

Wismar Declaration

2 June 2023

Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) is an intergovernmental co-operation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of the Baltic Sea Region. VASAB is part of the network of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, as well as coordinates the policy area ‘Spatial Planning’ within the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region jointly with HELCOM.

VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region and provides a forum for exchange of knowledge on spatial planning and development among the Baltic Sea countries. VASAB recommends transnational policy measures, promotes methodology development and co-operation projects, co-operates with other pan-Baltic initiatives and promotes a dialogue with sector institutions. For fulfilling those tasks, VASAB takes into account also strategies and policies on global, European, European Union, pan-Baltic and national levels, and provides input into these.

The Ministers, having met at the 9th Conference in Wismar on 2nd June 2023, upon the invitation of Germany, discussed the complex challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region in the face of geopolitical and energy policy changes, with a particular focus on the challenges posed by the unjustified and unprovoked full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and building on the Declaration of the last Ministerial Conference of VASAB in 2014, in which we set out our common vision for addressing the current challenges based on our shared values have adopted the following Declaration:

[Russia/Ukraine]

The Ministers,

1. express deep concern and condemn in the strongest terms the illegal war of aggression of the Russian Federation and it's accomplice Belarus against Ukraine,
2. confirm the decision from March last year to **suspend Russia and Belarus** from the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region, from the steering groups of the EUSBSR policy area "Spatial Planning" for land and maritime spatial planning, and from participation in related activities due to these circumstances,
3. commit to support cities and regions in their efforts to tackle direct consequences of war, e.g., influx of refugees, and acknowledge the important role of spatial planning and development to safeguard critical infrastructure, provide energy security, strengthen the capacity to act and enhance the **resilience** of the Baltic Sea Region,
4. emphasize the **necessity of close cooperation** and coordination between the Baltic Sea States to ensure peace and security, as well as democracy and human rights in the whole region.

[VASAB]

The Ministers,

5. underline the importance and enduring necessity of over 30 years of intergovernmental cooperation. This has led to the formulation of visions, strategies, joint actions and projects, raised awareness about spatial planning and development. Furthermore, it has influenced the designing of policies, planning processes and legislation at various levels,

6. recognize the Baltic Sea Region as a forerunner in **Maritime Spatial Planning** and acknowledge the implementation of maritime spatial planning by the VASAB Member States,

7. welcome the well-established co-operation between VASAB and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (**HELCOM**) and macro-regional policy framework on coherent maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea and endorses the Baltic Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030 as a guiding document for the continuation of these joint efforts,

8. appreciate the cooperation between the **CBSS and VASAB**, including in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and noted the adoption of the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 by the 9th VASAB ministerial conference as an example of successful cooperation to tackle the challenges facing the region,

9. acknowledge the role of VASAB as the Policy area 'Spatial Planning' lead coordinator within the **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** providing a platform for collaboration with other thematic policy areas,

10. acknowledge that we can tackle the considerable spatial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region only through **integrated multi-level cooperation** and highlight the importance of collaboration with our partners in the Baltic Sea Region in this context, by using and applying various cooperation platforms, networks and formats targeted to spatial planners and other stakeholders,

11. welcome the VASAB initiative to organise **Young Planners Summer Schools** by bringing together young professionals in the field of spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region,
12. express its gratitude to Germany for its successful 2022-2023 Chairmanship of VASAB and welcome Finland as **incoming Chairmanship** from July 2023,
13. extend our gratitude to the **VASAB Secretariat** for their valuable work in facilitating international cooperation in spatial planning and appreciate their contributions to achieving a more balanced spatial planning throughout the Baltic Sea Region,
14. affirm the continuity of the VASAB Secretariat located in **Riga, Latvia** as functionally independent entity until 31 December 2029 enabling the Secretariat to benefit from the established local networks and the competent team in Riga,
15. reaffirm our commitment to provide VASAB with the necessary **financial resources** to execute their tasks efficiently.

[VASAB VISION 2040]

The Ministers,

16. acknowledge and express concern about the **new challenges and trends** that have emerged in the Baltic Sea Region and globally in recent years, including the changing security situation, the impact of climate change and demographic trends,
17. express satisfaction with the work done since the last Ministerial Conference by the **Committee on Spatial Planning and Development** in the Baltic Sea Region, especially in initiating in 2019 the update of the "Long-Term Perspective 2030" for the time horizon of 2040,
18. welcome the open and co-creative elaboration **process of the VASAB Vision** for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 that were carried out in close cooperation with relevant partners and stakeholders,

- 19.** endorse the new version of the Long-Term Perspective "**VASAB Vision 2040**" as a positive strategic-visionary framework for a vibrant, well-connected and resilient spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region thereby strengthening the territorial dimension of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region,
- 20.** emphasize the importance of continuing efforts between countries, regions and cities, as well as the Baltic Sea organisations in **implementing the VASAB Vision 2040** in the future as well as recognizing it in their relevant policies and documents and support with the help of the VASAB Secretariat, networks of all relevant actors,
- 21.** ask **the German chairmanship, in co-operation with the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development** and the Secretariat, to **distribute this Declaration** and the VASAB Vision 2040 to relevant national, Baltic, European and global actors.