

MINUTES OF THE 54TH MEETING OF THE UBC EXECUTIVE BOARD

JYVÄSKYLÄ, FINLAND, 13 MARCH 2009

The 54th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on the 13th of March 2009 in the City of Jyväskylä, Finland, upon the invitation of Mr Markku Andersson, Mayor of Jyväskylä.

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

The meeting was opened by Mr Per Bødker Andersen, President of the Union. Mr Andersen expressed his gratitude to the hosts of the meeting for inviting the UBC Executive Board to hold the meeting in Jyväskylä. The meeting adopted the agenda.

2. Welcome by the Mayor of Jyväskylä, presentation of Jyväskylä.

Mr Markku Andersson, Mayor of Jyväskylä, welcomed all participants and wished them a fruitful meeting. The mayor made a presentation introducing his city. He also informed about the latest administration reform in Finland - consolidation of cities.

Jyväskylä with population of 130.000 inhabitants has become the seventh largest city in Finland. The city is famous for its educational possibilities, there are 45,000 pupils and students studying at three universities, nearly every third person is a pupil or student.

In Jyväskylä, there are many sectors interested in skills, competence and innovations. These include energy technology, nanotechnology, renewable forest industry and ubiquitous computing.

Jyväskylä is also the city of the world famous architect Alvar Aalto. The city has some thirty buildings designed by him, more than any other city in the world.

The most popular and international event in Jyväskylä is World Rally Championship.

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

Ms Marketta Mäkinen, Director of International Relations, Jyväskylä and Mr Maciej Lisicki, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk, were elected to check the minutes together with the President.

4. Application for membership from Botkyrka, presentation of the city.

Mr Peter Nyberg, Councillor, submitted the application of Botkyrka to join the Union of the Baltic Cities. The application is attached. Mr Nyberg provided general information about Botkyrka.

Botkyrka is one of the 26 municipalities in the county of Stockholm with population of 80.000. Botkyrka is not a typical Swedish municipality. The average age of the population is the lowest in Sweden, 37 years. It is also the most international municipality in Sweden; more

than 50% of the population has their roots in other countries. In Botkyrka schools, more than 100 nationalities are represented.

Sustainable development is a main guideline in steering the municipality. Botkyrka worked together with other municipalities in the Nordic-Baltic Aalborg Commitments Network. UBC has taken an active part in the network, and that is why Botkyrka found it useful to become a member. Botkyrka wants to expand cooperation in other fields within UBC as well.

Decision:

The Board decided to accept Botkyrka as member of the Union of the Baltic Cities and wished Botkyrka a successful cooperation with other UBC member cities.

5. Preparations to X General Conference in Kristiansand, 23-26 September 2009.

5.1 Invited keynote speakers.

Mr Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General, informed the Board about the preparations to the X UBC General Conference in Kristiansand.

Invited keynote speakers for plenary session who confirmed their participation are:

- Per Sigurd Sørensen, Mayor of Kristiansand
- Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC, Mayor of Kolding
- Maria Åsenius, State Secretary, Ministry for EU Affairs, Kingdom of Sweden, Presidency of the European Council.
- Luc Van den Brande, President of the Committee of the Regions
- Dirk Ahner, Director General, DG Regional Policy, Representative of the European Commission on behalf of Danuta Hübner EU Commissioner for Regional Policy
- Jannike Arnesen (Kristiansand) and Robert Lang (Tallinn) – representatives of the UBC Commission on Youth Issues
- Helge Aasen, Senior Vice President, Elkem Solar
- Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Chairman of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Other invited keynote speakers are:

- Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mette-Marit. Jorgen Kristiansen informed, that the government of Kristiansand sent an official invitation letter to the Crown Princess, but received the answer from the Court, that it was too early to give the final response.
- Representative of the Government of Norway. Jorgen Kristiansen said that the government of Kristiansand invited first the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and then the Minister of Environment, but they both have other duties in the time of UBC General Conference. Later on the invitation was addressed to the Prime-Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg. The city expects the answer.
- Vygaudas Ušackas, Chairman of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.
- Lech Wałęsa, former President of the Republic of Poland and Solidarność leader. Paweł Żaboklicki informed that there is no confirmation yet. Lech Wałęsa is a

member of the EU Reflection Group - Council of Wise Men. The meeting of this group will be held on 24 September in Brussels. Participation of Lech Walesa will be possible only in case the Reflection Group meeting is postponed.

- Francina Armengol Socias, President of Arco Latino Local and regional co-operation in the Mediterranean. Ms Socias was elected the President of Arco Latino at the end of February 2009.

Marie-Louise Rönmark, UBC Vice-President, Umeå, said that it was very important to have a gender balance among keynote speakers. She also stressed, that the economic situation in the whole world changed a lot since the previous UBC Executive Board meeting in Växjö on 28 October 2008. She stressed it should be reflected in the conference programme. She suggested to invite a keynote speaker to talk about the economic and environmental imbalance. In her opinion, it is necessary to put economy in a new way, and discuss it around the Baltic Sea Region. UBC is a strong network with a long tradition. She reminded the big influence of Hansa network in XIV-XV century upon the economy of the Baltic Sea Region.

Mikko Jokinen, Chairman of the Commission on Environment, supported the idea of including the economy problem into the programme of the Conference. The EU Baltic Sea Strategy is a very important issue, but according to the prognosis, this autumn the world will face even heavier economic crisis. That will be a very important issue for the member cities. Mr Jokinen suggested to formulate a theme of the conference: "Baltic chances in a new economic era". Having such theme, UBC should invite keynote speakers dealing with economy.

Paweł Żaboklicki reminded, that at the previous UBC Executive Board meeting, the theme of the conference "The role of the cities in implementing the new Baltic Sea Strategy" was accepted, and UBC mentioned it in the invitation letters to the keynote speakers. UBC will have to inform the speakers about the alteration in the main theme.

Per Bødker Andersen responded that it was not necessary to change anything, because the EU Strategy is also a question of adopting to new conditions, e.g. the changed economical situation for all cities. It is a question of good governance with the limited budgets. It is also a possibility, not a threat, for all cities and countries to make a good use of economical crisis in the new way of thinking. Such approach is also a part of the Baltic Sea Strategy. UBC, as other BSR organisations responded with their opinions. However, the European Commission takes into account the change of the conditions in the BSR. Mr Andersen stressed, that at the General Conference some of the keynote speakers are courtesy speakers, and some are more connected to the EU Strategy item. It would be useful to widen the area of discussion with economic issues.

Jørgen Kristiansen, Councillor, Kristiansand, reminded, that it was too late to make the bigger changes, as the invitations to the conference should be printed soon.

Per Bødker Andersen added, that it happens quite often, that the speakers mentioned in the printed invitations to different conferences are finally replaced by some others at the conference.

Björn Grönholm, Head of the Secretariat of the Commission on Environment expressed opinion that we needed to promote the General Conference. The countries and cities will be on the cross-road for the next few years. Regardless the time pressure with invitations, we should reflect on the keynote speakers, but also with the workshops. They should be more devoted to the economic crisis and to ideas how to strengthen the BSR and the UBC in the coming years.

Marie Louise Rönnmark proposed to invite Margot Wallstrom, the EU Commissioner for the Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, Vice-President of the European Commission. Per Bødker Andersen accepted the proposal.

Mikko Jokinen suggested to invite the Norwegian minister of finance or responsible for economy, who is a woman. Mr Jokinen expressed opinion the keynote speeches should have titles and the time limit for each speech should be 20-30 minutes. He also stressed, that we should have the “catchy” themes of the workshops. Mr Jokinen advised to have 2 big workshops instead of 4, as this would allow people to discuss more that the topic of the workshop, and to share more information with a bigger group of people. He said that economy could be the cross-cutting issue in the implementation of Baltic Sea Strategy.

Per Bødker Andersen underlined, that it was too late to make a totally new programme. However, the world has changed during the last half a year. Mr Andersen expressed opinion, that each of the keynote speakers would comment on what has been, is and will be happening in the future. Mr Andersen disagreed on reducing the number of workshops. This would make two conferences in a General Conference. Having 4 workshops gives possibility of more direct exchange of views and more internal discussion among member cities. Mr Andersen stressed, that there were three groups of keynote speakers at the conference. The first one is an official group combining the Crown Princess, Mayor of Kristiansand and President of UBC. The second one consists of courtesy speakers from other organisations. They could comment on the content of the General Conference. The third group are the speakers challenging for discussions in the workshops. This group would comment the actual problems. Mr Andersen also underlined, that in time of crisis, networking is not only a necessity, but also possibility.

Marie-Louise Rönnmark suggested that because there was no much time left, a group of 3 persons: Paweł Żaboklicki, Jorgen Kristiansen and Jan Björinge should discuss those questions during the break. The Board accepted her proposal.

Paweł Żaboklicki asked Erik Engenes, Inspirasjon Sørlandet, to distribute the printed draft invitation brochure among the participants of the Board meeting. Mr Engenes stressed, that this copy was only a preliminary one.

After the break, Per Bødker Andersen informed, that the group proposed adjusted theme of the General Conference: "Baltic cities for economic and climate solutions - a developed Baltic Sea Strategy".

Jørgen Kristiansen, on behalf of the group, informed that a letter of invitation would be sent to Mrs Margot Wallstrom. In case she is not able to participate in the General Conference, Jan Björinge would invite a representative of “Natural step” initiative to deliver a speech on

economic and environmental imbalance. Mr Kristiansen expressed concern that because of the economic crisis, some UBC members may not send their delegates to the conference. Therefore, to encourage them, on the invitation front we could place a sentence "Now it is more important than ever to meet and help each other to fight the emerging economic crisis and at the same time to meet the challenge of the climate change".

The Board accepted the proposals of the group.

5.2 Concepts of the conference workshops.

W.1 To improve the environmental state of the Baltic Sea Region

Moderator: Commission on Environment (Turku) and Commission on Energy (Oskarshamn)

Björn Grönholm, stressed that this workshop was specific, because it was focusing on the Baltic Sea, which is common for all of us. However, the sea brings a lot of problems, only some of them are related to cities, and many are not. The question is how UBC cities can address the state of the Baltic Sea, when many problems concern transportation, culture, etc. What can cities do to promote the state of the Baltic Sea. This is the starting point for this workshop. To find good solutions for improving the state of the Baltic Sea, the researchers have to be invited, but also city representatives. Organisers plan to have some presentations, but also an interacting part with the audience, perhaps also a door pool questionnaire. Mikko Jokinen added that depending on the time frame, they plan to include a panel discussion with an interaction with the audience.

President Andersen asked, if the Commission on Environment would prepare a survey on what the responsibilities of the authorities on the local, regional and state level in all Baltic Sea countries are concerning the fight against the pollution and cleaning the sea. At present there is a discussion in Denmark about the ship wrecks around Bornholm, on which authorities are responsible for removing them.

Björn Grönholm responded, that the survey would not be prepared by the commission, because many information of this kind is already collected. Commission cooperated a lot with Helcom lately, and these data information are already available. The next step is to see, how to use these data and to identify, what the cities should do in order to take next steps in improving the state of the sea. He added that the state of the Baltic Sea is very much connected to the attractiveness of the whole region, so the organisers of this workshop are also interested in the workshop III. There is also a question of economy, because the state of the Baltic Sea causes a lot of expenses. Mr Grönholm also mentioned, that taking into consideration a climate change in 20-30 years, the Baltic Sea Region could be the new Mediterranean Region, but a state of the sea might be an obstacle for it.

W.2 To make the Baltic Sea Region a more prosperous place by supporting balanced economic development

Moderator: Commission on Information Society (Tampere/St.Petersburg) in cooperation with Commission on Business Cooperation (Kaunas, Kiel, Kolding)

Esa Kokkonen, Coordinator, informed that it would be a joint effort of the Commissions on Business Cooperation and Information Society to prepare this workshop. There are many topics concerning prosperity, where the cities play important role. As emphasized in the UBC position paper, it will be important to show linkages between different priorities of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region - not to see them as isolated areas. Environmental cooperation means also environmental business opportunities. It could be discussed how to make four workshops more coherent and show that different sectors are interconnected. Each workshop should also concentrate on those parts of the Strategy for the BSR, which are specially interesting for cities. The possible theme for discussions at the workshop II is municipal services and different ways of doing them. The Strategy also says about the need for innovation and what will be the role of the cities in it. Another theme is promotion of the entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education e.g. in schools. In many cities there are good practises on how to promote entrepreneurship on different levels of education. Another topic is labour migration and e-services. There are around ten big themes, and 3-4 should be chosen out of them to be discussed and presented as good practices in the workshop. A panel discussion is also planned. Mr Kokkonen proposed to discuss with the workshop leaders how to use the 2 hours of the workshop in order not to have only mini seminars. At the workshops it should be emphasized, that different sectors and priorities are not isolated. Environmental cooperation means also business opportunities; there are connections between attractiveness and environment as already mentioned.

Mr Kokkonen stressed, that the Commission on Business Cooperation was to be supported by the cities of Kolding and Kiel, which hopefully would actively participate in preparations.

W.3 To make the Baltic Sea Region more accessible and attractive

Moderator: Commission on Tourism (Koszalin). Support: Commission on Transport (Gdynia), Commission on Urban Planning (Helsinki), Commission on Youth Issues (Kalmar), Commission on Culture (Vaasa), Commission on Sport (Gdynia).

Mr Ryszard Zdrojewski, Chairman, after discussions with Tarja Hautamaeki, Chairperson of the Commission on Culture and Sirpa Kallio, Chairperson of the Commission on Urban Planning, presented the concept of the workshop. He stressed that 6 commissions joined forces for this workshop. They worked out a concept of the workshop and prepared an action plan.

Mr Zdrojewski said the presentations should not be too long in order to have the time for discussions. Each commission will present its point of view by one representing speaker. It is up to the commission to decide whether it shall be a city or a commission itself presenting the statement. Each presentation will last up to 15 minutes. The last 30 min of the workshop will be devoted to the discussion and formulating the final conclusions. Before the General Conference each commission will have its own meeting during which the key questions of the BSR Strategy will be discussed.

The theme "To make the Baltic Sea Region more accessible and attractive" brings questions: how to do it, by what means, how to measure it, how to finance it. The workshop will try to find answers to these questions.

The organisers of the workshop - 6 commissions - will have a preparatory meeting in August, to discuss the presentations and prepare the draft of final conclusions. The conclusions will be adjusted during the workshop.

Mr Zdrojewski put forward a question whether we know before, how many participants have chosen each workshop. Erik Engenes answered that the actual number of participants registered to respective workshops would be available on the conference website.

Mr Zdrojewski also asked whether workshops conclusions were going to be published after the conference. Per Bødker Andersen said the conclusions would be available at the UBC website. Conclusions of the workshops will be also published in post-conference report.

W.4 To make the Baltic Sea Region a safer and more secure place

Moderator - Commission on Health and Social Affairs (Kristiansand). Support: Commission on Gender Equality (Umeå), Commission on Education (Kärdla/Norrtälje).

Hilde Engenes, Coordinator, informed that the Commission on Health and Social Affairs was preparing the workshop in close cooperation with the Commissions on Education and Gender Equality. The Commission also cooperates with the Commission on Youth Issues as regards the UBC Youth Conference to be held in Kristiansand parallel to the General Conference.

The focus of the workshop will be put on the safe and secure societies. There appears a question, how to include more people and prevent groups at risk from dropping out. It will be very important to get the possible answers. The organisers are discussing how to make sure that the participants will take home some good ideas from the workshop.

At the early stage of preparations, the major threats have been defined: drug and alcohol abuse, trafficking and prostitution, poverty and social exclusion. All UBC cities are affected by the economic crisis and this will also have an impact on the mentioned major threats. This fact will be underlined at the workshop. All those topics will be seen through the gender perspective. Organisers want to challenge the speakers to point it out. It will be also underlined, that all those problems can be dealt with on many levels, across cities, borders and generations.

Børge R. Nilsen, Communication Adviser, Kristiansand, informed about the structure of the workshop. Each speaker will have approximately 10 minutes for presentation. After each speech the key questions will be raised, followed by the 5-10 minutes of the group discussion. Those discussions will be led by the youth from the Youth Conference. That's the way of involving the representatives of young people to those difficult but important questions. The outcomes of discussions will be presented by moderators.

Workshop speakers confirmed so far:

- How to think global and act local, promoting a drug-free society, Mr Jorgen Sviden, Director of ECAD (European Cities against Drugs).
- A case study of human trafficking in Kristiansand, presented by the local Police Department. Borge R. Nilsen added, that they would try to look at this great problem through one concrete case.

- The economic crisis: A threat against health, social welfare and inclusive societies. How to secure better opportunities for group at risk? Vladimir Sokman, Deputy Mayor of Tartu.
- How to combat homelessness and develop support system for different groups of homeless people, Jarosław Józefczyk, Deputy Director of Municipal Welfare Centre in Gdynia.
- A survey on the situation of gender equality in the UBC area, Helene Brewer, Commission on Gender Equality.

Per Bødker Andersen underlined that he got inspired by the idea of having the representatives of Youth Conference involved in this workshop. He said that the other leaders of the workshops could also include young people as panellists or moderators of discussions. It would be a good way to show the UBC interest in the Youth Conference.

5.3 Technical information from the organisers.

Erik Engenes made a short presentation about the City of Kristiansand. Then he introduced the conference venue and the surroundings with the conference hotels. He also briefly presented the invitation brochure and the conference website under construction with the on-line registration form. Mr Engenes asked the UBC commissions to report him any need for equipment for the workshops and commissions' meetings. He also informed that a Friday lunch should be held together with the participants of the UBC Youth Conference held in parallel with UBC General Conference.

The Board discussed possible cultural program during General Conference. One option could be to invite one singer or band from each Baltic Sea country and make a small concert on the second day of the conference after the General Assembly. Cities could decide what kind of music to present. Such concert could show the diversity of the Baltic Sea area. UBC could support costs of travel and accommodation eg. for 1 artist from each BSR country. There were also plans about having a professional UBC song contest but in the time of the world wide economic crisis such idea must be postponed. The Board authorised the Secretariat and Kristiansand to discuss possibilities of organising such concert at low costs.

Karin Wohlgemuth, Rostock, reminded that several years ago an "anthem" for UBC had been composed by a Russian composer Aleksandra Pakhmutova. Lately the score of the anthem was found and the people from Rostock made a new arrangement of the anthem. Participants of the Executive Board meeting listened to the arrangement prepared by Rostock. Ms Wohlgemuth informed, that before adapting the anthem she had to contact the composer Aleksandra Pakhmutova to get her permission to work with it. The city of Kaliningrad helped to find the phone number to Mrs Pakhmutova and her husband, Nikolai Dobronravov, a poet who wrote the words of the anthem. This couple of artists is very famous in Russia. Their fame come from 1960's when they composed a few hundred songs. Mrs Wohlgemuth had a phone conversation with Mrs Pakhmutova and Mr Dobronravov. They gave permission to do the necessary arrangements and asked for keeping them informed about the works. Mrs Wohlgemuth suggested to send them a letter with thanks for their kind permission.

Mrs Wohlgemuth contacted professor Birger Petersen from Rostock University of Music and Theatre. Mr Petersen together with his student, studying organs and composing, prepared a new arrangement with fanfares and a choir for three voices. Professor Petersen also delivered composition for seven instruments. Mrs Wohlgemuth proposed to open the General Conference with fanfares and sing the anthem together at the end of the General Assembly. Concerning the words of the anthem, Mrs Wohlgemuth informed that the city of Kolding delivered her the translation of the text from Russian to English. Now the translation should be changed into poetry. She asked the Executive Board members for help with it.

Karin Wohlgemuth also proposed to invite Ms Pakhmutova and her husband to take part in the meeting. Per Bødker Andersen agreed with this proposal saying, that this would show UBC respect to the work of the musicians.

Mrs Wohlgemuth suggested to produce a CD with the anthem, including the cover and words and hand it to the participants of the UBC General Conference in Kristiansand as a gift. Per Bødker Andersen asked Ms Wohlgemuth, Secretariat and Kristiansand to check possibilities for CD production.

Mikko Jokinen expressed an opinion that updated versions of UBC documents such as Strategy, Social Charter and Sustainable Development Action Plan should be added to the programme of the General Assembly. President Andersen agreed with this proposal.

At the previous Board meeting in Växjö, Mikko Lohikoski, said that the UBC should develop its internal strategy hand in hand with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. He recommended that the proposals of changes in the UBC Strategy should be discussed at the next Board meetings and adopted during the General Conference in Kristiansand. The Board authorised Mr Lohikoski to present draft of revised Strategy at the next Board meeting in Miedzyzdroje.

6. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, latest developments.

Professor Esko Antola, Director of the Centrum Balticum, informed about latest developments concerning the Baltic Sea Strategy formulation process. Lately he paid a visit to Brussels and met EC officials responsible for drafting the Strategy. Mr Antola informed that the Action Plan was already prepared. The draft of the Strategy should have been ready by the end of March. After the draft Strategy paper is ready, it will be passed to the Directorates-General. The draft will be discussed there. After that, in early May, the document will be passed to the cabinets of the Commissioners. The cabinets will prepare a final version, which is going to be adopted on 19th June.

Professor Antola stressed it was the last possible date, when the Commission can adopt documents. A week before there will be elections to the European Parliament. The old Commission will have no mandate after elections to the EU Parliament.

Professor Antola reminded that at the previous Executive Board meeting in Växjö he was worried that the Strategy was going to be a Christmas tree, on which everybody hangs his best hopes and unfortunately it seems to be so. He said that the Action Plan included 51 proposals for actions and 75 proposals for flagships - there was something for everyone.

Mr Antola underlined that in the Action Plan there was no focus on priorities. The Action Plan doesn't need to be commented now, as no changes to the content will be accepted. The Action Plan will be passed to the DGs in the present form. It's possible to influence on the AP only through connections in DGs and Commissioners' cabinets. Prof Antola expressed an opinion that the Commission works more and more in cooperation with governments.

From the point of view of the cities and UBC, the key problem in the Strategy which was also stated in the UBC statement, is governance. UBC issued its own statement on the new EU Baltic Sea Strategy which was sent to the European Commission on 25 November 2009, the paper is attached to the minutes. In the opinion of prof Antola governance problem is the weakest link of the Action Plan. The proposal is, that the General Affairs and External Relations Council of Ministers should take the responsibility for providing policy guidance for the Strategy. To be effective, the Council needs support in the formal, executive and monitoring capacity. This is a task of the EU Commission. Decision making, planning, and other things of this kind will be put in the hands of the Commission. This means that institutions like UBC will not have a role in decision making, not even in drafting policies. Our role will be implementation on the ground.

In the opinion of professor Antola UBC needs to address this problem in the coming months and during the Swedish presidency which starts on 1 July 2009. The Swedish government has a duty to give this process into the hands of governments at the European Council meeting in December 2009. The Swedish government is the key player to put this into practice. Question of implementation as the only role for cities, regions and actors like UBC is alarming, in the opinion of Mr Antola.

Per Bødker Andersen reminded that UBC gave a lot of good advices to the Strategy and the Action Plan, as well as many other organisations. He said that somebody had to decide, what would be placed in the document, and we have to implement.

Esko Antola said that taking into consideration the economic situation in the Baltic Sea Region, a kind of focusing was needed. It is not possible to get through all 75 flagships under these conditions. Prioritisation should be done in the region. The eight governments from the EU member countries from the BSR were very active - they had bilateral talks with the Commission. The governments pushed all the power of initiative to the Commission and took responsibility only for general guidelines.

President Andersen stressed, that being in close contact with the Committee of the Regions and other organisations is important, as this is our possibility to move in the right direction.

Professor Antola reminded that the Committee of the Regions had taken governance as the key issue.

President Andersen said that the former President of COR, Michel Delebarre, Mayor of Dunkerque, made a report on governance a few years ago. Now the present President Luc Van den Brande is drafting a new opinion. Mr Andersen said that a couple of years ago he was a rapporteur on transparency and governance. It has been stated, also by the EU Parliament, that the local authorities are not to be considered as NGOs, they are part of the governance system of EU. This concerns people elected in local authorities and regions.

Esko Antola said that as the competences in regions differ in each country in BSR, and some countries don't have the regions, the cities are the only institutions that have power of governance.

President Andersen mentioned that there were discussions in COR to become a Committee of the Regions and Municipalities. He agreed that some regions have the legislative power, and some don't.

Mr Andersen also informed that the UBC and other Baltic Sea organizations, prepared the joint statement on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. It was passed to the EU Commission.

7. Declaration of common interest with CoR (11 Dec 2008)

President Per Bødker Andersen informed that on 11 December 2008, UBC, BSSSC, and B7 signed a Declaration of common interest with Committee of the Regions 2008-2011.

As stated in the declaration, efforts to further develop the cooperation will be made in particular in the following fields. Involvement of expertise in selected areas of interest of the Committee of the Regions. Dialogue between the European Commission and the Associations of Regional and Local Authorities. Participation in conferences and other activities organised respectively. Joint activities in the field of communication and the mutual publicity of key events. Joint activities in relation to the CoR's responsibility for safeguarding local and regional interest and monitoring the application of Protocol on the principle of subsidiary. Joint efforts to strengthen regional participation in the Northern Dimension. The development and realization of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: a common objective. The Declaration is attached to the minutes.

8. UBC Sustainable Development Action Plan 2010–2015.

Björn Grönholm informed that the Commission on Environment prepared the UBC Sustainable Development Action Plan 2010–2015. The current UBC Agenda 21 Action Program 2004-2009 is running out this year. The Action Plan has to be adjusted to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and to the current situation in the countries and cities.

Mr Grönholm reminded 5 thematic areas of the previous Action Program: good governance and sustainable urban management, sustainable use of energy and resources, good living environment and nature protection, sustainable economy and transport, social integration and health. All these topics are relevant also today. Mr Grönholm stressed that UBC is one of the forerunner city networks, that have been working on those topics since 2003-2004.

Working methods were: projects, networking, exchange of information, assisting member cities with contacts, workshops, conferences etc. There was also a website and two surveys, following the steps and the progress of the member cities. Not only the EnvCom was active in it but also other commissions.

Some of the results of the UBC Agenda 21 Action Program 2004-2009: 23 projects finalized with 12,72 m € budget / 16,2 m € total, including non EU members, 4 ongoing projects 5,85

m €, 5 applications 11,65 m €. More than 40 UBC member cities were involved. It's less than a half of all UBC member cities, but it is up to each city to be involved in this activity.

There were 2 surveys carried out in 2004 and 2006. The third one is planned in 2009. The surveys are very valuable because they give a lot of information from different sectors and they let follow the trends in the BSR. The European Commission is interested to find out the results of the surveys. UBC is one of the few city networks with this kind of surveys.

UBC has also been actively participating in the EU policy making and commenting on more than 20 documents. UBC commissions are also trying to involve Russian cities in activities which is important for the whole BSR.

In the next Action Plan we are moving from Agenda 21 period to more discussions about sustainability. We have to adjust to the new situation after 5-6 years. The Commission was preparing for the new Action Programme during two last meetings: in Tampere in February 2008 and in Tallinn in October 2008. The next meeting will be in March in St. Petersburg, around 80 participants registered for that meeting. Commissions on Environment, Energy, Information Society, Youth Issues, Health and Social affairs, Education, Transportation participated in the discussions on the Action Plan.

Challenges and possible focus areas for new Action Plan 2010–2015 are: geographic and economic concentration; aging population and migration; energy availability and consumption; traffic, transport and accessibility problems; climate change; state of the Baltic Sea. The Commission intends to focus on management related issues, management systems, leadership issues and so on. Everything concerning resources, not only money, but also knowledge and skills. The new Action Plan could be adopted at the General Conference in Kristiansand.

Marie Louise Rönmark reminded that Russia hadn't signed the financial agreement with European Union as regards European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. She asked what kind of problem for UBC it could cause and if UBC could react somehow. The agreement between EU and Russia should have been signed at the end of last year.

Mr Grönholm said, that in practice this means that Russian partners had been turned out from many BSR programmes. It will influence a lot cooperation in the BSR.

President Andersen said that this was a delicate problem. It should be the Russian cities to point out on behalf of themselves and UBC, that Russia should sign the agreement. The decision in the UBC Executive Board would not be appropriate in this process.

Björn Grönholm said that perhaps making some kind of statement could be good, because it's local authorities suffering at present in Russia. A lot of responsibilities had been delegated down to the local and regional level, and a lot of funding had been cut out, so the whole integration part will suffer.

Per Bødker Andersen said that UBC could support the opinion stated by the Russian members of UBC. This would be a balanced way of presenting UBC opinion.

Mikko Jokinen reminded the Board, that the Commission on Environment had sent a request to the Board to get funding for the survey in amount of 10.500 EUR.

President Andersen responded, that it was a question of the amount of money. He agreed that the survey was going to be a very good instrument and financing it would be a good idea.

Björn Grönholm explained, that the earlier surveys were funded by the Finnish Ministry of Environment, but this time the request for financing was rejected. The survey is more or less ready but there are no resources for carrying it out. The Board decided to grant the survey with 10.500 EUR.

9. Point 4.7 of the internal regulations.

The Commission on Urban Planning raised the question, whether the paragraph 4.7 (third sentence) of the UBC Internal Regulation should be still valid. In the opinion of the chair of the commission the support mentioned below is not necessary any more.

“4.7 Resources should be budgeted only for activities of the Commissions. The following activities should be given priority for use of resources: projects, meetings, seminars, events, publications. *As far as possible the resources should be used to assist the representatives of member cities from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia to take part in the activities mentioned.*”

At the meeting in Växjö the Board authorised the Secretariat to send out the query to the member cities to collect opinions on this issue. The query was sent out in February, several cities responded. The table with cities' responses is attached to the minutes.

Paweł Żaboklicki informed the Board, that more cities are in favour of cancelling this phrase than the ones which want to keep it. However, not too many cities responded to the query. Lithuanian cities said that especially now, at the time of economic crisis, it will be difficult for smaller cities to fund participation in all meetings of the commissions. Bigger cities could perhaps manage to find resources. Estonian cities were most in favour of cancelling this paragraph stating, that they would manage by themselves with these kind of expenses.

Jørgen Kristiansen said that city of Kristiansand advised to keep this phrase. He stressed it should be up to the countries, which can be affected by the change to tell what they want.

Karin Wohlgemuth proposed to modify the sentence in order to make it weaker. There should be still the possibility to use the resources, but that should not be a must. Commissions should have the possibility to help but not the duty.

Maciej Lisicki was of the opinion, that rather weak response from the cities means that cities were not very interested in that issue. Mr Lisicki would support the proposal to weaken the sentence, but it would be very risky to cancel this sentence in the actual economic situation. Especially having in mind, that the membership fees for eastern cities are rising by 5% a year since few years and fees for western cities remain unchanged.

Per Bødker Andersen reminded that UBC decided to gradually raise the fee, because the network existed for so long, that it was time to equal the conditions. Mr Andersen asked if the

decision about deleting or leaving the sentence should be made at this Executive Board meeting or left for the General Conference. A broader representation of cities will be at the General Conference, the vote will be more qualified.

Mikko Jokinen responded that it could be a good idea to vote this question at the General Conference. He suggested to leave the sentence without changes and only change the way of interpreting it. He said that UBC should organise events more often in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania instead of Sweden, Finland and Denmark. It would make it easier for participants from that countries to travel and participate. In Mr Jokinen's opinion it is not stated in the sentence, that the Commissions should compensate participant's travels.

Sirpa Kallio, Chairperson of the Commission on Urban Planning said that the reason for raising this question is the equality. UBC supports countries from one part of the Baltic Sea Region. The global economic crisis affects all cities in our region. She said she was informed several times by smaller cities of Finland and Sweden that they can't attend the seminars of the Commission on Urban Planning, because their cities have cut down the travelling budgets. Mrs Kallio proposed to add also Scandinavian countries on the list of the supported countries or to leave up to the commissions the decision about the way of using the money.

Per Bødker Andersen estimated this proposal as a tricky one. Accepting it would mean to mention all UBC countries, which is also possible. He advised to take into consideration the proposal to weaken the sentence so that the commissions could distribute the money in a way which would secure the broad representation of all member cities. He said the Presidium would propose the new wording.

Marie Louise Rönmark said that Umeå supports to keep the paragraph like Kristiansand. She said that if UBC makes no decision to give preference to any country, that can bring problems for UBC in the future. She stressed politicians should promote UBC in the cities and make sure that civil servants are involved in different commissions. She advised to hand over the decision to the General Conference.

Per Bødker Andersen suggested a draft text for the Internal Regulations: "Resources should be used to secure a broad representation of municipalities in the work of the commissions". He proposed to submit the alteration to the General Conference.

Paweł Żaboklicki reminded that the Executive Board decides about the Internal Regulations, not the General Conference.

Per Bødker Andersen answered that this discussion was very crucial for UBC. It's more democratic to have this discussion at the General Conference.

The Executive Board accepted the proposal.

10. UBC budget for 2009.

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki presented the budget proposal for 2009. He reminded that the countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia have a discount in membership fee which is currently 40%. According to the recommendation of the Executive Board, the discount is shrinking 5% a year. Having in mind the present global economic situation, the

above recommendation may be suspended for the next two years. This will be discussed at the next Executive Board meeting.

The major expenditure goes to the commissions. Mr Żaboklicki informed that the proposal from the President was to assign for each commission 10.000 EUR in 2009, which is 1.000 EUR more than in 2008. He added that some commissions have not used all the money last year and they have asked for the possibility to use them this year. The Commission on Environment had asked for additional 10.500 EUR for the sustainability survey.

It is also planned to spend 70.000 EUR for the meetings: General Conference, Executive Board meetings etc. The policy during the General Conferences has been that one participant from each Eastern member city receives support for flight and accommodation. This policy could be maintained, otherwise small cities will have a problems to participate in the General Conference in Kristiansand. Other main planned expenditure: services and maintenance 45.000, publications 15.000, communication 15.000, antenna in Brussels 12.000 for 2009 + 15.000 for 2008.

Mikko Jokinen said the UBC has an agreement with Stockholm Region concerning the Brussels antenna. Now the city of Stockholm is not a UBC member. Therefore Mr Jokinen suggested to discuss if UBC should continue with the Stockholm Region, or should find an alternative arrangement.

Per Bødker Andersen reminded that the agreement was signed with the Region of Stockholm, and there are UBC members from this region eg. Botkyrka. Mr Andersen said that the antenna could be held by another office, because many other UBC cities and also regions have their representation offices in Brussels. The antenna could also be held each year in different office.

Jan Björinge, Umeå, said that the Stockholm Region office serves not only the Region of Stockholm, but also other organisations. He said there was probably no more offices in Brussels with such a big capacity.

Per Bødker Andersen stressed that if UBC uses the office, then our organisation gets value for money. But if we don't use it, it's a loss. UBC member cities should remember that they have a possibility to use Brussels antenna.

Mikko Jokinen said that the agency that represents UBC in Brussels, should have an interest to promote UBC cities.

Per Bødker Andersen suggested to underline in the minutes, that the UBC member cities are more than welcome to use UBC antenna in Brussels, regardless if they are, or not, members of the European Union.

President Andersen said that at the next meeting the Executive Board would discuss the question of the membership fee 2010-2011 and the rebate for the Eastern cities.

The Executive Board adopted the budget for 2009. The budget is attached to the minutes.

11. New UBC website.

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki informed that the UBC secretariat, together with the City of Gdansk, in the recent months had been working on the new website for UBC. The new website will be finished in a couple of weeks and then it will be officially launched. The new website is modern and based on the CMS technology which is more interactive and easier to use. Mr Żaboklicki presented part of the website on-line to the Board members. The page includes links to all member cities, events calendar, commissions, statements, news, documents, publications, funding, gallery etc. Mr Żaboklicki encouraged participants of the meeting to visit the new homepage (www.test3.gdansk.gda.pl) and send comments and good ideas to the secretariat, as the website is still under construction and the amendments are possible.

12. Reports from latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.

President Andersen informed that below UBC representatives represented UBC at the following international conferences:

- Roundtable: How to make the Baltic Sea Region Environmentally Sustainable Place, Gdańsk, 13 November 2008 (Mikko Jokinen, Chairman of the UBC Commission on Environment, Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General)
- The UN Global Compact Cities Programme (UN GCCP) Conference “Sustainable Development for Urban Areas”, 17-19 November 2009, Wrocław (Ivo Eesmaa, City of Kardla)
- B7 Annual Conference: "Future of Islands in the Baltic Sea Region", Kuressaare, 3 December 2008, (Urve Tiidus, UBC Vice-President, City of Kuressaare)
- Annual General Meeting of EUROCITIES, the Hague, 26-29 November 2008 (Mikko Lohikoski, City of Turku)
- Summit of the Baltic Development Forum, Copenhagen – Malmö, 30 November – 2 December 2008 (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)
- 77th Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions, 26-27 November 2008 (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)
- 2nd Stakeholder Conference on the Baltic Sea Strategy in Rostock-Warnemünde, Germany, 5-6 February 2009 (Mrs Urve Tiidus, UBC Vice-President, Mayor of Kuressaare)
- 78th Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, 12-13 February 2009, Brussels (Per Bødker Andersen, UBC President)
- European Summit of Regions and Cities, Prague, 5-6 March 2009 (Per Bødker Andersen, UBC President)

The Board took note of the information. Reports from the conferences are attached to the minutes.

13. Publication “UBC Calendar of Events 2009”.

Paweł Żaboklicki introduced the latest publication “UBC Calendar of Events 2009”. The calendar includes various events like trade fairs, sport competitions, exhibitions, concerts, festivals and many other in most of UBC member cities. The secretariat received very positive feedback from the cities about this publication. They stressed the calendar is helpful to plan the work, e.g. participating in the trade fairs, and also visits in cities around the Baltic Sea. The publication had cost 4.093,68 EUR and was printed in 6.000 copies.

Per Bødker Andersen said that in the city of Kolding they put the exemplars in the library, so that the citizens could see that Kolding is a part of the UBC network.

14. Any other business.

Paweł Żaboklicki informed that the city of Szczecin together with Gdynia Maritime University, Academia Europa Nostra and Stegna Municipality requested UBC to take the patronage over the international scientific conference “The borders, passenger traffic and integration in the Baltic Europe” to be held in Stegna in May 2009. The Board accepted the request.

Karin Wohlgemuth reminded that in 2008 UBC decided to take patronage over the pupils’ conference Baltic Model United Nations (Balmun). Pupils tried to learn politics by acting like the United Nations. They concentrated on the Baltic Sea Region. The organisers asked UBC to support Balmun project also in 2009, appreciating the role of UBC as main actor in the Baltic Sea Region. The Board decided to give support to BALMUN 2009.

Per Bødker Andersen informed that the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation is now being revitalised by the cities of Kiel and Kolding, together with the secretariat in Kaunas. President wished them a fruitful cooperation.

15. Next meeting of the Executive Board, Międzyzdroje, Poland, 29 May 2009.

President Andersen presented the invitation from the City of Międzyzdroje to host the 55th Meeting of the Executive Board on 29th May 2009. He said that on 2-4 June 2009 in Copenhagen there would be an international conference “Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit”. National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark, including city of Kolding as a member of this association, are the host of the Summit. Municipality of Kolding will be hosting a number of conference participants who will come from 160 countries all around the world. President Andersen invited Executive Board members to the summit. He stressed that it would be the last possibility to show the significance and important role of local governments to United Nations Climate Change Conference 2009 when it comes to countering the serious consequences of climate change. In the final document it shall be stated, that the implementation of the decisions will be made on the local level, also in municipalities.

President Andersen said that in connection with the above the date of the next Executive Board meeting in Międzyzdroje would be changed.

16. Closing of the Meeting.

President Per Bødker Andersen expressed his thanks to all participants for the fruitful meeting and to the City of Jyväskylä for its warm hospitality and closed the 54th Meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Mr Per Bødker Andersen

Chairman

Mr Paweł Żaboklicki

Secretary

Ms Marketta Mäkinen

Adjuster

Mr Maciej Lisicki

Adjuster