

RESOLUTION
of the 34th Session of the Baltic Assembly

The Baltic Assembly,

having convened on 19-20 November 2015 in Vilnius, the Republic of Lithuania, for its 34th Session;

having discussed internal and external dimension of the European security, cooperation among the Baltic States, development of joint transport and infrastructure projects in the region, cooperation in cyber security and cyber defence, implementation of the Partnership Agreement on Joint Procurements of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices and Lending of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices Procurable Centrally, implementation of other joint healthcare projects, as well as issues related to economic cooperation among the Baltic States;

emphasizing that the Baltic States share values, aspirations and interests and are profoundly committed to elaborating joint solutions for challenges and problems in the region, and **believing** that the strength of the Baltic States lies in their unity;

acknowledging that the Baltic States need to continue developing common and secure political, economic, social, educational and scientific regional community;

appreciating cooperation with the Baltic Council of Ministers in implementing the recommendations of the Baltic Assembly during the Lithuanian Presidency;

regarding cooperation in security and defence:

highly appreciating decisions of the NATO Wales Summit and progress achieved in implementing these decisions, as well as the Readiness Action Plan;

welcoming the positive cooperation of the Baltic States in the field of defence, and **emphasizing** the need to further increase this cooperation in order to ensure that the voice of the Baltic States in security matters is heard more clearly;

expressing concerns about the increase in terrorist threats and shifts in the security environment caused by Russia's annexation of Crimea and aggression in Eastern Ukraine, and **reaffirming** strong support to an independent, peaceful and prosperous Ukraine, as well as its territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders;

expressing concerns about the rising terrorism and changing security situation in the EU;

underlining that with its military action, coercion and intimidation of its neighbours Russia continues to challenge European and transatlantic security;

calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to ensure and maintain allocation of 2% of GDP for defence, thus contributing to NATO's strong collective defence and affirming commitment to develop national defence capabilities;

- to carry out activities aimed at eradicating terrorist cells and engage in ground operations conducted in Syria, Libya and Iraq in cooperation with our allies, if required;
- to intensify cooperation in strengthening the eastern border of the European Union and to develop relevant joint measures;
- to elaborate and implement joint measures aimed at counter-acting Russian propaganda and increasing public awareness of disinformation campaigns launched by external forces, thus decreasing vulnerability of our societies (one of the measures – introduction of civil defence in school curricula);
- to commence negotiations among experts about joint procurements in the military sector, with particular emphasis on necessary legislative changes, and to report on their conclusions in June 2016;

regarding cooperation in cyber security:

following up on the 32nd and 33rd Resolutions of the Baltic Assembly about the fight against cybercrime and establishment of enhanced cooperation in cyber security, as well as the priorities for cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers, which included enhancing the cooperation in the IT policy in 2014 and improving the cooperation in the area of information security of the Baltic States in 2015;

recognizing internet freedom as the fundamental right in free European societies and protection of free cyberspace which is outlined in the 2001 Budapest Convention on Cybercrime. In 2012, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly outlined cyber security as a global policy (Resolution 58/199 of the UN GA on the creation of a global culture of cyber security and the protection of essential information infrastructures) and asked the UN Member States to cooperate in order to fulfil the ITU Secretary General's Global Cyber Security Agenda;

realizing that common Baltic position in cyber security issues regionally and globally could be achieved only by adequately allocating resources for training the much needed personnel. Innovative and start-up companies thrive in the free internet environment in the ever integrated Baltic States' IT market, therefore, the Baltic Assembly **welcomes** both Lithuania and Latvia raising defence expenditures according to the previously agreed policy framework;

noting that since Estonia withstood the cyber-attack in 2007, and Lithuania faced DDoS attacks during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, capabilities of the national authorities in the Baltic States to detect, analyse and prevent cybercrime have increased. Now the Baltic States have their cyber security strategies, however, mutually compatible standards and application of national action plans to develop common security technologies are still the areas in which cooperation has to be intensified;

underlining that it is important to upgrade national legal systems on cyber security, to develop international collaboration and raise awareness while using the best governance practices and expertise from the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn,

highly appreciating the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Estonia, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia and the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania on cooperation in cyber security, which was signed electronically on 4 November 2015,

calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to establish mutual electronic signature compatibility among the three states;

- to upgrade the technical hardware while using joint procurements;
- to coordinate allocation of resources for the cyber security provisions within the defence budget;
- to emulate Estonia and start coding in grade one of the elementary school;
- to strengthen cooperation of volunteer cyber guards in the three states;
- to establish a common Baltic IT study programme in order to use resources and train best experts for the civil service, police and armed forces in the three states;

regarding cooperation in energy sector:

underlining that the recent geopolitical changes have created an urgent need for the Baltic States to adopt new joint measures aimed at ending the isolation of the Baltic energy market and fully integrating into the European internal energy market;

welcoming the opening of the Klaipėda LNG terminal, which serves as an alternative gas supply source in the entire Baltic region;

appreciating the activity of the Baltic Council of Ministers with regard to the energy sector, the Declaration on Energy Security of Supply of the Baltic States signed on 14 January 2015, the Memorandum of Understanding on the reinforced Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan signed on 8 June 2015, the Joint Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the President of the European Commission on Ending the Gas Isolation of the Baltic Sea Region of 15 October 2015, and **underling** that more intense cooperation is still needed to achieve full independence in the energy sector and also to create an open and effectively functioning regional gas market;

calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to continue consistent implementation of the agreed action plan and scenario for synchronising the Baltic electricity grid with the continental European network, which is a prerequisite for increased security in the electricity sector;
- to make the best endeavours to improve the functioning of the regional gas market and eliminate the existing bottlenecks in the gas transmission infrastructure;
- to intensify regional cooperation aimed at developing sufficient number of interconnections and balancing arrangements between the Baltic States, ensuring that capacity mechanisms and market integration are contributing to energy security, and striking a balance between costs and overall benefits of these developments;

regarding cooperation in transport and infrastructure:

underlining that high-quality road, rail, sea and air transport and infrastructure are prerequisites for effective implementation of joint Baltic projects and promotion of comprehensive cooperation, thus facilitating economic growth and development of the entire region;

reiterating that the *Rail Baltica* is an international cross-border project that connects the Baltic States with the rest of Europe and has a significant European-scale added value;

welcoming the application for funding submitted by the joint venture *AS RB Rail* to the European Commission's Connecting Europe Facility for implementation of the first stage of the *Rail Baltica* project;

calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to intensify cooperation with Finland and Poland on their involvement in the North Sea-Baltic TEN-T Corridor and thus the *Rail Baltica* project;
- to ensure that the *Rail Baltica* project is implemented and the relevant legislation is amended without delay and in strict compliance with the set timeframe, as well as to raise public awareness about the positive impact of the project on economic growth of the Baltic States;
- to prepare a joint action plan for modernisation of road transport corridors in the Baltic States;

regarding economic cooperation:

emphasizing that in light of the current geopolitical situation and sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, economic cooperation of the Baltic States can open up new trade markets and attract foreign investments;

being aware that the Baltic States are perceived as a single region for foreign investments and foreign trade;

reaffirming their joint commitment to the digital economy and **strongly supporting** the development of the Digital Single Market of the EU;

welcoming the decision of the European Commission to launch new programmes to promote agricultural products in the EU and on third country markets, as increased funding for promotion measures will continue to contribute to the success story of the growth in exports of high-quality EU agricultural products on the world market;

calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to take a coordinated approach in promoting the exports of the Baltic States to distant markets;
- to elaborate joint marketing activities for exports of the Baltic States to the international market, for example, the Baltic Brand – 100 years of experience;
- to intensify coordination of activities to represent economic/business interests of the Baltic States in the EU and third countries which are strategic partners of the Baltic States;
- to join forces and elaborate joint applications for the EU promotion programme of its agricultural products in the EU and on third country markets;
- to foster active coordination of activities among exports councils of the Baltic States;
- to promote cooperation among borderland municipalities with regard to an inclusive labour market;
- regardless of the progress achieved in relation to cooperation in the field of tourism, to elaborate comprehensive cooperation measures aimed at marketing the Baltic region as a single tourism destination, finding new markets and developing joint tourism products by bearing in mind the desire of each Baltic State to attract more tourists to its respective market;
- to immediately commence negotiations among the relevant line ministries on jointly developing rare and costly higher education study programmes, to initiate and support joint marketing strategy in higher education, and to report on the progress achieved by June 2016;

regarding cooperation in the healthcare sector:

reiterating the need to facilitate implementation of the Partnership Agreement on Joint Procurements of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices and Lending of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices Procurable Centrally, to expand cross-border coordination of emergency aid and to develop other ways of cooperation in the healthcare sector;

calls on the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to commence negotiations among experts about joint procurements of medical devices and lending of medicinal products;
- to commence negotiations among experts about specialisation of national medical centres.

Vilnius, 20 November 2015