



VILNIUS II DECLARATION "A VISION FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION BY 2030"

1. On 1 June 2021, the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden and the European Union met in a video conference hosted by the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States instead of in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives underlined the importance of regional cooperation, fostering mutual understanding, building trust, ensuring stability and promoting people-to-people contacts. They expressed satisfaction, that the Baltic Sea Region ("the Region") despite complex global and regional challenges, accomplished successful achievements in key areas of cooperation, enabled by political dialogue and practical cooperation involving diverse actors on various levels.

They approved the progress in sustainable development that has been achieved in the Region following the political commitment in the first Vilnius Declaration "***A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020***" ("***Vilnius I***"), adopted in Vilnius on 2 June 2010 by Heads of Government and other high-level representatives in the Region.

3. The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives agreed to maintain the overall objective of the Region to become one of the most sustainable, prosperous, innovative and competitive regions in the world using the strengths of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and other Baltic Sea regional cooperation frameworks. They agreed to provide further political guidance for the coordinated development of the Region, and made a political commitment to realize "***A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030***" ("***Vilnius II***") as set out below:

- All countries in the Region uphold the rule of law, democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- The Region has a strong and well-functioning multi-level governance structure for political dialogue, practical cooperation, and people-to-people contacts. It also has a coherent system of cooperation networks leading to better synergies between them and thus enabling a swift adaptation to new circumstances and effective assistance to regional stakeholders in tackling old and new challenges.

- Young people participate and are represented in a meaningful way in institutions and decision-making processes giving impetus to efforts to reach a more resilient, gender equal and safe Region. The Region also benefits from an active civil society, vibrant and enhanced exchanges between people that help nurture a shared regional identity.

- The ecological health of the Baltic Sea has been restored and the ecosystem is thriving, as a result of strong efforts by littoral States and other regional and international actors across

the Baltic Sea catchment area. The degradation of nature areas and damage to biological diversity have stopped.

- The Region has in line with UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, taken resolute steps, including de-carbonisation, towards climate neutrality and to climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural sinks, such as forests. The introduction of circular economy and increased generation, exchange and use of clean and renewable energy have significantly reduced the negative ecological foot-print in the Region. The green and blue economy is based on innovation, creates jobs and ensures competitiveness.

- The Region has recovered from the COVID pandemic by building back better and greener with strengthened resilience across all parts of society. It is characterised by dynamic economies and societies, with all countries effectively reducing the welfare gap within and among them by actively promoting employment, development of new skills, social inclusion and gender equality ensuring good public health, active ageing and other policies to offset demographic challenges. The Region's success is underpinned by responsive public services, sound socio-economic development and the positive dynamics of new, innovative and green investments.

- A high level of digitalization and a cohesive digital infrastructure allow all parts of society to profit from digital solutions that adhere to high ethical standards. The countries of the Region promote innovative technologies and help entrepreneurs develop new services for individuals and businesses. The Region is well protected against cyber threats and has strengthened its defence against wilful distortion of information and factual data. Artificial intelligence and other new and emerging technologies play an important role in industry, public administration and the provision of services, without jeopardising personal freedom, family life and democratic participation, governance and control.

- The Region experiences significant progress in regional cooperation in civil protection, especially the prevention, preparedness and response against emergencies, including oil pollution, forest fires and in maritime search and rescue. Similarly, the Region has achieved significant progress in the protection of children at risk, and in fighting organized crime, including all forms of trafficking, especially in human beings.

- Close cooperation in education, science, research and innovation, and the exchange of ideas and experiences ensure a wide dissemination of knowledge and effective utilisation of research infrastructure, leveraging the Region's research and innovation performance.

- Cultural networks and tourism, devoted to fostering and nurturing regional identity, tightly link the Baltic Sea regions, municipalities and cities. They strive to support initiatives that enhance bottom-up community based activities and encourage citizens' participation at all levels.

4. The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives welcomed the **CBSS Action Plan** as an important and focused contribution to achieving the aims set out in this vision for the development of the Region.
5. The Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives expressed their gratitude to Lithuania for its Presidency of the CBSS during 2020-2021, and welcomed Norway as the incoming Presidency for 2021-2022.