

**MINUTES FROM THE 48TH MEETING OF THE UBC EXECUTIVE BOARD
GÄVLE, SWEDEN, 9 MARCH 2007**

The 48th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on 9 March 2007 in the city of Gävle, Sweden, upon the invitation of Ms Carina Blank, the Mayor of Gävle. The list of meeting participants is included as an annex.

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

The meeting was opened by Mr Per Bødker Andersen, the President of the Union. Mr Andersen expressed his gratitude to the hosts of the meeting for inviting the UBC Executive Board to Gävle. The meeting adopted the agenda attached as an annex to this report.

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

Ms Carina Blank, the Mayor of Gävle, heartily welcomed all participants. Ms Blank and Mr Göran Arnell, City Manager, made a presentation of the city of Gävle.

The city has a population of 92,000 inhabitants and is situated on the coast, 80 min train journey from Stockholm. Good infrastructure is one of the main advantages of the town. The Gävle University has 13.500 students and is located close to the Gävle Technology Park, quickly expanding with IT companies. The main branches of industry are: steel, electronics, paper and forestry. Gävle has also a very varied cultural and outdoor life. Furuvik - an animal and pleasure park, the Concert Hall and the water oasis Fjärran Højderbadet are some examples of that.

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

Mr Søren Revsbaek, Deputy Mayor of Naestved, and Mr Gunars Ansins, Deputy Mayor of Liepāja, were elected to check the minutes together with the President.

4. Applications for membership from Slupsk (Poland) and Gargzdai (Lithuania) - short presentations.

President Andersen informed the Board about the applications for UBC membership submitted by the city of Slupsk, Poland and Gargzdai, Lithuania. The applications are attached to the minutes.

Mr Vaclovas Dačkauskas, Mayor of Klaipeda District Municipality, briefly introduced the city of Gargzdai. Mr Robert Kujawski, Vice-Chairman of the Slupsk City Council, provided the video presentation of Slupsk containing the basic information on the city, its economy, culture and future plans.

Decision:

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

5. Preparations to IX General Conference in Pärnu, 27-28 September 2007 – information from the task force.

5.1 Invited keynote speakers

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

The speakers for plenary session who confirmed their participation are:

- Mart Viisitamm, Mayor of Pärnu
- Per B. Andersen, President of UBC
- Michel Delebarre, President of the Committee of the Regions, Mayor of Dunkerque (a letter from Mr Delebarre is attached)

Other invited keynote speakers are:

- Toomas H. Ilves, President of Estonia. Mr Toivo Riimaa, Association of Estonian Cities, informed the participants that decision on the President's attendance depends on the date of the United Nations summit which is to be held at similar time.

- Council of the Baltic Sea States' representative. Mr Zaboklicki informed that director of CBSS secretariat Ms Gabriele Kotschau will pass our invitation to Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which takes over from Sweden the CBSS chair on 1 July 2007.

- Gro Harlem Brundtland, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development – Mr Żaboklicki informed that Mr Thomas Friis Konst, Stockholm Region, has offered to speak with Ms Brundtland, information is expected soon.

- Rodney Bernam, President of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, Mayor of Cardiff – most probably will come

- Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy, invitation sent recently.

Unfortunately, the following persons will not be able to participate in the GC:

- Black Sea, Kiril Yordanov, Mayor of Varna
- Commissioner on Energy Andris Piebalgs
- Chairman of "Baltic Europe" intergroup in the European Parliament, Christopher Beazley

Mr Zaboklicki added that the Task Force on GC discussed also other proposals for keynote speakers.

5.2 Proposed workshops/forums

Secretary General presented the proposals of the conference workshop / forums.

1. Energy security in the BSR, renewable resources, safety of supplies.

Moderation - Commission on Energy and Commission on Environment

2. Culture as driving force for municipal development.

Theme proposed by Umeå. The theme is strongly supported by the Commission on Culture.

Moderation - Umeå and the Commission on Culture

3. Involvement of youth in democracy and in the life of society.

Moderation - Commission on Youth Issues

Reserve theme: Land and maritime transport in the BSR (maritime logistics corridors was a theme for one of the forums at the last GC in Turku).

Mr Zaboklicki said that some members of the task force proposed that the first theme "Energy security in the BSR" could be reformulated to "Climate change – response of the cities". The reason is that the issue of the safety of supplies could come down to the Baltic Pipeline project on which the cities have no influence. The Board accepted the suggestion.

Mr Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, said there are two aspects of the climate change problem. What cities can do to stop the climate change - reduce CO₂ emissions, use of renewable energy. And how the cities should prepare themselves for climate change e.g. for problems resulting from the raise of sea level.

Mr Holger Bellgardt, Rostock, informed the participants about the G8 Summit which is to be held in Germany at the beginning of June. He said that UBC could also discuss the results of this summit during the General Conference.

Mr Zaboklicki informed that in parallel with the GC, the youth conference entitled "Under the Surface" will be held in Pärnu. The conference will be organised by the UBC Commission on Youth Issues within the project "Different History - Common Future - youth as a resource in the Baltic Sea Region" funded from the EU "Youth" program.

Additionally, Secretary General informed that the UBC Commission on Environment organises next edition of the Environmental Award. The commission would prefer the awarding ceremony to take place during the General Assembly instead of during the official dinner. The Board accepted the proposal.

Decision:

The Board accepted the themes of the General Conference workshops and authorised the task force to go on with the conference preparations.

5.3 Venue of the conference

Ms Anu Juurma, Pärnu, presented to the participants the venue of the conference. The conference will be held in the STRAND hotel located in the forestry area of Pärnu, on the shore of the Pärnu bay, close to the beach. There are seven modern conference rooms in the hotel. The biggest of them holds 520 people. More information on the hotel facilities is available at: www.strand.ee

5.4 Proposal from Kristiansand to host the GC in 2009

Mr Bjarne Ugland, Kristiansand, on behalf of the Mayor of Kristiansand invited the UBC member cities to hold the X General Conference 2009 in Kristiansand. The letter from the Mayor of Kristiansand is attached.

Mr Andersen suggested that the Board should recommend the General Conference in Pärnu the City of Kristiansand as a venue of X UBC General Conference in 2009.

6. UBC Antenna Office in Brussels – major policy issues to be discussed by the EC in 2007.

Ms Jessica Rabenius, Stockholm Region Office in Brussels, presented the European Commission work programme in 2007, priorities of the German Presidency, perspectives in 2008 and EU related funding possibilities.

The EC work programme focuses currently on four areas: prosperity, solidarity, security and freedom, Europe in the world. The policies within those fields concentrate on achieving the Growth and Jobs and cohesion principles, energy and climate change issues, maritime policy, research and innovation, environmental protection, economic migration, urban transport. As far as solidarity is concerned, EC stresses i.a. the necessity of cohesion and rural development, and equality issues. European Year of Equal Opportunities is celebrated in 2007. Furthermore, the EC plans to strengthen the fight against organised crime and terrorism.

The priorities of the German Presidency - growth and jobs (employment), European social future and energy - are in accordance with the EC work programme. During the German Presidency, on 24-25 May in Leipzig, the conference will be held with an aim of signing two documents of high importance for the cities: Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Cities and Territorial Agenda of the EU.

In 2008, the following issues are expected to be tackled: climate change, sustainable, secure and competitive energy, transport, Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, migrant flows and maritime policy.

As far as project funding is concerned, Ms Rabenius informed i.a. that there is a general trend to focus on larger multigovernmental projects and on building on on-going projects.

7. UBC budget for 2007.

Secretary General provided the Board members with the proposal of the budget for 2007, the document is attached to the minutes.

Mr Zaboklicki informed the membership fees in 2006 were paid by the vast majority of UBC members (only two cities Baltijsk and Moletai have not yet paid).

The incomes consist mainly of the membership fees and the money transferred from 2006.

The expenditure major positions are: commissions, meetings (general conference, board), services/maintenance, antenna in Brussels, publications, communication etc.

Mr Markku Lumio, Vaasa, asked for a reason of keeping a substantial budget reserve in 2007. President Andersen informed the funds from the budget reserve can be used in case of unplanned projects or actions demanding the financial contribution of the UBC.

Decision:

The Board adopted the budget for 2007.

8. Proposal from Umeå to take the lead in the UBC Network on Gender Equality.

At the Board meeting in Gdynia, the city of Turku informed that NGO Femina Aboensis is no longer capable to lead the UBC Gender Equality Network.

Vice-President Marie-Louise Rönmark, on behalf of the city of Umeå, presented the concept for continuation of UBC work in the field of gender equality (the proposal is attached).

Ms Rönmark stressed it is crucial to increase the importance of gender issues and gender mainstreaming as a strategy within the UBC and its member cities.

She proposed to transform the network into the UBC Commission of Gender Equality. The aim of the commission would be securing the gender perspective in policies of the cities, especially in the areas of combating prostitution and trafficking, the labour market, social and urban planning. Ms Rönmark said that Umeå is ready to take responsibility for the work of the commission.

Mr Bjarne Ugland, supporting the idea, suggested that the work programme of the commission should include also other issues of gender policy such as children problems, integration of immigrants and their cultures in our countries.

Decision:

The Board decided to transform the UBC Network on Gender Equality into the Commission on Gender Equality with Umeå as the lead city.

9. UBC further development.

At the Board meeting in Gdynia the Board discussed the ideas on UBC further development. The Board stressed UBC shall constantly discuss how to improve its operations in order to serve better the citizens of our cities. Mr Mikko Lohikoski, chair of the working group, informed he is working now on the questionnaire which should be soon sent out to the member cities.

10. UBC contribution to the Green Paper on European Maritime Policy – first draft.

At the Executive Board meeting in St.Petersburg the Board decided to adopt the UBC Maritime Logistics Policy Paper and commissioned the UBC Secretariat to send it out to the European organisations and institutions. The document was sent out to the EU institutions, other organisations and to the ministers of transport of the Baltic Sea countries. Also in St.Petersburg the Board authorised Turku to start the work on UBC contribution to the Green Paper on EU Maritime Policy on the basis of the UBC Policy on Maritime Logistics. The first draft of the UBC contribution to the Green Paper on European Maritime Policy prepared by the city of Turku is attached to the minutes.

President Andersen informed he received a letter from Arco Latino. Arco Latino and other organisations comprising the maritime regions have also comments on the EU Maritime Policy. The President's suggestion was reaching these organisations with the UBC position paper in order to make a common statement which would sound stronger in Brussels.

Mr Lohikoski expressed opinion that UBC should prepare also its own statement as the Baltic Sea region have certain unique issues like cooperation with Russia and adjacent areas, and they must be taken into our consideration. What we have in common with other regions is the role of local and regional authorities.

The Board authorised Turku to go on with the work.

11. Proposals from Rostock, Kiel, Lubeck, Wismar.

11.1 Re-activation of the UBC EU-coordinators network.

At the Board meeting in Gdynia Mr Roland Methling, Rostock, informed about the proposal of Europäisches Integrationszentrum Rostock e.V. (European Integration Centre) to revitalise the UBC EU-coordinators network.

EIR proposed that the main tasks of the EU-coordinators network (in cooperation with the Brussels antenna) could be: monitoring and distributing information on the European policy, informing about the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and Plan B in the BSR, strengthening the UBC position towards the European Commission; exchanging best practices between member cities etc.

Decision:

The Board decided to re-activate the EU-coordinators network with the city of Rostock as a network leader.

11.2 Other proposals

Mr Holger Bellgardt, Head of Bureau Hanse Sail Rostock, presented an idea of foundation of a “sailBALTIC ASSOCIATION” (SBA) within the INTERREG III B project MariTour. This organisation would represent sailing tourism in the Baltic Sea, marina business, yacht clubs and traditional ships as part of European maritime heritage. The main goal of this association would be to promote the Baltic Sea as a first class sailing resort for boat and water tourism and develop sailing as a trademark of the Baltic Sea region. SBA shall provide information services for its members, operate and maintain databases with market information and develop a central booking office for traditional ships, arrange events, lectures, etc. Bureau Hanse Sail as an entity of the city of Rostock and leader of the BALTIC SAIL Network asked UBC to act as co-patron and to support the project.

Mr Bellgardt informed that the city of Gävle has already made a decision to become a member of the existing network – the Baltic Sail. Mr Roland Methling handed over the Baltic Sail flag and poster to the city of Gävle.

Ms Andersen recommended to support the initiative.

Mr Bjarne Ugland wondered if UBC should be a patron of only one out of many similar organisations in the Baltic Sea Region. Mr Andersen stressed that UBC is not going to favour this particular organisation and is ready to support the others as well, if they apply for it.

Decision:

The Board decided to support the project.

As far as the other proposals from the meeting of Rostock, Kiel, Lubeck, Wismar are concerned, Mr Methling informed that they were sent to the UBC member cities after the UBC Board Meeting in Gdynia.

12. Latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.

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

- 8th Annual Baltic Development Forum Summit, Helsinki, 29-31 October 2006 (Aleksi Randell, Chairman of the City Board of Turku, Mikko Lohikoski, City of Turku)
- VASAB Conference on Future of our Baltic Europe Territory, Warsaw, 6-7 November, (Lars-Göran Boström, UrbanCom Umeå / Björn Grönholm, EnvCom Turku)
- Special consultation with the Swedish CBSS Presidency, and the CBSS Troika in Kalmar, Sweden, 8 November 2006 (Marie-Louise Rönmark, UBC 1st Vice President, Umeå)

- CLRAE Autumn Session, Moscow, 13-15 November 2006, (Ligita Pudza, City of Liepāja)
- B7 General Conference "Maritime Strategies and Sustainable Islands", Mariehamn, 21 November 2006, (Maciej Lisicki, Councillor, City of Gdańsk)
- EUROCITIES General Meeting, Manchester, 22-25 November 2006 (Søren Revsbæk, Deputy Mayor of Næstved)
- 67th Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 6-7 December 2006 (Per Bødker Andersen, President / Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General)
- Hearing with José Manuel Barroso, Structured Dialogue between the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the European and national associations of regional and local authorities, Brussels, 7 December 2006 (Marie-Louise Rönnmark, UBC 1st Vice President, Umeå)
- Conference of the Association of Major Cities of Latvia, Riga, 8 December (Maciej Lisicki, Councillor, Gdańsk)
- "Training Workshop for the Territorial Cooperation Project – Planning", Ancona, 9 February (Anna Sośnicka, UBC Secretariat)

The Board took note of the information. The written information is attached to the minutes.

13. Publication "UBC Business Mixer".

Mr Żaboklicki presented the latest publication "UBC Business Mixer". 40 member cities took part in the Business Mixer project. The new publication contains an interesting and up-to-date material concerning economic profile of each city, the investments opportunities, contact details to the city's departments responsible for entrepreneurship and development and to the organisations supporting business, etc. Thus the UBC Business Mixer can serve as a useful directory for those who are seeking partners and areas to develop their companies. The UBC Business Mixer has been published in 6.000 copies and spread out to all member cities, regional and European organisations and business institutions.

14. Any other business.

14.1 President Andersen informed about the report from the workshop Baltic Cities and Migration Problems–Potentials–Perspectives held by the Commission on Health and Social Affairs and the University of Rostock on 5-7 October 2006.

14.2 UBC Commission on Energy affiliation with Energie Citiés.

President Andersen informed that the UBC Energy Commission on Energy proposed to the UBC Executive Board to apply for an affiliation as a collective member with the Energie Cités network. The Commission is convinced that collaboration and mutual support can enhance our common agenda towards a more energy efficient and environmental conscious Europe. The membership fee would be 2000 € / year.

Decision:

The Board decided the Commission on Energy may affiliate with Energie Citiés and cover the membership fee from its budget.

14.3 Mr Vilis Bruveris, Commission on Youth Issues, informed the Board about the Youth Conference to be held in Pärnu in interaction with the UBC General Conference.

The youth conference entitled “Under the Surface” intends to discuss the thesis: Youth as a resource for more sustainable region – what is it like to be young in the BSR ? Is the BSR a region of possibilities ?

The conference will consist of the following workshops: Young today, Youth info society, Youth and NGO’s, Tolerance and intercultural learning, European Voluntary Service, Keeping the door open – micro-projects for youth.

Organisation of the youth conference at the same time as the UBC General Conference will enable the dialogue of the young people with decision-makers. As mentioned under point 5, one of the GC workshops titled “Involvement of youth in democracy and in the life of society” will be prepared by the commission on youth and attended by the participants of both conferences.

15. Next meeting of the Executive Board, Jekabpils, Latvia, 15 June 2007.

The Board maintained its decision taken at the 47th Board Meeting in Gdynia, to hold its 49th meeting in Jekabpils, Latvia, on 15 June 2007. The invitation from the Mayor of Jekabpils is attached.

16. Closing of the Meeting.

President Per Bødker Andersen expressed his thanks to all participants for the successful meeting and to the City of Gävle for its warm hospitality and closed the 48th Meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Mr Per Bødker Andersen
Chairman

Mr Pawel Zaboklicki
Secretary

Mr Søren Revsbaek
Adjuster

Mr Gunars Ansins
Adjuster