII General Conference in Turku.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, on behalf of the 1st UBC Vice-President, Mayor of Turku Mr Armas Lahoniitty, proposed 29 September – 2 October 2005 as the date of the VIII UBC General Conference in Turku.

Mr Lohikoski proposed that the main theme of the General Conference could be the transportation and logistic corridors in the Baltic Sea region. He said the task force led by Turku and Riga would propose more concrete proposal in autumn. The conference could also discuss further development of UBC organisation in the spirit of the new strategy.

Mr Lohikoski also added that we should remind the Council of the Baltic Sea States to hold the Committee of Senior Officials meeting and the coordination meeting of Baltic Sea organisations in connection with the General Conference in Turku.

Decision:

The Board approved 29 September – 2 October 2005 as the date of the General Conference in Turku.

17. Closing of the Meeting.

President Per Boedker Andersen expressed his thanks to all participants for the fruitful meeting and to the City of Kristiansand for its warm hospitality and closed the 40th Meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Mr Per Boedker Andersen
Chairman

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki
Secretary

Mr Jan Odegaard
Adjuster

Mr Gunars Ansins
Adjuster