

Report on the Activities of The Union of the Baltic Cities

22-24 May 1992 (Kalmar) - 24-25 September 1993 (Kaliningrad)

Introduction

Since its creation in September, 1991, the Union of the Baltic Cities has expanded. The number of Union's members has reached the figure 41 (the new members are: Stockholm, Mörbylånga, Liepaja, Palanga, Kuressare, Leba, Västerås, Västervik, Mamonovo, Baltijsk). With this growth comes change, however, the Union has matured gracefully. The Union has accepted new members, taken on exciting and ambitious challenges and formed effective and long lasting national and international relationships.

The Union is recognized as an influential, powerful and effective mechanism for cooperation and communication in the Baltic Sea Region. The Union now enjoys a working relationship with the Helsinki Commission Program Implementation Task Force (HELCOM PITF) through the innovative Baltic Sustainable Cities Program. The Union has indeed expanded its sphere of influence in many ways.

The Union has dedicated itself to Baltic Sea cooperation and development. However, this task can not be accomplished without assistance. During the Gdańsk High Level Resource Mobilization Conference, financial support to Baltic programs was discussed in depth. Of course, this is not an easy subject, however support is available. The Swedish Government, for example, has pledged to set aside USD \$20,000 for the Union of the Baltic Cities provided that this amount is matched by other Western Countries.

This is a powerful display of support for the Union. The Swedish Government should be applauded for its devotion to the Baltic Cities.

As the Union sets its sights on its Second Term, it is important to consider its future aims, goals and responsibilities. The Union has accepted a task of improving the condition of the Baltic Sea Region. The cities of the Union must work together to create an effective, efficient and financially secure organization.

The Union looks forward to its Second Term. The Union invites and encourages all cities on the Baltic to join the Union as it continues to develop closer national and international cooperation and communication, foster economic development and environmental sustainability, and instill historical, social and cultural appreciation to all.

The Executives of the Union during first 2 years period:

Mr. Anders Engström, President (Kalmar)

Mr. Michael Bouteiller, Vice President (Lübeck)

Mr. Vjacheslav Tcsherbakow, Vice President (St. Petersburg)

Mr. Piotr Krzyżanowski, Secretary (Gdańsk)

The Executive Board of the Union during first 2 years period:

Århus, Denmark

Gdańsk, Poland

Kaliningrad, Russia

Klaipeda, Lithuania

Kristiansand, Norway

Riga, Latvia

Rostock, Germany

Sundsvall Sweden

Tallinn, Estonia

Turku, Finland

The Executive Board Meetings:

Five Executive Board Meetings took place during the Reporting Period between Kalmar and Kaliningrad.

3rd Meeting - Kalmar, 22-24 May 1992

4th Meeting - Gdańsk, 27 September 1992

5th Meeting - Klaipeda, 13 February 1993

6th Meeting - Kaliningrad, 6-7 June 1993

7th Meeting - Turku, 4 September 1993

The Executive Board has been pleased with the growing role of the Union. UBC is involved with many international campaigns and projects. Perhaps most noteworthy is the close working relationship with the Helsinki Commission and the desire for future practical cooperation with the ICLEI ECO-CITIES program, and others.

During this Report Period, the Union received Observer Status with the Helsinki Commission Program Implementation Task Force (HELCOM PITF). During the Gdańsk High Level Resource Mobilization Conference, UBC proposed that they could take responsibility for the *Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource Development* component of the Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Program. This ambitious task will be addressed through UBC's Twin City and Baltic Sustainable Cities Programs.

In addition, the Executive Board heard reports from the UBC Commissions who oversee specific Union projects, activities, and special events. Reports and Action Plans from the Working Commissions will be presented separately, however they can be briefly outlined at this point.

Working Commissions:

The Union has decided to focus its activities into 5 main areas. The Executive Board decided to place each of these areas under the leadership of a Lead City and Commission. These Commissions are:

- the Commission on Cultural Affairs;
- the Commission on Environmental Protection;
- the Commission on Telecommunication;
- the Commission on Transportation;
- the Commission on Social Affairs;

The Commissions oversee Union activities in each of the respective areas. Some examples of UBC Projects, Activities and Events are detailed below.

Projects

The Union of the Baltic Cities is proud to be involved in the following Projects:

"Steps and Aims"

The main goal of this project is to strengthen the Union through a brief study to "find out the limits and structures of appropriate fields of activities." Special stress will be put on issues being dealt with by the Union;s Commissions. Some examples of these activities include:

- to compile a catalog with information about Member Cities;
- to conduct a workshop dealing with issues of the project;
- to make "a written consultation of the Member Cities accompanied by expert talks";
- to present and report on results of the project.

"A Fax and Modem Memosystem"

This project is aimed at creating a computer network within the Union of the Baltic Cities. The system will give users the possibility of immediate and safe communication between persons and organizations from Baltic Countries. Each city will have easy access to the system on very favorable financial conditions. The main goal of implementing the project is to facilitate contacts between Baltic Cities, but also to have access to European Data Bank, and better contacts between Baltic businessmen in the end.

"Baltic Sustainable Cities Program"

According to this program, the following five members of the Union; Elblag, Kaliningrad, Klaipeda, Riga and Tallinn, have been chosen to have their western counterparts provide assistance and expertise concerning planning capacities, as well as preparation and implementation of specific projects.

As mentioned above, this program plays an integral part in the Union's role with HELCOM PITF. The Union will employ this project as a means to improve Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource Development in the Baltic Sea Region.

"Educational Projects"

The Executive Board emphasized the need for educational courses on different levels and subject for the decision makers in East European Countries. UBC members with governmental support are preparing the following educational trainings for selected representatives from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia: Journalism, Telecommunication Personnel, and Study Circle Leader.

UBC Activities and Events

"International Art Festival of the Union of the Baltic Cities"

This festival was held in Kaliningrad, June 5-9, 1993. Artists and performers from 49 cities took part in this event which will be an annual UBC event from now on. The motto of this year's Festival was "Unity through rebirth". The Festival included art exhibitions, classical

and rock music concerts, folklore and sporting events, and competitions, fairs, and festivals. The Festival will be held in Kaliningrad again next year. After the 1994 Festival, the event will take place in a different Baltic City each year.

"Environmental Youth Summer Camp"

In the Summers of 1992 and 1993, many young people from UBC Member Cities had an opportunity to meet, get to know each other and their countries, learn about Regional environmental problems and do some practical work for the environment. The camps were made possible thanks to cooperation and support from the North European Club, Union of the Baltic Cities, Confederation of Nordic Associations and Baltic Youth Office.

"Women of the Baltic Sea Region"

All women from Member Cities were invited to this Conference held in Kaliningrad May 13-15, 1993. It was also attended by participants from the city of Newcastle, England. Participants exchanged opinions and experiences on the most urgent problems existing problems facing all UBC countries; labor market, unemployment, wage discriminations, etc.

Detailed reports of the above activities will be provided during presentations by responsible organizations and/or commissions.

Other Recent Conferences

It would not be practical to list all of the Conferences and Seminars that the Union of the Baltic Cities has attended or held in the past two years. However, the following partial list provides a sample of some of the issues in which UBC is involved.

- * **Baltic Sea Conference - Helsinki, Finland 1-3 September 1993;**
(Union Activities as they pertain to HELCOM Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme, especially Baltic Sustainable Cities Programme)

- * **Environment of Northern Seas Conference - Stavanger, Norway 24-27 August 1993;**
(Union Presentation on Environmental Protection)

- * **Baltic Cities MCAP Meeting** - Sandnes, Norway 22-24;
(Representative of the Union and World Health Organization, Healthy Cities project coordinator attended and discussed accomplishments and future plans)
- * **Modern Hansa League Conference** - 13 August 1993;
(Presentation of Union Activities)
- * **Trans European Motorway and Other Contemporary Transport Projects** - Gdańsk, Poland, 8 June 1993;
(Conference organized under the auspices of the Union discussed matters related to the Trans European Motorway North-South Project, underlining the necessity of project extension to the whole Baltic Sea region)
- * **Council of Europe Seminar on Environmental Law** - Gdańsk, Poland 4-6 June 1993;
(Secretary discussed future cooperation with Ferdinando Albanese, Director of Environment and Local Authorities, Council of Europe, Secretariat General)
- * **Council of the Baltic Sea States** - Tallinn, Estonia, 29 June 1993;
(Union President and Mr. Alar Ollijum, Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions discussed cooperation between State and Local level organizations)
- * **HELCOM Program Implementation Task Force** - Hamburg, Germany, 26 May 1993;
(Representatives of Union again discussed UBC's future PITF involvement. The PITF asked the Union to provide work and action plans for these activities)
- * **High Level Resource Mobilization Conference** - Gdańsk, Poland, 24-25 March 1993;
(Union proposed to be responsible for one component of the HELCOM Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme, Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource Development)
- * **Conference of the CEMR** - Prague, Czech Republic, 1-2 October 1992;
(President and Secretary of the Union attended the conference and met the General Secretary of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Ms. Elizabeth Gateau to discuss cooperation between the 2 networks)