In a context of brutal and illegal aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission express their full solidarity towards Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. What is happening in Ukraine has a particular echo for the people in the regions around the Baltic Sea, living close to the Russian borders. With Russia’s aggression, Baltic Sea cooperation that has been built step by step has been partially broken and damaged. However, we reaffirm our will to maintain and reinforce close cooperation across borders to build a safe, secure, resilient, sustainable, prosperous and competitive Baltic Sea Region within Europe. Therefore, we call on EU decision-makers and national governments to contribute, ensuring:

1) A **safe and secure Baltic Sea Region** through increased support to interregional cooperation in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region;

2) A **greener and resilient Baltic Sea Region** leading the way on the production of clean energy, based on territorial strengths;

3) A **better-connected Baltic Sea Region**, based on a functional TEN-T promoting territorial accessibility and sustainable mobility;

4) A **Baltic Sea Region based on a Sustainable Blue Economy**, including the development of sustainable coastal tourism;

5) An **effective implementation of the new EU Arctic Policy**, based on multi-level cooperation and the involvement of regional authorities;

6) A **balanced and sustainable regional development** across the Baltic Sea Region through an ambitious EU Cohesion Policy.
1) A safe and secure Baltic Sea Region through increased support to interregional cooperation in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:
- Reiterates its messages calling for peace, solidarity and cooperation with Ukraine and its people as expressed in the Statement “CPMR Baltic Sea Commission stands with Ukraine and its people” adopted in March 2022 by the BSC Executive Committee;
- States that with the Russian attack on Ukraine, the conditions for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region have changed fundamentally and require a new assessment. Welcomes in that perspective the reflection process that has been started by the German Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and proposes its support to this process as a voice of the regions in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Deplores the impact of the conflict on cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, however, reiterates its commitment to intensify cooperation with other pan-Baltic organisations to ensure a peaceful and reliable neighbourliness in the Baltic Sea Region in times of crisis;
- Welcomes the renewed strategic vision – the Vilnius II Declaration – a vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030 - and the subsequent CBSS Action Plan, which were adopted during the CBSS Ministerial Meeting in June 2021 as well as the Kristiansand Declaration adopted in May 2022 by the Foreign Ministers of the BSR under the Norwegian CBSS Presidency;
- Underlines the importance to mobilise all resources available on macro-regional, national, regional and local levels in order to make Baltic Sea cooperation as resilient and successful as possible in order to promote the urgent adaptation processes in Baltic Sea countries in the fields of energy supply and security, climate change and digitisation;
- Considers the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to be an appropriate reference frame for action which should be further strengthened through a systematic multilevel governance approach;
- Stresses the importance to associate regional authorities in the implementation of the EUSBSR Action Plan to promote the green and digital transitions of the Baltic Sea Region through the promotion of strategic cooperation partnerships.

2) A greener and resilient Baltic Sea Region leading the way on the production of clean energy, based on territorial strengths

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:
- Stresses that Russia's unprovoked aggression in Ukraine worsens the situation on the energy market. Therefore, welcomes the ambition of the European Commission initiative “REPowerEU”, to accelerate Europe’s energy transition and strongly strive to be independent of Russian fossil fuels, whilst acknowledging the need to increase production of green energy, diversify energy supply and reduce demand for energy;
- Regrets the possibility for Member States to transfer up to 12.5% of their Cohesion Policy funding to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The lack of a territorial approach in the RRF threatens the regional implementation of the Just Energy Transition;
- Recalls that energy transition should be based on territorial strengths and that smart specialisation strategies, regional land-use plans, in particular maritime spatial plans, and the R&D capacity in regions have potential in that regard;
- Underlines that regions are places where innovative companies are contributing to the path towards net zero emissions;
- Stresses the importance of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change and in protecting biodiversity. Solutions and shared working methods are needed to support balanced and multifunctional use of forests with a science-based approach to the multiple roles of forests in the diverse areas such as carbon sequestration, bioeconomy, biodiversity, wood construction, energy production and recreation and health, whilst taking into account the different conditions of the member regions to meet increased energy demands;

- Highlights the need for further support to enable a full-scale transition from a linear to circular economy in the EU. Territories in the Baltic Sea Region have a huge potential in becoming global forerunners in a circular economy. Both funding and support, and regulations are required in order to enable effectively leaving behind the old linear economic model and transition into a circular economy as a basis for a new competitive and sustainable economy;

- Welcomes the Marienborg Declaration adopted during the Baltic Sea Energy Security Summit in August 2022, that underlines the importance of urgent and immediate actions to increase energy resilience by making Europe, and especially the Baltic Sea Region, independent of Russian energy as soon as possible. The Baltic Sea holds a substantial but largely untapped potential for offshore wind.

3) A better-connected Baltic Sea Region, based on a functional TEN-T promoting territorial accessibility and sustainable mobility

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:
- Stresses that the transport sector will play a key role in achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Reiterates the importance of supporting the development of innovative technologies and alternative energy solutions including biofuels in providing climate efficient energy solutions;
- Considers the revision of the TEN-T regulation to be of importance to reinforce territorial accessibility and connectivity, while promoting a climate neutral transport system to achieve the Green Deal. Therefore, calls on the EU co-legislators to take into account messages included in the BSC Position Paper on TEN-T, and the concrete demand for changes as indicated in the Annex.

4) A Baltic Sea Region based on a Sustainable Blue Economy, including the development of sustainable coastal tourism

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:
- Highlights that tourism, especially in coastal regions, represents an important area of strength for regional development and that the main challenges for sustainable tourism are to spread visitors across the region and over seasons, transport and accessibility in coastal and remote regions, and dealing with uncertainties arising for tourism from the Russian aggressions in Ukraine;
- Underlines that the coastal tourism industry requires stability to be able to thrive in a sustainable way after the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises to develop and cooperate and creating conditions to recruit a workforce;
- Welcomes the new HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. As an observer in HELCOM, the BSC Maritime Working Group is following and supporting the implementation of the Action Plan’s four segments: Biodiversity, Eutrophication, Hazardous substances and litter, and Sea-based activities;
- Underlines the importance of small-scale fishing as a cultural-historical value, an identity, for food security and for the economic development of coastal and archipelago communities, and therefore calls on the EU to support the further development of small-scale fishing in the revised Common Fisheries Policy.
5) An effective implementation of the new EU Arctic Policy, based on multi-level cooperation and the involvement of regional authorities

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:
- Welcomes the EU’s commitment in Arctic matters and stresses that the implementation of the EU Arctic Policy must rely on the involvement of regions. Therefore, calls for the creation of an Advisory Forum as set out in the BSC Policy Position reacting to the new EU Arctic Strategy;
- Calls on EU institutions to offer stronger support to clean energy technologies, forestry, sustainable extraction, and innovative solutions in the Arctic to contribute to the Green Deal;
- Calls for the TEN-T Regulation to include major strategic routes and links to increase the territorial accessibility of the Arctic, as mentioned in the BSC Policy Position on TEN-T.

6) A balanced and sustainable regional development across the Baltic Sea Region through an ambitious EU Cohesion Policy

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
- Welcomes the 8th Cohesion Report and appreciates the attention to the added value of territorial and cross-border cooperation programmes, the importance of the partnership principle and multi-level governance and believes that Cohesion Policy is a long-term investment for regional development;
- Is concerned about the implementation of Cohesion Policy that faces challenges due to delays, multiplication and fragmentation of funds. Also, the risk of prolonged economic and geopolitical uncertainty has an indirect impact and should be taken into account. Therefore, this calls for measures to ensure an effective rollout of Cohesion Policy programmes for 2021-2027;
- Insists on the necessity to exhaustively apply Art. 174 of the TFEU, effectively addressing structural geographical constraints and specific needs that hinder islands’, cross-border, mountain regions and sparsely populated regions with very low population density’s development, and therefore regrets that the 8th Cohesion Report – although pointing out the need for a new development paradigm for less developed regions and peripheral regions – does not address in a comprehensive manner the situation of territories beset by permanent geographical handicaps, as per Art. 174, thus systematically neglecting the insular dimension of territorial disparities as previous cohesion reports;
- Underlines the importance of the Interreg Programmes for Europe and for the Baltic Sea Region as instruments for creating territorial cohesion and believes that creating territorial cooperation has become of greater importance than ever in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.