

## Special UBC General Conference (General Assembly)

20 May 2022, 14.00-15.00 CET on-line

### Report

#### 1. Opening of the General Assembly.

President Mantas Jurgutis opened the General Assembly and asked that the representatives hold a minute of silence for the victims and the Ukrainian people. The conference adopted the agenda.

#### 2. Membership of Russian cities.

On 24 February 2022 Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children have been dying due to bombing of housing estates, schools, hospitals. The humanitarian situation is dramatic, people are hiding from bombs in cellars without food, water or heating. Over 6 million of Ukrainians have been forced to flee abroad.

In the face of such a huge tragedy, the UBC Executive Board had a Special Board meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> of March and found the cooperation impossible, so took these decisions until the Special General Assembly makes final decisions.

In the Special Board meeting the Board decided:

- 1) To suspend membership of the Russian cities
- 2) To terminate the cities' positions in the UBC organs/bodies
- 3) To change the location of the next UBC General Conference.

Decisions:

- 1) The General Conference accepted the voting card. The UBC member cities are to cast their votes and scanned voting forms are to be sent to UBC Secretariat by 23 May 2022.
- 2) The General Conference supported the Board decision on terminating the Russian cities' positions in the UBC organs/bodies.
- 3) The General Conference approved the Board decision on changing place of the GC and by same decision called for proposals of a new host. The General Conference empowered the Board to make a choice if there is more than one proposal.

The issue of Russian member cities evoked much conversation:

Jørgen Kristiansen, Kristiansand, UBC Vice President, informed they would vote for suspension of Russian membership. In his opinion the leadership in Russia might change within the next months or years and there should be possibility to unfreeze the relations.

Elina Rantanen, Turku, UBC 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, supported Kristiansand's position and confirmed the city of Turku and Finnish cities were in favour of suspension. That was a decision made also by many organisations, for example the National Coordinator Group for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Roger Kaliff, Kalmar, informed the city of Kalmar suspended the cooperation with its Russian partners and they would vote for suspension of Russian membership in UBC.

Also, city of Luleå decided to freeze all cooperation with Russian twin cities and other partnerships. Daniel Smirat, Luleå, explained they chose suspension, not termination, as they believe it was always about people-to-people relations. He said the city of Luleå would vote for suspension also for UBC.

Linda Ozola, Riga, expressed an opinion on behalf of the Latvian members of UBC who supported the termination of relationships with Russia. The Latvian cities, including the capital Riga, terminated all the bilateral cooperation agreements both with Russian and Belarussian cities. In Latvia's opinion the political leadership on all levels do support the existing political regime in the Russian Federation which has launched the war against Ukraine. So the political leadership of the cities that are members of the UBC network also support the war. Ms Ozola underlined that people in Russia must change and only then any dialogue and cooperation would be possible.

Piotr Grzelak, Gdańsk, UBC Vice President, agreed the cooperation should be started from the beginning on the basis of new values. He supported Latvia's voice and reminded the UBC had been built on values and hope that the Baltic Sea would be the sea surrounded by the democratic countries. Gdańsk was for termination of the membership of the Russian cities.

Mantas Jurgutis, Kaunas, UBC President, underlined he would respect all opinions and would follow the majority decision. He pointed out the biggest value UBC had for 30 years was the dialogue, the strength and the experiences shared together. He appealed to the General Conference for unity in this difficult time no matter what the final decision would be.

The voting results were:

25 for termination

13 for suspension

As a result, the membership of St. Petersburg and Gatchina has been terminated.

3. Establishing of the new UBC Commission on Education 'Learning Cities'. Presentation of Matti Mäkelä, Turku.

The UBC Executive Board was asked to establish a temporary UBC Commission on Education. The task of the temporary commission is to carry out the work plan of the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being, and to prepare for the General Conference (Assembly) a proposal of a new commission along with its long-term objectives. The proposal is supported by the following UBC member cities: Liepaja (Latvia), Naestved (Denmark), Riga (Latvia), Rostock (Germany), Turku (Finland) and Århus (Denmark). To be in line with other commissions it could be named eg. Learning Cities.

The Board decided to establish a new temporary UBC Commission on Education.

Decision:

The General Conference created the new UBC Commission on Education 'Learning Cities'.

4. Associated membership of the City of Vilnyansk (Ukraine). Presentation of Alexei Stoyanovsky. Sustainability Expert Panel (StEP) Ukraine Co-Founder, contact person of Vilnyansk.

Vilnyansk is located in the northeastern part of the Zaporozhye region. It has 14,580 inhabitants. The main industries are machine, chemical and farming industries. Industrial potential is realised through a number of companies. Among the most recognized cultural sites, there are: St. Vladymyr Christian Orthodox Temple, Memorial for those who perished during WW2 and Afghanistan War (1979-1989), Chernobyl Memorial, Aaron Garden Monument to the Victims of Holocaust and Military captives. Vilnyansk offers many green areas to its inhabitants, e.g. the Jubilee Park (17 ha) with over 3.500 plant species.

On 4 April 2022, the Executive Board accepted City of Vilnyansk as an Associated City of UBC.

The video presentation was made. The General Conference warmly welcomed a new member.

5. Information about the loss of infrastructure in Ukrainian cities. Anatolii Komirnyi, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine.

Direct damage caused to Ukrainian infrastructure was presented by Anatolii Komirnyi, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the war, Ukraine has suffered major losses in lives and also infrastructure. Among them, city of Mariupol has suffered the most. There are currently 94,3 billion dollar damages to physical infrastructure and 564-600 billion dollar overall economic losses due to the war – and the numbers are rising.

Many UBC cities are helping Ukrainian cities by sending e.g. buses, money, medicines, food, water and sewage equipment, building machines and many other supplies.

President Jurgutis proposed launching an initiative with the Presidium to those cities who focus on humanitarian aid or any help to Ukraine. A task force could be created to coordinate the information flow.

Mantas Jurgutis  
President

Paweł Żaboklicki  
Secretary General