

**MINUTES FROM THE 35th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE
BOARD OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES
Panevezys, Lithuania, 9 November 2002**

INTRODUCTION

The 35th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on the 9th of November 2002 in the City of Panevezys, Lithuania, upon the invitation of Mr Valdemaras Jakstas, Mayor of Panevezys.

The meeting was attended by the Members of the Executive Board. The list of participants is attached to this report.

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

The 35th meeting of the UBC Executive Board was opened by Mr Per Boedker Andersen, the President of the Union. Mr Andersen greeted all participants and wished them a successful meeting.

Mr Valdemaras Jakstas, Mayor of Panevezys, welcomed all delegates and wished them the fruitful discussions and a pleasant stay in Panevezys. Mr Jakstas made a short presentation introducing the city of Panevezys.

The meeting adopted the agenda which is attached to this report.

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

Ms Vilma Kucyte, Panevezys and Mr Alexander Kuznetsov, Baltijsk, were elected to check the minutes together with the President.

3. Applications for UBC membership.

President Andersen informed about the applications for UBC membership from the City of Moletai, Lithuania, and from the City of Fredericia, Denmark. Applications are attached to the minutes.

Mr Valentinas Stundys, Mayor of the City of Moletai, made a presentation introducing his town. Short information about the City of Moletai is enclosed to this report.

Decision:

The Board decided to accept the cities of Moletai and Fredericia as Members of the Union of the Baltic Cities and wished them a fruitful cooperation with other UBC member cities. The updated list of member cities is enclosed.

4. VII General Conference in Klaipeda.

Mr Vidmantas Pleckaitis, Vice-Mayor of Klaipeda informed that the city has already started preparations to the VII UBC General Conference to be held in Klaipeda on 17-19 October 2003. Mr Pleckaitis warmly invited all UBC member cities to come to Klaipeda.

He informed that the next year, the Klaipeda will celebrate 750 anniversary of coronation of the king Mindaugas who made the city well-known. Mr Pleckaitis invited UBC executives to visit Klaipeda to discuss preparations to the GC.

Vice-Mayor of Klaipeda underlined that the conference will be held on the eve of the EU enlargement scheduled for 2004. Having this in mind he expressed an opinion that the theme of the GC should be connected with the enlargement.

President Andersen stressed that the conference should propose a fresh view and concentrate on presenting the Baltic Sea area as the key area of the future Europe. Baltic Sea region has good solutions, good governance, good environment and these should serve as a platform not only for the discussion but also to encourage the EU to attend the conference, he said.

The President proposed the following title of the conference “The Baltic Wave in the Future Europe”. Mr Andersen stressed we should aim at inviting speakers from the very high level eg. Mr Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, stressed that the Europe is in motion now and the enlargement process would emphasise the role of the Baltic Sea Region. The theme should reflect those changes and the fact that we are looking forward to the enlargement. The theme should reflect motion, movement and the wave is both a symbol of our sea and a symbol of motion.

Ms Beate Waldtmann, Lubeck, supported that idea and noticed that the Baltic Sea would be no longer a border sea of Europe but it would be in the middle of Europe.

Mr Jens Zvirgzdgauds, Jekabpils, asked about the difference between the concept of the Baltic Wave and current Nordic Dimension. He stressed that this new idea should bring new quality, new concerns not only for Europe but also for the whole world.

Mr Bartlomiej Sochanski, Szczecin, stressed that at the conference we should not only give the message to the EU that we are coming and we have demands. We could achieve a very good political aim if we could prove and present that the cooperation in that region started years before any European treaties were signed.

Mr Anders Engstrom, Kalmar, said that the EU enlargement is very important but the other important question is the governance in future European Union. He said the role of the cities in the system of European governance should be strengthened.

The Board stressed it is very important to start the preparations to the General Conference already now in order to make sure that the conference will be a great success.

The Board agreed with the German cities proposal that the member cities should have an opportunity to make exhibitions in the conference lobby.

5. Current political issues involving UBC.

Mr Juhan Janusson, Political Adviser, made a presentation introducing latest political initiatives taken up by the UBC Presidium, these are:

1. Interreg III.

Under the present rules of Interreg, the Baltic Sea region is discriminated because Interreg is designed for the land bordering regions. The programme is not intended for the regions (countries) which have the maritime borders, which is the often case in the Baltic Sea area. UBC will strive for the change of rules of the next Interreg programme, so the regions which are bordering through the sea will be also eligible for Interreg funding.

2. Trans European Network and White Book on Transportation.

In the EU policy on transportation described in the Trans European Network the ferry lines, vital for the BSR, are not included. The policy includes roads, railways and telecommunications but no ferry lines. This year the government of Finland proposed the initiative called "Baltic Sea Motorways" which is to be formalised by the next revision of TEN 2004.

In the EU White Book on Transportation issued this year, the following issues are highlighted: roads, railways, air transport, "maritime highways" (= canals in central Europe), bottlenecks, legislation, Marco Polo program. Baltic Sea region is hardly mentioned (except the new bridge Denmark-Germany).

Important forgotten aspects are:

- ferry traffic
- the Northern part of the BSR will be a peripheral European region
- a sustainable transportation policy comparing all modes (environmental aspects, safety, efficiency and productivity)
- effects of the different modes on the regional economy

UBC position on the White Book should be as follows:

- ferry connections are integrated parts of the communications network for freight as well as passengers and vital for the Baltic Sea Region to be an integrated part of the European Union;
- the lack of good ferry connections across the Baltic Sea in large parts of the region is a severe obstacle for development.

BSSSC supported the UBC standpoint on the EU White Book on Transportation. Both organisations agreed to send joint statement on the White Book to CBSS, to be forwarded to the Ministries of Transportation of Baltic Sea countries and the European Commission.

3. Other political issues in which UBC has been involved are:

- Preparing for EU enlargement from local authority perspective
- Small Projects Facility
- Northern Dimension first Action Plan
- White Paper on Governance
- Agenda 21 and other

4. The new political tasks for the UBC:

- UBC will contribute to the Northern Dimension Second Action Plan 2004-06 (NDAP). UBC and other Baltic organisations has been requested by CBSS to submit by 15 November, an overview document outlining existing cooperation and activities. CBSS will coordinate the contribution of Baltic organisations to the new EU NDAP.

- as agreed at the Board meeting in Viljandi, UBC should closely follow and contribute to the process of the European Convention.

The Board authorised the Presidium to continue its work with mentioned above, very important for the UBC and BSR, political issues.

6. Revising of the UBC Strategy – information from the WG.

On behalf of the working group Mr Juhan Janusson presented the ideas on the structure and contents of the new UBC Strategy. The presentation is included as an annex to this report. The working group proposed that the Strategy document should be concise, easy to read and understand. The main target group should be the present and potential member cities.

The Strategy should include the following chapters:

- Introduction presenting the origins of the UBC; referring to the Baltic Sea Region and to the EU enlargement (new challenges for the cities).
- Role of the cities. What binds the cities together? - common tasks, history, destiny and values of BSR cities.
- Vision. What do we want to accomplish? Where are we heading? Why do cities pay a membership fee?
- Mission. How do we work? UBC provides a platform for cooperation. Political work for the benefit of the members.
- Contact information.

President Andersen stressed that the present UBC Strategy is fine but it is too long, so the new document should be concise, clear, easy to read, printed in form of colour brochure.

Mr Anders Engstrom, Kalmar, expressed an opinion that the new short Strategy should be complemented with the UBC Action Plan presenting concrete UBC activities.

The Board authorised the working group to go on with the work on creating the new UBC Strategy.

7. Implementation of the UBC Social Charter – present status. (Rostock)

President Andersen informed that unfortunately nobody from Rostock was able to attend the Board meeting in Panevezys. The City of Rostock has sent written report on the status of Social Charter implementation. The report is enclosed to the minutes.

The Commission on Health & Social Affairs proposed a presentation of the UBC Social Charter at the Baltic Sea Women's Conference 'WoMen and Democracy', 13-14 February 2003 in Tallinn. The Board decided to support this Conference and requested one of the members of the UBC Presidium to present the UBC Social Charter at the conference, if possible.

8. UBC-LVRLAC project – phase II.

Mr Juhan Janusson, project manager, made a presentation informing the Board about the second phase of the UBC-LVRLAC project. The presentation is included as an annex to the minutes.

The Board took note of the report.

9. Involvement of cities from Belarus in the UBC work.

President Andersen informed the Board that the opinion of the UBC Presidium is, that UBC should not accept members from Belarus as long as Belarus is ruled by the totalitarian regime. He stressed that local authorities in Belarus are appointed by the government and UBC should not legitimise the authorities which are the part of the regime.

Some of the Board members were of the opinion that UBC could involve these Belarus cities whose leaders are supporting democratic changes, even if these leaders have been appointed by the government.

After debate the Board decided to authorise the Presidium to continue discussion on that question.

The City of Klaipeda proposed it could invite its partner city from Belarus to the next UBC General Conference in Klaipeda. The Board accepted the proposal.

10. Reports from the conferences and meetings attended by Union representatives.

- Conference "Enlargement from a Local and Regional Perspective", Brussels, 5 July 2002 (P.B.Andersen)

- World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 26 August – 4 September 2002 (A.Engstrom)
- Conference “Future Europe”, Norrtälje, 9-13 September 2002 (J.Janusson)
- SUCI – 6th Framework Seminar, Brussels, 17 September 2002 (J.Janusson)
- EU Conference on Environmental Governance, Aalborg, 19-20 September 2002 (J.Janusson)
- UBC Conference on disabled “Without limits”, Gdynia, 27-28 September 2002
- Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, St.Petersburg, 30 September 2002 (P.B.Andersen / P.Zaboklicki)
- EU Conference on Enlargement, Munich, 10-11 October 2002 (J.Janusson)
- BSSSC Conference, Lillehammer, 25-26 October 2002 (P.B. Andersen)
- Johannesburg Follow-up Conference, Kolding, 4-6 November 2002 (P.B. Andersen)

President Andersen reminded that the written information from mentioned above conferences was sent to the Board members in advance. The Board took note of the reports. The written information about the conferences is attached to the minutes.

11. Membership fees.

President Andersen informed the Board that all member cities paid the membership fees for the year 2002 except:

- City of Rezekne, Latvia
- City of Kaliningrad, Russia
- Cities of Lomonosov, Peterhof, Sestroretsk (administrative districts of St.Petersburg), Russia

The table showing the amounts and dates of payments is enclosed to the minutes.

Decision:

The Board requested the City of Kaliningrad and the City of Rezekne to pay the membership fee before 30 November 2002. The Board requested the City of St.Petersburg to pay the membership fees for the cities of Lomonosov, Peterhof, Sestroretsk, before 30 November 2002.

12. Information on NGO Forum in Turku, 8-11 May 2003.

Mr Lohikoski informed that representatives of NGOs from all Baltic Sea countries will meet in Turku, next Spring. Some 400 civil society participants are expected to come and share their experiences and plan joint activities. The previous Forum took place in St. Petersburg. The main theme will be ”Northern Dimension - Human Dimension? Strengthening the Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region”.

Mrs Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, has agreed to be the Patron of the Forum, which takes place under the auspices of the Finnish Presidency of CBSS, the Council of Baltic Sea States. The main issues to be discussed in the Turku Forum include such issues as social

exclusion / inclusion, sustainable way of life, relationship between civil society and public authorities as well as human rights and equality.

The Board supported the conference and encouraged all member cities to inform NGOs in their cities about this important event.

13. Questions raised at the meeting.

13.1 New issue of the Baltic Cities Bulletin.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki presented the latest issue of the UBC Baltic Cities Bulletin devoted to "Governance in Baltic Cities". The bulletin includes articles sent by member cities, introducing new methods of governance in Baltic cities. UBC position on the latest EU White Paper on Governance is also included in the publication.

The bulletin also provides information on latest UBC meetings and activities as well as news from the member cities. The bulletin is printed in over 5000 copies and it is sent out to all member cities as well as to numerous Baltic and European institutions and organisations including the EU.

The Board encouraged the contact persons in all member cities to distribute the bulletin among departments in each City Hall and send it to various city institutions such as universities, libraries, ports, chambers of commerce etc.

13.2 Invitations to the conferences.

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki informed the Board that UBC has been requested to support two conferences.

The City of Gdansk invited all member cities to the international conference titled "Chances of the Baltic Lobbying in the European Union" to be held in Gdansk on 16-17 December 2003. The UBC Secretariat already forwarded Gdansk's invitation to all member cities. The Board supported the conference and encouraged the member cities to participate in this interesting event. The conference invitation and program is attached to the minutes.

The Academy of Physical Education and Sport in Gdansk requested the UBC and the Commission on Sport to support the international scientific conference entitled "Euro-Baltic Academy of Sports Humanism. Postmodern Culture and Olympic Humanism: Threats and Hopes" to be held in Gdansk on 12-15 June 2003. The Board supported the conference and authorised the Commission on Sport to help the organisers to promote this conference in UBC member cities.

14. Next meeting of the Executive Board.

Mr Jan Björinge, Umea City Manager, forwarded an invitation of the Mayor of the City of Umea Mr Lennart Holmlund to hold the next (36th) UBC Executive Board meeting in the City of Umea, Sweden, on 28-30 March 2003. Mr Björinge made a presentation introducing the City of Umea.

Decision:

The Board decided to hold its 36th meeting in the City of Umea, Sweden, on 28-30 March 2003. Part of the meeting will be open to all member cities.

15. Closing of the Meeting.

Mr Per Boedker Andersen expressed his thanks to all participants for the fruitful meeting and to the City of Panevezys for its warm hospitality and closed the 35th Meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Mr Per Boedker Andersen
Chairman

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki
Secretary

Mr Alexander Kuznetsov
Adjuster

Ms Vilma Kucyte
Adjuster