

**MINUTES FROM THE 39TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE
BOARD OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES
Vaasa, Finland, 6 March 2004**

The 39th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on the 6th of March 2004 in the City of Vaasa, Finland, upon the invitation of Mr Markku Lumio, Mayor of Vaasa.

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 greeted all participants and wished them a successful meeting. Participants introduced themselves, as it was the first meeting of the Board elected at the General Conference in Klaipeda. The meeting adopted the agenda attached as an annex to this report.

Mr Markku Lumio, Mayor of Vaasa, welcomed all delegates and wished them fruitful discussions and a pleasant stay in Vaasa. Mr Lumio presented a short video film introducing the beautiful and dynamic city of Vaasa.

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

Ms Tarja Sjoberg from Vaasa and Mr Bjarne Ugland from Kristiansand, were elected to check the minutes.

3. Venue of General Conference in 2007 – proposal from Parnu.

President Andersen informed that the Mayor of Parnu, Mr Vaino Hallikmagi, sent a letter applying to host the UBC General Conference in Parnu in 2007. Mr Andersen added that Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Norway has not yet hosted the UBC General Conference.

The Board endorsed the application from Parnu, but reminded that the decision about the venue can be taken only by the General Conference. The next GC will be held in Turku, Finland, in October 2005.

4. Election of Secretary General for the next 4-year period.

President Andersen reminded that according to the UBC Statute, the candidate for UBC Secretary General shall be nominated jointly by the Mayor of city hosting the secretariat and the President of UBC. The Mayor of Gdansk and the President of UBC proposed Mr Pawel Zaboklicki to be re-elected as Secretary General for the next four year period.

Decision:

The Board re-elected Mr Pawel Zaboklicki as the Secretary General for the next four year period.

5. New possibilities for cross-border cooperation after EU enlargement.

5.1 Information from Council of the Baltic Sea States.

Mr Tiit Naber, chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials of CBSS, informed that just the day before, the CSO at its meeting in Tartu/Pskov (4-5 March), was considering the issue of development of cross-border cooperation (CBC) in the BSR.

In June 2003 in Pori the Ministers asked the CSO to examine possibility of organising, in cooperation with other actors, seminars/workshops to promote CBC. A feasibility study on that subject, commissioned by Sweden, was carried out by NORDREGIO last year. The study gave a clear picture of opportunities and possible challenges in the region in regard to CBC after EU enlargement.

The CSO at its meeting the day before, has approved a draft joint CBSS – Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) strategy in regard of the “pilot project” on CBC between two organizations. Such a joint project is aimed at a possibility of setting commonly a program to enhance CBC at the “external” EU borders in the region. The document would be considered in May at the high-level bilateral CBSS-NCM meeting in Reykjavik.

The goal of the joint initiative is to encourage local actors, including authorities, private sector, NGO to establishing a constructive dialogue on both sides of the “external” border. The actions should also aim at capacity-building, and the preparation of the regions to the aftermath of the EU enlargement. The program would be valid for 2-3 year time-span, with a possibility of prolongation.

Mr Naber confirmed that other organizations of the region are welcome to join CBSS-NCM efforts in promoting CBC. A long and a reach experience of UBC in the field of CBC could contribute significantly to this process, he said. Mr Naber added that especially, the expertise of UBC would be an asset when it comes to approaching Commission and INTERREG and Interact Secretariats for a support to the different projects in the region.

Mr Anders Engstrom, Kalmar, said that of course the new CBSS proposal, the EC neighbourhood initiative and the Norwegian contribution are very welcome. However he expressed concern that after the EU enlargement the cross-border cooperation between Finland, Denmark, Sweden and new EU members may decrease due to the lack of funding. He reminded that since 1996 UBC was strongly promoting the idea to give the maritime borders in the BSR the same status as the land borders, which would allow CBC projects funding for example through Interreg III A.

Mr Engstrom informed, that according to his knowledge, the European Commission is finally considering to establish an Interreg area across the Baltic Sea, provided that the countries concerned would be interested to assign for this purpose a certain amount of money from the Interreg. A strong lobbying is needed to assure that the EC and the governments of Baltic Sea countries will make that decision, crucial for cooperation across the sea.

5.2 Norwegian contribution to the European cohesion.

Mr Jan Odegaard, Kristiansand, informed about Norwegian contribution to economic and social cohesion in the new EU-member states, resulting from the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement which unites EFTA and EU states into one single market. In the negotiations on extending the EEA Agreement, it was decided that two new financial instruments should be established for the period 2004-2009.

The first instrument - Multilateral EFTA Financial Mechanism will provide annual contribution of 120 million eur (94,5% from Norway). The main priority areas are the environment, promotion of sustainable development, securing the European cultural heritage, education, health and child care.

The second instrument - Bilateral Norwegian Financial Mechanism will provide annual contribution of 113,4 million eur. Priority areas include projects to assist the 10 new members to adapt to the Schengen co-operation, justice and home affairs, environmental measures, regional policy, regional policy and cross-border activities and technical assistance relating to implementation the of EU legislation.

A joint secretariat for the two arrangements will most likely be established in Brussels when the arrangements enter into force. The recipient countries will themselves be responsible for proposing, developing and implementing the projects. Recipients will have to pay a share (15-40 per cent) of the project costs.

The two new financial arrangements will enter into force on 1 May 2004. Mr Odegaard added that further information will be provided by Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities at the next Board meeting in Kristiansand in May.

6. Conclusion from the GC in Klaipeda – proposal of voting procedure.

President Andersen informed that the city of Luebeck proposed the following alterations to the formal procedure of the General Conference:

- every member city taking part in the General Conference shall receive one voting card (in a bright colour) which has to be raised visibly with every voting
- in every voting the possible votes (yes, no, indifferent) are convened separately
- the results shall be counted in case of unclear majorities
- the results shall be documented

Mr Christopher Odmann, Stockholm, supported the proposal emphasizing that such rules would facilitate the proceedings at the GC.

Mr Maciej Lisicki, Gdansk, suggested to add Luebeck proposals to the UBC internal regulations.

Decision:

The Board accepted the proposals submitted by Luebeck.

7. UBC Action Plan 2004-2005.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki said the Action Plan 2004-2005 would refer to:

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

Mr Zaboklicki presented the frame of the action plan underlining that the action plan should include guidelines and priorities for various UBC organs ie. Executive Board, Presidium, Secretariat, Commissions, Networks. Naturally all UBC activities in 2004-2005 will be significantly influenced by the EU enlargement which will make the Baltic Sea region practically the EU sub-region. UBC shall utilise the historical fact of the EU enlargement for the benefit of citizens living in our cities.

Other priority areas will be:

- 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

President Andersen proposed to set up a working group consisting of persons working closely with the members of UBC Presidium to carry on the work on the action plan. The Board authorised the President to appoint a working group on the action plan. The draft action plan will be presented at the next Board meeting.

8. Atlantic Arc Cities proposal re. EC communication on dialogue with associations of local authorities.

Vice-President Gundars Bojars, Riga, informed that he represented UBC at the first forum of organisations of regional and local authorities on future EU cohesion policy, Brussels, 23 February 2004. European Commission invited to the forum such organisations like AEBC, CEMR, CPMR, Eurocities, CAAC and UBC. Mr Michel Barnier, Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy and Institutional Reform presented the draft proposal of the EU budget for the period 2007-2013. Mr Bojars informed that the budget is to be adopted by the EU in the middle of 2005 and now there is a time for discussions and comments on the draft proposal.

President Per Boedker Andersen informed about Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) proposal on joint statement on European Commission proposal to hold annual consultations with local authorities associations on EC policies. Mr Pawel Zaboklicki added that UBC called for such consultations in the resolution from the General Conference in Klaipeda, 18 October 2003.

European Commission responded positively in a letter of 27 January from Commissioner Michel Barnier to SG Pawel Zaboklicki. In the letter Mr Barnier informs that on 19 December 2003 the Commission adopted a communication on "Dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of European Union policy". In its communication the EC proposes to give the regional and local representatives the opportunity of expressing their views – via their European and national associations – during annual hearings which will concentrate on the Commission's annual work programme, and the major policy initiatives that have a significant direct or indirect regional and local impact. The EC communication has been sent to all member cities in January. Mentioned above meeting with Commissioner Michel Barnier in Brussels was the first meeting following the EC communication.

In a letter sent to UBC, CAAC expresses opinion that these consultations between EC and local authorities associations should take a form of a dialogue, not only one-way communication from the Commission. Mr Andersen said that he fully agrees with CAAC opinion. He informed he is a member of Constitutional Commission of the Committee of the Regions, CoR discussed this questions some weeks ago and expressed the same opinions as CAAC.

President Andersen informed that during the work on the draft of EU Constitutional Treaty it has been emphasized that EU governing organs must consult and negotiate with local and regional authorities the relevant policy matters, and not only inform them. That's why it is important to support Atlantic Arc Cities initiative and encourage other local (Black Sea Club, Adriatic Cities Association) and regional (BSSSC, Arco Latino) actors to join forces.

Maciej Lisicki, Gdansk, informed he participated in the Atlantic Arc Cities general assembly in July last year. He said it is young but very interesting organisation, similar to UBC and it is worthy to cooperate with them. CAAC Director also participated in the UBC GC in Klaipeda. Mr Lisicki added that two weeks ago he represented UBC in the annual conference of Arco Latino, the organisation gathering Mediterranean regions from Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. As this organisation gathers regions not cities, the cooperation should rather concentrate on the exchange of information.

Mikko Lohikoski said that now is the time when the Commission is in the process of identifying the associations, which will be invited to participate in this dialog. It is important for all of us to lobby and make sure that UBC and other regional associations (eg. CAAC) are included in that list. It would not be good if only pan-European organisations and national associations would represent the local authorities in the dialog with EC. Mr Lohikoski stressed that members of the Committee of Regions are in key position here and we should in each country contact our CoR members in this respect. We should ask our Brussels offices to lobby for UBC to be placed on the list of organisations to be consulted.

Mr Anders Engstrom stressed it is so also important to influence the way how the EC carries out the conferences. He remembered that in the year 2000, it was only one way communication more and less. He said that the organisations must have the possibilities to come up with the proposals and opinions.

Decision:

The Board accepted proposal from the Atlantic Arc Cities to send a joint statement to the European Commission on the EC communication on dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of European Union policy. The Board members committed themselves to lobby for UBC to be included on list of organisations to be consulted by the EU bodies.

9. Commission on Information Society – action plan.

Mr Esa Kokkonen, Tampere, reminded that Commission on Information Society was established at the 34th UBC Executive Board meeting in Viljandi in June 2002, and the City of St. Petersburg was appointed as the lead City of the Commission.

During last few years Information Society development has emerged as one of the priority sectors for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, and the Region is developing into a European model region of Information Society. Baltic cities have been active in Information Society development, and various local e-initiatives and programmes have been launched. Joint projects, networking and exchange of experiences and information between the UBC members cities and their e-programmes contribute significantly to the Information Society development in the Baltic Sea Region, and to the objectives of European and national Information Society strategies and programmes.

Based on the above background and framework, there is a strong rationale for the active UBC contribution to the Information Society Development in the BSR through its Commission on Information Society. Unfortunately since the creation of the Commission in June 2002 there has been practically no activities.

At the Commission meeting during the GC in Klaipeda, 18 October 2003, the City of Tampere together with the Baltic Institute of Finland proposed to contribute to the re-launch of the Commission and to the preparation of a Action Plan for 2004-2005. The Commission agreed that Tampere would join St.Petersburg as co-leader of the Commission.

Tampere and St.Petersburg prepared the draft action plan of the Commission. Mr Kokkonen presented the action plan to the Board. A working meeting devoted to action plan was held in St.Petersburg in December 2003. According to the plan, the Commission on IS will aim at promoting and accelerating development of information society in the UBC member cities by facilitating exchange and dissemination of experiences, information, best practices and successful applications of technical innovations acquired in local information society activities.

The activities of the UBC Commission on IS will follow and support the guidelines, strategies and general objectives set out in eEurope, eRussia, Northern eDimension and various national e-initiatives promoting the IS development in the BSR.

Commission activities scheduled for 2004-2005:

1. Questionnaire to the UBC member cities concerning local information society development activities (March-May 2004)
2. Database / Internet portal for Baltic best practices on local information society development (Spring-Autumn 2004)
3. Preparation of an Interreg III C project proposal "eCities Forum: Promoting Information Society in the Baltic Sea Region" (February-April 2004)
4. Elaboration of new project ideas (Spring-Autumn 2004)
5. Seminar on local information society development in the Baltic Sea Region (2005)

President Andersen thanked Mr Kokkonen for presentation of the action plan and expressed hope that with joint leadership of St.Petersburg and Tampere, the Commission would finally start concrete activities.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, informed he spoke with the chairman of international committee of St.Petersburg Mr Prohorenko who said he was not aware about IS Commission problems, but he would give all possible help to the Commission.

Mr Tiit Naber proposed the UBC IS Commission to take part in the meeting of Senior Officials on Information Society (SOIS) to be held in Riga on 23 April 2004 in order to establish links of cooperation. SOIS is acting under CBSS umbrella.

Moreover Mr Naber informed that as a result of the decision taken at the 3rd Coordination Meeting of Heads of Regional Organizations held during the UBC GC in Klaipeda on 17 October 2003, in April the CBSS will launch the Baltic Sea Portal. The Baltic Sea Portal will be a focal point for people interested in Baltic Sea Region issues. Apart from a short description and link to all the participating organizations, the portal will also present a common calendar of events in the Region, a Latest News section and will include an On-line forum for various discussions regarding the Baltic Sea. The Portal will also bundle all the newsletters available from the participating organizations and the possibility of subscribing on-line will be available.

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki added that web address of the Baltic Sea Portal will be the www.balticsea.net As promised during mentioned above meeting in Klaipeda, UBC who is the legal owner of that domain, donated this web address to CBSS, as UBC contribution to the Baltic Sea Portal.

Mr Pertti Palttila, Tampere, confirmed that the City of Tampere together with the Baltic Institute of Finland are ready to contribute and co-lead the work of IS Commission together with St.Petersburg. Mr Palttila informed the chairman of UBC IS Commission Mr Zhdanov became the chairman of the Committee on Informatisation and Communication in St.Petersburg, which is good news for the UBC IS Commission. Mr Zhdanov confirmed that St.Peterburg is very interested to co-chair the Commission together with Tampere and to be more active than so far.

Mr Gunnars Ansins, Liepaja, pointed out that although the IS Commission has been established almost two years ago, there were practically no activities so far. He said there were always presentations about future plans but no concrete activities. He proposed that if there is still no

activity till the end of the year, then the IS Commission could be incorporated for example to the Business Commission which also deals with e-services.

President Andersen said that we should give another chance to the IS Commission and expressed hope that since now, with the contribution from Tampere and other interested cities, the Commission will start concrete activities and projects. The Board asked the Commission to spread the draft Action Plan to all member cities in order to get comments and new ideas. The draft action plan is attached to the minutes.

10. UBC role in the 4th Pan-European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, Aalborg, 9-11 June 2004.

This item was postponed to the next Board meeting.

11. CLRAE conference “The role of Baltic local authorities in responding to major oil spills”, Helsinki, 9-10 February 2004.

President Andersen informed that in the beginning of February he was a speaker at Council of Europe’s CLRAE conference in Helsinki titled “The role of Baltic local authorities in responding to major oil spills”. During the conference participants shared their experiences how to handle major oil spills. Interesting contribution was given by the speakers from the south of Europe (France).

Mr Andersen informed that, as a follow up of that conference, today he received a letter from the Mayor of Maardu who proposes to create a new UBC Commission on Safety and Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea area. President stressed that UBC should consider whether to create a new Commission dealing with safety matters or to give this work to one of existing 10 UBC Commissions. He proposed that the Presidium would discuss this issue and would submit proposal how to handle these questions within UBC, at the next Board meeting in May.

Mr Christopher Odmann added he also had the possibility to take part in this interesting conference, which touched one of the greatest problems of the Baltic Sea region. He pointed out the example from France where oil companies and tankers owners must pay to local authorities in case of oil spills.

President Andersen stressed on one hand oil spills are handled by state authorities, not by the cities, but on the other hand local authorities must of course cooperate when the problem arises on the city cost line. The conference discussed how can we collaborate in a better way. How can we react at state level, the regional level and the local level. The cities message to the conference was that in case of major oil spills they are ready to cooperate closely in rescue action with the respective regional/state services.

Mr Risto Virtanen, Kotka, informed that a question of oil spills is a very hot issue now in the BSR. In different countries the seminars are being held to discuss how to protect and how to handle the oil spills. He said in Finland the responsibility for handling the oil spills belongs to the state when it’s off-shore, but when the oil comes on-shore then it’s the local authority problem. He stressed the close cooperation between state and local authorities is necessary in handling oil spills. Cooperation with other countries is also needed, for example Finland closely cooperates with Estonia and Russia in monitoring the oil spills.

Mr Tiit Naber added that environment is one of the CBSS priorities and the last CBSS meeting discussed the ship monitoring system in the Finnish Gulf - Vessel Traffic Management and Information Service (VTMIS). Three partners: Finland, Russia, Estonia agreed on it. CBSS is

trying to make an effort that this monitoring system will be launched on the 1st of July this year. CBSS goal is to convince all Baltic Sea countries to reach consensus and to create common ship monitoring system for the whole Baltic Sea.

12. Information sent by the Commissions.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki informed that some Commissions and Networks sent information on latest activities and forthcoming meetings. Information sent by the Commissions and Networks is attached to the minutes. The Board took note of the information.

President Andersen informed about the application from young people from Rostock who asked for UBC support to the Baltic Youth Conference “Education overcomes borders” to be held in Rostock on 13-19 June 2004. The Board expressed opinion that naturally UBC is ready to endorse this conference provided that the event receives support of the UBC Network on Youth Issues.

13. Information on the meeting with youth in Vaasa (afternoon, 6 March)

After the meeting the Executive Board met the young people from Vaasa in the Youth Culture House “Kultsa” opened on 31st of May 2003 in the building of former police station. The centre is open to all youngsters living in Vaasa. Here young people can meet, listen to the music, dance, play sports, read magazines, cook, surf on the internet etc. During the visit a group of young people made an extraordinary brake-dancing show for the Board members.

14. Other matters.

14.1 National UBC meetings.

Ms Lillian Westerberg, Stockholm, informed about national meeting of Swedish UBC cities held in Stockholm on 5 February 2004. The meeting was well attended by both politicians and officers, totally 23 persons. 14 cities out of 22 UBC Swedish members cities participated in the meeting. The meeting started with presentation of Swedish Foreign Ministry representative on Swedish Government’s policy concerning the Baltic Sea Region. Then representative of Swedish Association of Local Authorities talked about “How to finance the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in the future after the enlarged EU”. After lunch Mr Anders Engström made an overview about UBC during 12 years and how the work within the organisation has changed. He also gave a brief summary of the General Assembly in Klaipeda. Then the meeting focused on the expectations on UBC and the commissions.

Mr Maciej Lisicki, Gdansk, informed about national meeting of Polish UBC cities held in Gdansk on 17 February 2004. The meeting was attended by 20 persons representing all 12 UBC Polish member cities. 8 cities were represented by mayors and other elected politicians, 4 cities were represented by civil servants. Secretary General Zaboklicki informed the participants about questions to be discussed at the Board meeting in Vaasa, concentrating on the new funding possibilities for cross-border cooperation, to be available for the cities after the EU enlargement. This information was followed by the discussion on Polish cities role in the UBC and their expectations from the Union. Ms Ewa Depka, Gdynia, coordinator of the Commission on Sport presented latest activities of the Commission. Mr Lisicki informed that Ms Depka expressed opinion that UBC financial reports should be a little more detailed than so far. Mr Andersen informed that the Presidium would discuss with the Board of Audit at the next Board meeting whether the UBC financial reports need to be more detailed than in the bygone years. Mr Lisicki also informed that Poland would like to host a Board meeting next year for example in Chojnice, situated in the beautiful lake region of Kaszuby.

Ms Tiina Hallimae, Voru, informed about national meeting of Estonian UBC cities held in Võru on 23 January 2004. The meeting started at noon with laying flowers on the monument for the victims of the Estonia ferry catastrophe. Most of the city council, including the Mayor, total about 15 persons, perished in the Baltic Sea on their way to the first meeting with their new twin town Landskrona. The meeting was attended by 30 persons from the 12 Estonian UBC cities. 13 participants were mayors or other elected politicians. The meeting discussed Estonian cities expectations on UBC, the new UBC Strategy, and focused on the importance of the UBC Commissions. Ms Mirje Auksmann, Kardla, secretary of the Commission on Education, made a presentation of latest Commission activities.

Mr Christopher Odmann, Stockholm, informed that Stockholm region, together with Oslo, Copenhagen, Malmoe, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, South Denmark House and Hansa Office are together organising a conference titled "Baltic Sea Region - perspective 2010", Brussels, November 2004. The enlargement is a fact and the Baltic Sea Region now has to prove its position as a European model region. Many countries, regions and local authorities in the North and East of Europe have identified the BSR as a priority for their international work and development efforts. Therefore it could be beneficial with a better overview of the work and activities carried out in Brussels by various organizations and representations active in the BSR. Such an overview could contribute to a clear perspective of the region in the next six years and help identify priority activities at the European level as well as in the region. Mr Odmann suggested that UBC should also take part in this conference and inform about its activities. The Board supported the idea and decided that UBC would participate in this event.

14.2 Financial report for 2003.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki presented the financial report for 2003.

The main sources of income in 2003 were the membership fees (166.979 eur) and the donation from SIDA for the LVRLAC project (244.446 eur).

The main expenditure in 2003 were:

- LVRLAC project 245.903 eur
- Political adviser 73.362 eur
- Meetings 32.140 eur
- Services/maintenance 31.314 eur
- Communication 9.442 eur
- President fee 8.733 eur
- Publications 7.839 eur

There are five annexes attached to the financial report as follows:

- UBC Membership Fees in 2003
- Expenditure of UBC Commissions in 2003 within the UBC budget
- Contributions to the secretariats in 2003
- UBC projects with external funding in 2003
- Member cities contribution to the UBC events in 2003

Mr Zaboklicki reminded that the full financial report for 2003 including the annexes was sent out to all member cities in February 2004.

Decision:

The Board approved the financial report for 2003.

14.3 Information from the President

President Andersen informed the Board that the Presidium had agreed on a proposal from the President to stop the employment of Mr Juhan Janusson as a personal adviser to the President.

15. Next meeting of the Executive Board.

Mr Bjarne Ugland, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand, warmly invited the Executive Board members to Kristiansand on 16-17 May 2004, emphasizing that Kingdom of Norway has its National Day on May 17th.

Decision:

The Board thanked Mr Ugland for his invitation and decided to hold its 40th meeting in the City of Kristiansand, Norway, on 16-17 May 2004.

16. Closing of the Meeting.

President Per Boedker Andersen expressed his thanks to all participants for the fruitful meeting and to the City of Vaasa for its warm hospitality and closed the 39th Meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Mr Per Boedker Andersen
Chairman

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki
Secretary

Ms Tarja Sjoberg
Adjuster

Mr Bjarne Ugland
Adjuster