



14th BSSSC Annual Conference
Kiel, 22 September 2006

**Intervention by Ambassador Christer Persson,
Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials
of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS CSO)**

Ladies and gentlemen,

• It is indeed a great pleasure for me to address the 14th BSSSC Annual Conference on behalf of the Swedish CBSS Presidency. This year's BSSSC Annual Conference seems to be in good company since tomorrow various meetings and events of importance for the Baltic Sea Region coincide (Northern Dimension Senior Officials meeting in Imatra/ Finland; 5th ScanBalt Forum – Industry, Academia & Authorities, Collaborating for Excellence in Tartu; Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association Economic Forum in Åbo; and the 14th BSSSC Annual Conference here in Kiel). I would therefore like to thank the organizers of tomorrow's Annual Conference for having made it possible for me to speak already today, one day prior to the actual Conference.

• The mere fact that all these meetings take place on one and the same day shows the diversity of co-operation in our region, of the possibilities and benefits resulting from this, but also the risk to lose the overview and the risk of producing isolated solutions with no common added value. Therefore, the overall objective of the Swedish CBSS Presidency 2006-2007 is *cooperation to achieve common objectives, greater visibility and concrete results in collaboration with other regional councils, structures and organisations, and with countries in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea States.*



Ladies and gentlemen,

- Before elaborating, not in great detail but still in some detail, on the priorities of the Swedish CBSS Presidency 2006-2007 *Energy and Environment, Civil Security and Trade and Investment*, let me describe how the CBSS under its present Swedish leadership intends to work to achieve this overall objective.

- Collaboration with other regional councils: The CBSS being an overall political forum for (practical) regional intergovernmental cooperation works closely together with other regional councils such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Just less than a month ago, on 28 August, these four regional bodies met in Moscow to exchange information on current activities and to discuss the future cooperation especially in the context of the new Northern Dimension policy as of 2007. The lingering feeling of the meeting was that it is indeed time to work, in practical ways, together to achieve those objectives that can be defined as common ones. Sweden will during its tenure at the helm of the CBSS take concrete steps to see to it that this work actually gets under way!

- A very concrete cooperation between regional councils is the joint NCM-CBSS project *Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN)* co-financed by the BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme. The objective of the BEN project is to promote spatial development and territorial integration in the Baltic Sea Region by strengthening Euroregions as competent partners with national authorities and international institutions, and by building a network of Euroregions for continuous capacity-building and sharing of experience. The Lead Partner is the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania. In total 35 partners from nine countries in the Baltic Sea Region take part in the project. This is but one example of co-operation between the CBSS and the NCM, albeit a successful one, and we are together with the NCM currently entertaining also ideas for other joint cooperation projects in the very near future.

- To continue and to enhance the dialogue with other regional councils, the Swedish Presidency of the CBSS has already invited to an extended meeting of active European regional organisations/ councils for the 16th of November in the afternoon. The meeting is to be held in Malmö. Beside the already mentioned councils, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the Baltic Council, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation, the Central European Initiative, the South European Co-operative Initiative, and the Vyshegrad Group will be invited. We will this time, at this first meeting of this



extended kind, not only look for, neither be satisfied with, synergies to avoid duplication, nor with transfers of "best experiences" but seek to identify areas of both mutual and common interest where concrete practical co-operation between various/different bodies could and should be developed.

- Collaboration with other structures and organisations: The CBSS, today more than ever before being a flexible, demand-driven and result-oriented forum for regional cooperation closely follows the work and activities of its Special Participants and Strategic Partners, hence also of the BSSSC. Annual coordination meetings of the Heads and Secretariats of these organisations as well as meetings with the CBSS Presidency and Committee of Senior Officials take place intending not only at an exchange of information, but also at investigating possibilities to join forces. This form of concrete interchange in order to find ways and means for working together at the practical level will be at the centre of our attention when we meet the Special Participants at a meeting in Kalmar in the afternoon of the 8th of November. To that meeting we will invite you, the BSSSC, and other Special Participants. The invitations are to be sent out shortly. To ensure the effectiveness of our co-operation, an annual invitation of a CBSS (Secretariat's) representative to a BSSSC board meeting might be a useful complement to the annual invitation of a BSSSC representative to a CBSS Committee of Senior Officials' meeting.

- Furthermore, the CBSS invites its Special Participants and Strategic Partners to, on occasion voice their views collectively on concrete issues of importance for the region towards the EU – suffice mentioning the CBSS Survey on the Northern Dimension beyond 2006 to which also the BSSSC contributed extensively. It was handed over to the European Commission as a regional contribution to the ongoing discussion on the new Northern Dimension policy as of 1st January 2007. Using this opportunity to speak with one collective and strong voice, gives an added value compared to raising a single voice towards the EU. It makes the Baltic Sea regional input based on 27 CBSS Working Bodies and Structures, Strategic Partners and Special Participants a voice to be taken notice and account of! Thus the interests of the whole of the Baltic Sea region can be forwarded in a form that cannot be misunderstood.

- Collaboration with countries in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea States: The CBSS playing “a key role in helping to underpin a stable, democratic, prosperous and undivided Europe” [Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, cf. *Genscher/Ellemann-Jensen, True Partnership and Co-operation Can Make the Baltic Sea Region a Winner*, Baltinfo No 45 (February 2002), pp. 1-3 (1)] encourages its



Observer States to actively participate in the work of the CBSS structures and working bodies as appropriate, on an ad-hoc basis and according to their expressed interests. Since 2002, the Observer States France, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America are invited on an annual basis to a meeting of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials, at which they are expected to inform about their activities, both planned and completed, in the CBSS framework. In addition, Observer States participate in meetings and support activities of other CBSS Structures and Working Bodies as e.g. projects initiated by the CBSS Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety; the EuroFaculty projects in the Baltic countries and in the Kaliningrad Oblast; the work of the Task Force on Organised Crime in the Baltic Sea Region and the former CBSS Commissioner on Democratic Development. This work together with the Observers should be extended to also other areas of mutual interest to the CBSS Member States and the Observers, in a group or individually.

- During the Swedish CBSS Presidency 2006-2007, the CBSS intends to work actively to increase cooperation especially with the Observer State Ukraine within the framework of CBSS Structures and Working Bodies in which Ukraine has an interest. In addition, the CBSS will work actively to increase practical/technical cooperation with Belarus in areas where there could possibly be mutual practical advantages for both the CBSS Member States and Belarus.
- Let me now elaborate a little bit more on how we intend to implement the Swedish priorities of *Energy and Environment*, *Civil Security* and *Trade and Investment* and transform them into concrete actions [Cf. attached presentation “Swedish Presidency 2006-2007 Priorities and Activities” by Deputy Director Eva Ekmehag, Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden].
- Once again, thank you very much for giving me the chance to – in the full sense of the word – intervene already today and to address tomorrow’s 14th BSSSC Annual Conference. I wish you all success and am looking forward to a further fruitful and result oriented increased cooperation between the BSSSC and the CBSS.

Thank you for your attention.