



RESOLUTION of the IX Baltic Sea NGO Forum

to the 8th Summit of the Baltic Sea States due on 1-2 June 2010

17 April 2010, Vilnius

We, the participants of the IX Baltic Sea Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGO) Forum, representing over 200 civil society organisations from Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden, have assembled 16 to 17 April 2010 in Vilnius, Lithuania, to discuss difficulties and challenges the civil society in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region faces and highlight the necessity to ensure an active engagement of society in the development of public policies, transparent and accountable governance and in decision-making processes at international and national levels.

The Forum focused on the core areas of civil society empowerment, in particular interregional cooperation, fostering innovations and strengthening of the NGO sector.

The participants of the Forum agreed that the will to democratisation and involvement of the civil society should always be matched with its political implementation. In building a socially responsible, inclusive, fair and democratic European society, we find it important that the dialogue related to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is not limited to the EU institutions, the Governments of the Baltic Sea Region and the Project implementers, and shall actively involve the civil society and business sector of the region. The civil society dimension shall constitute an integral part of each element of the Strategy. Likewise, social responsibility of the business sector will be fostered and partnerships with public institutions and NGOs enforced while actively engaging private sector actors in the implementation of the Strategy.

Being aware that not all countries of the Baltic Sea Region are members of the EU, we are convinced that it is essential to establish instruments ensuring cooperation among all countries as equal partners. As a first step, we advocate the establishment of a non-visa regime in the border areas of the EU with the third countries that would facilitate people to people interaction.

We believe that trans-national cooperation among NGOs themselves as well as between public bodies and NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region shall be given priority and support. Therefore we urge the European Parliament and the European Commission, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Governments to undertake specific measures that would help advance the region to the forefront of the international practices of civic participation and would become one of the hallmarks of the region. In view of the above, we appeal to the Council to include in its agenda the following measures:

- To set up joint annual forum of NGOs, socially responsible corporate businesses and politicians to consider the implementation process of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its further development;
- To work out a regional NGO development program and set up the fund to promote NGO cooperation, establishment and strengthening of regional networks;



LITHUANIAN PRESIDENCY 2009–2010



- To further promote intersectoral cooperation between academics, businesses, NGOs and public institutions and encourage their partnerships by improving and extending the conditions of the existing support instruments for the region, i.e. European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and the programs of the Nordic Council of Ministers. To this end, shared interests have to be defined and relevant capacities and skills developed, also best practices of public-private partnerships, including those involving direct person-to-person contacts should be exchanged. Also a common task group of representatives from the BS NGO Network and Baltic Development Forum shall be established to develop joint action plans;
- To establish specific measures that would enable NGOs, including small and grassroots organisations, from the region, and in particular Russia, to participate in the implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Program;
- To urge Governments to approve national NGO development programs that would set up cooperation patterns and principles between government institutions and NGOs and ensure transparent representation of civil society interests at national and local levels;
- To encourage Governments to involve NGOs on an adequate footing in the development and implementation of national public policies throughout the entire process, starting from policy formulation, drafting documentation, consultations and evaluation; also to establish joint bodies at national and local levels to consider the issues of public interest. In view of the above, we urge all countries to implement the **Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process** adopted by the Council of Europe on 1 October 2009;
- To initiate regional surveys under the Council of the Baltic Sea States on the level of engagement of civil society in the decision-making processes at national and local levels and best practices in individual countries, the enforcement of the existing legislation, the public benefit of NGO activity and its input into national GDPs and the funding resources;
- To increase competitive capacities of NGOs not only by encouraging the use of new technologies, but also by facilitating the design of innovations by NGOs that will enforce the sustainability of social developments;
- To support the official setting of the World NGO Day. Following the discussions among non-governmental organizations and members of the Baltic Sea NGO network from **Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden**, the Coordinating Committee on behalf of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2010 (16 to 17 April 2010, Vilnius, Lithuania) has approved the necessity to promote the official setting of the "Worldwide NGO Day", proposed by the Civic Alliance-Latvia. The World NGO Day is to be announced as an official UN observance day according to the UN resolution.

On behalf of the Coordinating Committee of the Baltic Sea NGO Network

Martinas Žaltauskas