

FIRST SESSION

**Vision 2030: Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region,
Safe and Prosperous Development – Common Effective
and Sustainable Solutions for the Future**



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Agenda item: *Vision 2030: Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, Safe and Prosperous Development – Common Effective and Sustainable Solutions for the Future*

(Ambassador Ove Ullerup, 2019-2020 Danish Presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States)

INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure for me to share with you the main results of the Danish Presidency and some reflections for the future.

When my predecessor updated your Steering Committee on 2 March, she was quite upbeat in her assessment of what could be achieved. I am happy to confirm that this assessment was well-founded.

THE MINISTERIAL

On 19 May, the reform process was successfully concluded, when the Foreign Ministers of all 11 Member States and a high-level representative of the EU met in a video conference. This extraordinary level of participation was a strong sign of the political support for the reform.

The ministers adopted revised Terms of Reference for the CBSS and for the CBSS Secretariat, with these key objectives:

- more focus and flexibility in the way the CBSS works;
- improved cooperation with other regional cooperation for a;
- better use of the unique strengths of the CBSS in the design and implementation of activities.

In addition, **ministers discussed broad issues** of relevance to the entire region, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, youth engagement, environment and climate-related challenges, and cross-border organized crime. Ministers used the CBSS meeting as a platform for a truly regional dialogue. A dialogue also relevant for cooperation in other regional cooperation formats. At the end of the discussion they adopted the **BORNHOM DECLARATION**.

In our view, this dialogue at the Ministerial was successful, not only because the participation was so strong, but also because the meeting showed that the CBSS platform can really be used for a

broader dialogue on issues facing our region and not just limited to the activities of the organization itself. The recent **Reflection Paper** on the Vilnius Declaration also notes this fruitful and open exchange.

As we now move forward, it will be important to **maintain** this **distinction** between a broader regional dialogue on common challenges of the region and the specific tasks that we assign to the CBSS.

The regional challenges are many and COVID-19 has only provided one more. At the same time, the CBSS has limited financial and personnel resources and ministers have agreed to **focus** its **activities** on the areas **where** the organization is **uniquely suited to add value** for the region and its members. The new guiding documents for CBSS work on Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Children at Risk adopted during our Presidency reflect this approach.

REGIONAL COHERENCE

During our Presidency, we adopted orientations for the CBSS role and engagement within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension.

Regional coherence requires political leadership. Member States have a great responsibility for avoiding overlaps and duplication. If we want better regional coherence, we have to create adequate **incentives in the governance systems** of the regional organizations.

When a new need arises (COVID-19 provides a good example!), regional organizations typically see an opportunity to gain increased visibility and funding and therefore propose new initiatives. Often, this happens without much consideration of regional coherence. This leads to parallel and often competing initiatives. It spreads the activities of each organization, to the detriment of focus and quality. Moreover, it reduce impact and value for money, blurring the roles and mandates.

While our regional organizations need to become more able to react rapidly to new challenges, there is a need to ensure more systemic coherence. Otherwise, **increased flexibility could mean even more overlaps and duplication.**

What can be done? Let me offer you two concrete suggestions:

We can work to insert **wording in the governing documents** of the secretariats of the other regional organizations similar to what has been added the new Terms of Reference of the CBSS Secretariat (“*to promote enhanced dialogue, cooperation and alignment with other regional actors through a regular structured dialogue in the context of existing cooperation formats in the region*”). In addition,

we could ask the Heads of all the secretariats to regularly report to their governing bodies on such coordination efforts.

We may also require “**Regional coherence checks**”. A Secretariat proposal to address a new challenge would have to outline how it fits with the role and mandate of other regional organizations. This would enable Member States to ensure that we avoid overlaps and make decisions that further regional coherence.

NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL

I would also like to mention that we are very pleased that a **new Director General** for the CBSS Secretariat has been appointed, a Director General with a reformed and updated job description. And, very importantly, we were able during our Presidency to recruit the new DG through an open and transparent process.

We hope this open approach will promote trust and help Ambassador Grzegorz Poznanski build the strong relations with all Member States that will be crucial, in order for him and the Secretariat to be able to use its potential in ensuring that we can all harvest the fruits of the reform.

CBSS TROIKA

In conclusion, let me inform you that we have taken the initiative to reinforce cooperation within the **CBSS Troika**. **We do this to seek continuity in our work and effective follow-up of the CBSS reforms**. We are happy to see the solid engagement of both Lithuania and Norway in this effort.

Thank you for your attention