1. Opening of the BSC Executive Committee meeting

1.1 Welcome remarks were delivered by Mr Richard Sjölund, Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (Region Ostrobothnia). Mr Sjölund explained the aim of the meeting was to finalise the preparation of the upcoming General Assembly of the Baltic Sea Commission, scheduled for 19-20 September 2023, to be held by Västerbotten and Ostrobothnia.

1.2 Approval of the meeting Agenda
The BSC Executive Committee approved the agenda.

1.3 Approval of the draft minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, 24-25 May in Rostock
The BSC Executive Committee approved the minutes of the last Executive Committee meeting in Rostock, Germany (24-25 May 2023).

2. Tour de Table

Update from national representatives:

Pontus Lindberg (Region Skåne):
- Mentioned Sweden's challenges, including fighting inflation and addressing the supply of electricity.

Gustav Hemming (Region Stockholm):
- Presented outcomes of a visit to Brussels with Stockholm Regional Council’s Innovation Board.
- Mentioned the initiation of a 10-year Regional Development Plan for Region Stockholm due to high population growth.
- Expressed interest in the EU Drone Strategy within the Transport Working Group.

Sari Nurro (Oulu Region):
- Noted the start of the implementation of the Northern Programme in the Finnish Parliament.
- Highlighted the Northern Programme’s focus on clean energy, education, and R&D.
- Mentioned Finnish governmental efforts to improve electric mobility and the TEN-T network.
- Discussed the government's interest in offshore wind parks.

Pekka Komu (Region Päijät-Häme):
- Mentioned a change in the regional government's narrative from “green” to “clean”.
- Shared the inauguration of new electric buses and the availability of EV charging stations in Lahti.
- Mentioned Lahti's role in the growing EV industry but expressed concerns about the economic situation.

Romek Kosenkranius (Pärnu, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities):
- Mentioned plans to create a green connection between Pärnu and Tallinn, although fiscal policies may pose challenges.
Jerker Johnson (Region Ostrobothnia):
• Discussed support for regional innovation and the application process for becoming Regional Innovation Valleys.
• Raised concerns about large multi-national companies potentially dominating development and the risks of a “Dutch disease” effect.

Wolf Born (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern):
• Mentioned the development of a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region by Mecklenburg Vorpommern.
• Mentioned regional elections in Hessen and Bavaria and domestic policy challenges.
• Noted discussions within the ruling coalition about subsidising electricity due to high prices.
• Mentioned the German-Finnish Business Forum in Rostock, Germany.

Markku Markkula (Helsinki-Uusimaa Region):
• Mentioned the process of nominating a new Mayor in the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council.
• Emphasised the importance of private-public partnerships in research and innovation.
• Discussed efforts to strengthen pan-Baltic cooperation at regional and Brussels levels.

Richard Sjölund (Region Ostrobothnia):
• Mentioned Finland's new conservative government and concerns related to the True Finns party.
• Highlighted Ostrobothnia’s efforts in updating the Regional Development Plan with a focus on renewable energy sources (RES), offshore wind power, and urban spatial planning.
• Expressed concerns about insufficient funding for regional welfare.

Ramona Dolan (Västerbotten):
• Addressed Sweden’s problems with inflation and rising costs.
• Discussed challenges related to municipal development, housing, and real estate costs in areas like Västerbotten.
• Called for government support for Regional Councils in facilitating municipal development.
• Mentioned an issue related to the Aurora Bothnia train and Skellefteå municipality.

Hanna Honkamäkilä (Oulu Region, Host Region of the BSC Secretariat):
• Informed the Executive Committee about CPMR BSC Executive Secretary Lucille Ehrhart's intention to work remotely more often, while the BSC will still be based in Brussels.

3. BSC Financial Reports

3.1 Ms Hanna Honkamäkilä (Oulu Region, BSC Host Region for 2023-2024) presented the interim Financial Report for 2023 that will be presented during the BSC General Assembly. Key points:
• The report covers expenses from January to July of 2023;
• The BSC budget for 2023 is based on 20 Member Regions, including Lapland, with a total income of €140,000;
• As of the report, approximately €70,000 remains in the budget for the remainder of 2023;
• All BSC Member Regions have paid their membership fees for 2023;
• The Executive Secretary's costs include expenses related to covering Vialto;
• Oulu Region decided not to invoice the costs of handling the BSC Secretariat, and no expenses were invoiced to the organisation by Oulu Regional Council, such as salary and system costs;
• There is currently a BSC surplus of €12,704.
3.2 Intermediary Financial Report for 2023, presented by Ms Hanna Honkamäkilä, Oulu Region (BSC Host Region for 2023-2024)

- Region Västra Götaland has decided to withdraw its membership from the Baltic Sea Commission;
- A new proposal for a Forecast Budget for 2024, accounting for Västra Götaland's withdrawal, was presented;
- The Forecast Budget for 2024 is based on 19 Member Regions (excluding Västra Götaland) with a total income of €133,000 (compared to €140,000 for 2023);
- The proposal suggests not including the use of the surplus in the forecast budget, as the final surplus amount for 2023 is uncertain;
- To balance the budget, some budget lines, specifically travel and office costs, have been reduced;
- Oulu Region negotiated a reduced office rental cost of €500 for the year with the East North Finland EU Office;
- The forecast budget for travel expenses may be adjusted depending on the surplus at the end of 2023.

3.3 Comments

Mr Wolf Born (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) suggested that the BSC should explore the possibility of increasing certain budget allocations if it intends to co-organise the next EUSBSR event in Sweden in 2024. It is crucial that this matter is discussed to secure a prominent role in the event.

4. Preparation of the 28th BSC General Assembly

BSC Executive Secretary Lucille Ehrhart provided a comprehensive overview of the Working Papers for the upcoming CPMR BSC General Assembly scheduled for 19-20 September 2023. Executive Committee Members were invited to react to the following Working Papers:

- Draft Agenda of the General Assembly
- Draft Resolution and presentation of the amendments from Helsinki-Uusimaa, Norrbotten, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Finnish Regions
- Draft BSC Work Plan 2023-2025
- Activity Report 2022-2023
- Financial Reports (already addressed under session 3)

All these documents will be finalised and distributed to BSC Member Regions on 11 September 2023.

Comments on the Draft Resolution included:

- Mr Richard Sjolund (Region Ostrobothnia) expressed support for the inclusion of a solidarity point to aid regions in Finland, Baltic Republics, and Poland in light of Russia's aggression towards Ukraine.
- Mr Gustav Hemming (Region Stockholm) advocated for adding this amendment, emphasising that Sweden should also be mentioned in the joint support area due to Russia's war of aggression. Although Sweden does not share a direct border, the impact on Sweden prompted the application for NATO membership.
- Mr Wolf Born (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) emphasised that it's never too late to offer support to regions affected by Russia's invasion, citing prior special support to regions affected by Brexit.
- Ms Sari Nurro (Oulu Region) suggested that in identifying the regions eligible for solidarity (paragraph 21), the term "external EU border regions" should be considered to potentially include non-EU regions.
5. Report from the BSC Working Groups

1. **Mr Magnus Lagergren (Chair of the BSC Transport Working Group):**
   - Reminded attendees about the forthcoming meeting on the EU Drone Strategy, scheduled to be organised by the CPMR BSC Transport Working Group on 18 October.

2. **Ms Sari Nurro (Chair of the BSC Maritime Working Group):**
   - Acknowledged the extensive participation in the joint Working Group (WG) meeting on sustainable mobility in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).
   - Announced the next WG meeting in November, to be held in Stockholm and hosted by the Stockholm Region, led by Isabella Palomba Ryden.

3. **Mr Markku Markkula (Chair of the BSC Energy Working Group):**
   - Informed attendees about an upcoming seminar organised on hydrogen and the acceleration of hydrogen development.
   - Emphasised that the meeting's impact would extend beyond the energy sector, influencing investment, electrification, and infrastructure development, and attracting interest from regions outside the Baltic area.

4. **Pontus Lindberg (Vice-Chair of the BSC Energy Working Group):**
   - Highlighted the possibility of a future in-person meeting for the WG in Skåne.

6. Report from the BSC Secretariat

Update by **Ms Lucille Ehrhart**, BSC Executive Secretary:

- **BSC participation in 9th VASAB Ministerial meeting (2 June, Wismar)**
  The BSC President Tomas Mörtsell and Executive Secretary Lucille Ehrhart participated in the 9th VASAB Ministerial meeting that took place on 2 June in Wismar in Germany at the invitation of German Minister Klara Geywitz. The highlight of the event was the adoption of the new VASAB Vision 2040 for a vibrant, resilient, and well-connected Baltic Sea Region by the Ministers responsible for spatial planning, Heads of Delegations from VASAB Members States and pan-Baltic organisations. BSC President Tomas Mörtsell was invited to comment on the vision from a regional perspective and highlighted some key BSC messages. Read more about the event: [BSC endorses VASAB vision 2040 at 9th VASAB Ministerial Conference](#)

- **BSC representation at an ESPON seminar about “Territorial perspective of green industrialisation” (14 June, Luleå)**
  On 14 June, BSC President Tomas Mörtsell was invited to participate as a speaker in a seminar in Luleå focusing on a “territorial perspective on green industrialisation”, co-organised by the ESPON programme and the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council. The seminar aimed to discuss with various actors how to make green industrialisation a success and benefits for the people and how to address challenges that the region and municipalities need to deal with.

- **Participation in the CPMR Political Bureau (8-9 June, Region Tuscany, Firenze)**
  Among other outcomes, the PB led to the adoption of the CPMR Proposals for the Simplification of Cohesion Policy.

- **Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (28-29 August, Berlin)**
  The BSC President was invited to participate but could not attend, nor the BSC Executive Secretary.
• **BSSSC Annual Conference (12-13 September, Szczecin)**
  At the invitation of Mr Olgierd Geblewicz (BSSSC Chair and President of West Pomerania Region), BSC President Tomas Mörtsell was invited to the BSSSC Conference in September. The focus will be on celebrating 30 years of the BSSSC, highlighting the role of regions in times of crisis – challenges and opportunities of the green transformation. Tomas Mörtsell will be a speaker in the session “the role of regions in the time of crises and green transformation”.

• **European Commission high-level event “Our Baltic” (29 September, Palanga)**
  At the invitation of European Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, the European Commission is organising the 2nd edition of the “Our Baltic Conference”. This high-level event will bring together Ministers from the 8 EU Baltic Sea Region countries and stakeholders. BSC President Tomas Mörtsell has been invited to participate and react on “Promoting Sustainable Blue Economy Development in the Baltic Sea while Protecting the Baltic Sea Environment”.

• **EUSBSR Annual Forum (4-5 October, Riga)**
  On 4 October, the BSC is co-organising, together with Southwest Finland, Västerbotten and PA Innovation of the EUSBSR, a workshop on the topic of a macro-regional approach to the new Regional Innovation Valley concept.

• **Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (11 October, Tallinn)**
  The 15th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, organised by the EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism Coordinators will take place on 11 October 2023 in Tallinn, Estonia. The event will be an opportunity to discuss a shared vision for addressing the key challenges in tourism development around the Baltic Sea. The BSC Executive Secretary will have a speaking slot during this event.

### 7. Closing session

#### 7.1 Any other business

- Candidacies for CPMR Presidency are now open after the resignation of CPMR President Cees Loggen. As of 8 September 2023, candidacies have arrived from Brittany and Crete.
- Regions interested in doing so can apply to be in charge of modifying the collective manifesto of the CPMR in preparation of the CPMR General Assembly in St Malo.
- **Mr Gustav Hemming (Region Stockholm)** signaled that the EC has proposed to reduce or ban large-scale herring fishing; it is a positive proposition, as the Region supports protection of marine wildlife, but local small-scale fishing has no impact on the reinvigoration of the herring stocks in the Baltic Sea and should be tolerated and supported.

#### 7.2 Next BSC statutory meetings:

- **17-18 January 2024**: BSC Executive Committee, Strasbourg, France
- **22-23 May 2024**: BSC General Assembly, Kotka, Finland
- **Autumn 2024**: BSC Executive Committee, Lahti, Finland

#### 7.3 CPMR statutory meetings

- **CPMR General Assembly**, 15-17 November 2023, Saint Malo

**Concluding remarks**

Mr Richard Sjölund concluded the meeting by thanking participants.