Building together a secure, stable and resilient Baltic Sea Region

*Adopted by the BSC General Assembly on 21-23 May 2024 (Kotka, Kymenlaakso, Finland)*

Russia’s illegal attack against Ukraine has created a new geopolitical situation in Europe, particularly impacting the Baltic Sea Region. With Finland and Sweden joining NATO, the Baltic Sea is almost an inland sea of NATO. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) points out that this shift in security has significant social, economic, territorial, and military impacts for the Baltic Sea Region and its regions and therefore calls for increased collaboration at all levels.

Ahead of the EU elections in June 2024, the BSC Member Regions urge the new European Parliament and the new College of Commissioners to develop an ambitious future generation of EU policies with regions fully involved in their design and implementation. These policies should serve a long-term EU agenda, supported with adequate funding. They must continue achieving the EU Green Deal ambition while ensuring cohesion, stability, cooperation, and security. These policies should build upon the existing regional initiatives for the green transition of Europe.

Indeed, the Baltic Sea Region is in many ways already contributing and leading the way to the decarbonisation of Europe. It is one of the most dynamic and innovative areas within the EU and contributes significantly to EU competitiveness. For this to continue, the Baltic Sea Region and its regions require special attention and support from the EU.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Member Regions call upon the EU institutions:

- **to safeguard European values, set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on the EU.** They constitute the common ground for regional collaboration with democratic partners around the Baltic Sea Region to build a sustainable, resilient, and well-connected macro-region.

- **to ensure social, economic, and territorial cohesion within the Baltic Sea Region and Europe.** It is imperative to have a strong Cohesion Policy covering all regions after 2027, with regions fully involved both in the design and delivery. The Interreg programmes should also be reinforced in the future to help address cross-border challenges and continue to bring people closer. Furthermore, BSC regions call for adequate EU support to regions bordering Russia facing difficulties and posing serious risk of increasing regional disparities.

- **to ensure seamless decarbonised transport of goods and people within, to, and from the Baltic Sea Region.** The BSC regions call for improving cross-border connections and resilience of the transport network to strengthen the security of supply of strategic goods in the Baltics and the rest of Europe, and movement of people. As the North Sea Baltic and the Scan-Med corridors have gained strategic importance, including for military mobility, it is necessary to improve the capacity of infrastructures of all transport modes for a dual-use purpose. In this regard, BSC regions call for more EU budget for transport in the future, and therefore a robust CEF III.
- to strengthen energy security in the Baltic Sea Region by supporting the diversification of regional energy mixes via adapted EU regulatory framework and funding instruments. BSC regions also call for an upgrade of energy infrastructure and promote their interconnectivity. Considering the growing energy needs in many sectors, the BSC regions call on the EU to foster an increased production of clean energy. The BSC regions call on the EU to foster efforts to improve energy efficiency and energy supply in order to promote low prices, climate-neutrality and energy security.

- to ensure the security of maritime transport in the Baltic Sea for a dual-use purpose. Ports in the Baltic Sea Region must be further supported in their developments, not only in light of their growing strategic security importance, but also in ensuring security of supply in the Baltic Sea Region, and as hubs of the green transition and sustainable blue economy. BSC regions call for the allocation of adequate EU resources and enhanced coordination in the areas of maritime and air surveillance. It is essential in the future to continue ensuring a fully functioning and operational maritime traffic monitoring system VTS (Vessel Traffic Service) by the European Maritime Safety Agency in the Baltic Sea.

- to support (blue) food security in the Baltic Sea Region by supporting local and sustainable agriculture, including sustainable small-scale fishing. BSC regions also recall that the protection and the restoration of the Baltic Sea must be a priority for EU, national, and regional actors. Furthermore, recall the importance of the involvement of regional authorities in national maritime plans. Maritime Spatial Planning plays a crucial role for a sustainable exploitation of maritime ecosystems and biodiversity.

- to increase EU support for a sustainable development, just green transition and stability of the European Arctic. The BSC calls for further EU investments in people, infrastructure and public services in the Arctic. Overall, there should be better consideration of Arctic issues in future EU policies and programmes, including in the upcoming revised Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

- to reinforce the role of regions in the revision process of the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. A greater role for Regional Authorities in the design, governance, and implementation of the Strategy, combined with more targeted cooperation actions, would enhance ownership and engagement of the Strategy, and its overall impact.

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1 Read: CPMR position on the future of Cohesion Policy post-27
CPMR position on the future of INTERREG
The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Member Regions:

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Gathered together in Kotka, on 21-23 May 2024 for the 29th General Assembly