



STATEMENT OF THE BALTIC LOCAL AGENDA 21 - HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES CONFERENCE

(The Turku Conference)

FRAMEWORK

We, as representatives of Baltic municipalities, other organisations and participants, have gathered in Turku at the Baltic Local Agenda 21 - Health and Sustainable Cities Conference (The Turku Conference) 3-5 September, 1998, to share our experiences, increase commitment, and to discuss and agree on co-operation and common goals for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

This statement is the outcome of the first in a series of four regional conferences (Turku, Sofia, Seville and The Hague) to be organised in the various regions of our common Europe within the framework of the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign. These regional conferences will discuss the present situation across Europe with regards to sustainable development at the regional, inter-governmental and local level. The outputs from the regional conferences will provide a framework for the Third Pan European conference of the Campaign and initiate concrete actions at the local level which will be presented and discussed on the Pan European stage in the Year 2000.

The Turku Conference follows up on the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio, 1992, the European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Aalborg, 1994, the Second European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Lisbon, 1996, the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, 1996, the International Healthy Cities Conference in Athens, 1998, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States Meeting in Nyborg, 22-23 June, 1998, where Baltic 21, the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region, was adopted. Despite remarkable progress on sustainable development since the Rio and Aalborg Conferences, we are still not on a sustainable course and a lot remains to be done.

Sustainable development is a continuous, controlled and democratic process of

societal change at global, regional and local levels, aimed at improving the quality of life for present and future generations. Improving health is an essential part of this process. Sustainable development integrates environmental protection and efficient use of natural resources into other essential social, economic and cultural activities. Preserving biodiversity and reducing anthropogenic global climate change are examples of environmental goals of this process. Environmental, economic, social and health questions must be tackled simultaneously by implementing cross-sectoral approaches over the traditional sectors of administration. Community participation leads to an open forum that enables democratically sound local public policies and strategies to be continually evaluated and adapted. Local Agenda 21 is a central tool in bringing sustainability to reality.

REGIONAL PATTERN

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR, all the Nordic Countries, the Baltic States, Germany, Poland and the Russian Federation) is a region of change, differences and similarities, and has an increasing importance in Europe and the rest of the world. It is bound together by the sea, by history, cultural heritage, economic action and co-operation in all appropriate fields. The relevance of tackling the questions of sustainable development within the context of the BSR arises from these links and from the fact that the countries, municipalities and people of this region can reach sustainable development only through concerted action and continuous co-operation irrespective of political and economic differences and borderlines. The existing strong organisations, networks and partnerships provide an excellent basis for this work. The strong will and commitment to international co-operation in the BSR is manifest at all levels from municipal and sub-regional initiatives - such as city twinning and organisations like the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), the Coastal Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and NGOs - to the level of national governments.

COMMITMENTS

We recognise our duties towards the generations to come, we pledge our continuous commitment to the principles, goals and guidelines of Agenda 21, the Aalborg Charter and the Lisbon Action Plan, and we will in all appropriate ways join our efforts to implement Baltic 21 - the first regional inter-governmental Agenda 21

program in the world after the Rio Conference - and to fulfil the principles and goals of the Athens Declaration for Healthy Cities.

As participants of the Turku conference - the first regional conference of the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign - we want to express our full support to the Campaign. We are willing to carry on and further develop the Campaign together with actors from other regions of Europe. We are convinced that the following points must be considered and the actions taken in order to implement Baltic 21 and to support sustainable development for the future in the Baltic Sea Region and the whole Europe.

Herewith we pledge our common support to these goals, actions and points of view.

- The vital role of the local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region must be recognised. We will strengthen and join the efforts of our distinct municipalities and organisations to fully support the implementation of the Baltic 21 action programme.
- We agree on the necessity to promote the Local Agenda 21 work in all possible ways. Our common goal will be that a vast majority of municipalities in each of the Baltic Sea countries shall have its own Local Agenda 21 process started before the end of 2000.
- We will join our efforts through the Baltic Local Agenda 21 Forum (BLA21F), which as a joint effort of different organisations and municipalities will pool, coordinate and promote the Local Agenda 21 activities in the Baltic Sea Region. We call upon the European Institutions and the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign, to actively support this European Regional initiative for the promotion of Local Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development, in line with European Union commitments described in the follow up to the 5th Environmental Action Programme 'Towards Sustainability'.
- We will actively seek and develop tools for co-operation and networking between our local authorities and other actors and stakeholders, e.g., NGOs and local businesses, recognising the important role that the private sector plays in global, national and local economies and the opportunities this provides for a more sustainable future. The promotion of environmental education and public

awareness is an important tool in our work, as is the involvement of young people in the local agenda process.

- We will in all appropriate ways seek for international partnerships within our region as well as with actors in other parts of Europe and in the rest of the World. We are willing to develop the Baltic Sea Region as an active region aiming at co-operation across the whole continent in the interest of our common future.
- We shall endeavour to exchange technical expertise and knowledge with local authorities in countries whose economies are in transition and between countries with developing economies in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This exchange should also include awareness raising, information and control on how “western” consumption and production patterns cause serious degradation on other countries.
- We fully support the goals and activities of the WHO Healthy Cities Project in the BSR. We also appreciate and welcome the establishing of the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Project Office in Turku, Finland.
- We consider it an essential responsibility of the European Union (EU) to promote and implement the principles of sustainable development in the planning of all activities, policies and programmes affecting the Baltic Sea Region. Promoting sustainability must be regarded an essential part of the development of the Northern dimension of Europe. We see it as an essential responsibility of the governments of the BSR Countries and the bodies of the European Union to allocate appropriate resources to this work, and to support it politically.
- We urge the EU to include evidence of progress towards sustainable development as a requirement of the grant of any funding to EU and non-EU countries.
- The significance of sustainability in regard to urban issues should be taken into consideration in the forthcoming Urban Action Plan of the European Union. Special emphasis should be put on the influences in regard to the European integration in the Baltic Sea Region.
- As part of our work towards the Year 2000, our individual municipality will identify the key issues and obstacles effecting local sustainability and will strive to

make real commitments to tackle these issues. Such commitments will reflect the principles of the Aalborg Charter and steps of the Lisbon Action Plan. At the same time, the commitments will move beyond these principles and steps thereby bringing sustainability to reality.

- We will identify and work towards five key commitments/pledges for the benefit of our city or town and its citizens. These pledges and the actions taken to meet them will be reported to the 2000 Pan European conference. The five commitments/pledges identified by each city and town will also be forwarded to the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign to be used for identifying key areas on which the Campaign should concentrate its efforts in the forthcoming years.
- We consider this statement as a message to be sent from the Turku Conference to the regional Sustainable Cities and Towns conferences, the next Pan-European Conference which is to be organised in 2000, to the European Union, to national governments and all municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region.