

1. Under the chairmanship of the German Federal Minister for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development, Professor Klaus Töpfer, the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea States held their fourth conference in Stockholm on 22 October 1996. They thanked the Swedish government for its hospitality and for the choice of conference venue which made close co-operation possible at the Informal Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of the Environment held on 21 October 1996.
2. The coupling of economic development needed in cities and regions with a cautious use of the coastal zone and landscape in the hinterland can only be achieved within the framework of a policy of sustainable development in keeping with the document "Agenda 21", adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (1992). The Baltic Sea State Summit in Visby, 3-4 May 1996, recommended drawing up an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region.
3. The Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning welcome the Declaration made by the Ministers of the Environment at their Informal Meeting of 20-21 October with the decision to draw up an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region by early 1998. They pledge full support for the preparation of this regional Agenda 21 and instruct the Committee on Spatial Development to co-operate closely with HELCOM and the Senior Officials Group established by the Ministers of the Environment to this end. They agree with the established time-table which states inter alia that a progress report be presented to the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in June 1997
4. The Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning will play an active role in this important political process from the outset. A regional Agenda 21 must place particular emphasis on harmonising regional development opportunities and development requirements with environmental concerns. Due to its multi-sectoral approach spatial planning contributes to improving the shaping of sectoral policies in accordance with regional circumstances, to securing the legal basis of locational decisions of private investors and helps to reconcile international, national, regional and local interests in the development of cities and regions.
5. Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region represents a great chance of integrating economies at very different stages of development to mutual advantage. A policy of strengthening regional cohesion has been initiated by the European Union, CBSS, VASAB 2010 and international organisations. Subsequently, regional development projects have to be realised in accordance with the criteria of sustainability comprising economic, social and ecological aspects. Such criteria of sustainability should guide regional impact assessments.
6. This approach should be demonstrated inter alia by the following projects described in the report „From Vision to Action” which has been drawn up by the Committee on Spatial Development of the Baltic Sea Region and approved by the fourth Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development:
 - setting up a programme on sustainable settlement and urban networks development („pearls”);
 - combining the development of a European Transport Network with sustainable regional development i.e. concerning the corridors („strings”)

mentioned in the chapter on mobility networks in the report „From Vision to Action”;

- establishing a set of pilot projects to manage the sustainable development of specific areas („patches”), i.e. cross-border areas, islands, lakelands, cultural landscapes, rural and forest areas, coastal zones, nature protection areas;
- creating a network of marinas taking account of criteria for regional and environmental impact;
- elaborating a maritime transport programme with port hinterland connections and focusing on multimodal transport centres;
- building up a monitoring system of spatial development for the BSR;
- organising regional conferences for the presentation of key projects and a permanent project management for the implementation of VASAB 2010.

7. Conflicts of spatial development are mostly concentrated in the coastal zone. The Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning will therefore take appropriate measures to ensure the implementation of the „Common recommendations for spatial planning of the coastal zone in the Baltic Sea Region”, prepared by CSD/BSR.

8. Synergy effects can be achieved through regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region and through reconciliation of the diverse activities in the region by adopting appropriate spatial development policies. The new Community Initiative on Spatial Development (INTERREG II C) drawn up by the European Commission, offers new opportunities as an important instrument in this context. The countries and institutions involved should contribute to achieving the ambitious goals and objectives set out in the spatial development perspective VASAB 2010 by establishing suitable spatial development projects with the support of this Initiative.

9. The European Commission should establish the necessary pre-conditions to ensure that joint development actions and projects in the Baltic Sea Region can be financed both out of funds provided under the Community Initiative INTERREG II C and under the support programmes PHARE and TACIS for countries in transition. Only by integrating these two support mechanisms of the European Commission will it be possible to carry out transnational development projects initiated by the Member States of the EU and other countries along the Baltic Sea, designed to promote the spatial cohesion of this region. The necessary conditions enabling the Baltic transition countries to participate in the elaboration and implementation of the INTERREG II C Operational Programme should also be ensured.

10. The co-operation among the countries, regions and cities of the Baltic Sea Region within the framework for implementing VASAB 2010, which draws upon the Community Initiative INTERREG II C will be the focus of attention in the future activities of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning.

11. Therefore the Ministers stressed the necessity for the secretariat of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning to work closely together with the management structure set up to implement the Community Initiative INTERREG II C. The long-term aim is to merge the two administrative agencies on condition that co-ordination between spatial planning projects and actions financed under PHARE, TACIS and INTERREG II C are achieved.

12. The Ministers welcome the offer made by the German Chairman to invite VASAB countries to an international Conference to be held in Spring 1997 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which will seek to reinforce the dialogue between the States, cities and regions that is required to facilitate the implementation of transnational spatial planning

projects and to guarantee improved integration of the projects in decentralised planning systems.

13. The Ministers will have this Stockholm Declaration translated into their respective national languages and will pass it on to their national parliaments. They ask the Chairman to send this Declaration to the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly and to the institutions of the European Union (Council, European Parliament, Commission, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee), requesting them to support the objectives and the practical measures proposed in their respective spheres of responsibility.

14. The Ministers welcome an offer of Latvia to host next Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development in Riga.