

Sopot Declaration

29 May 2026

On 29 May 2026, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy met for the 23rd Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in Sopot, Poland, at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland.

The Council reiterated in the strongest terms its condemnation of Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine – a CBSS observer state – has fundamentally altered Europe's security landscape, with consequences far beyond Ukraine's borders. Russia remains the most important direct and long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security.

The Council emphasized that Russia supported by Belarus, and the individuals responsible, must be held accountable for their crimes and provide full compensation for the damages caused to Ukraine. There is a need for increased pressure on Russia to weaken its capacity to continue its illegal war of aggression, including through an effective sanctions process, stricter enforcement of existing measures and the introduction of potential new instruments, such as a full maritime services ban on Russian energy exports, based on full coordination and consideration of discussions within the G7 and the Price Cap Coalition. The Council also emphasized the importance of swift efforts towards ending the dependency on energy imports from Russia, in line with REPowerEU and took note of proposals to further restrict the movement of individuals involved in Russia's war against Ukraine, including through new targeted visa measures.

The Council reaffirmed its strong and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and support for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace based on international law, including the United Nations (UN) Charter. The Council stands by Ukraine as it exercises its inherent right to self-defence against Russia's illegal war of aggression and emphasized the importance of ensuring increased political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support. The Council expressed its commitment to supporting the tracing, return and reintegration of Ukrainian children unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred by Russia, ensuring accountability for these crimes, as well as legal evaluation of the indoctrination of children in occupied territories. The Council shared the understanding that Ukraine is increasingly a contributor to the security of its partners, recognizing for example its unmatched innovation and experience in modern technologies on the battlefield. The Council underscored that no initiative or decision concerning Ukraine must be taken without Ukraine.

The Council expressed the need to reinforce response measures in the Baltic Sea region against Russia's aggressive actions that the CBSS Member States have faced, such as: cyber operations, sabotage, including across European supply chains; Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI); election interference; instrumentalization of migration including through the actions of Belarus, notably in relation to illegal migration pressure, as well as disruptions of flights, airspace incursions and Russia's reckless interference with navigation systems.

This situation calls for closer cooperation among democracies in the region to enhance resilience and security. The Council called for continued decisive steps to address activities that threaten security in the Baltic Sea region, including its critical undersea infrastructure. The Baltic Sea States are committed to strengthening their readiness and cooperation while ensuring that their

competent national authorities have the capacity to act effectively. The Council highlighted that implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Protection of Critical Undersea Infrastructure in the Baltic Sea constitutes a central component of these efforts. The Council commended the NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activity “Baltic Sentry” for improving situational awareness and deterrence.

The Council expressed deep concern over the high number of shadow fleet vessels, many of which are suspected to be without nationality and some using fraudulent registries, and called for further actions, including through diplomatic engagement with flag states. The Russian shadow fleet, composed to a large extent of obsolete, underinsured vessels that fail to meet maritime safety standards, remains a major concern, posing significant safety, environmental and economic risks to the Baltic Sea region and worldwide. Addressing the shadow fleet, including through robust action against its vessels, is crucial to limiting Russia’s revenues from energy exports used to fund its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, and to ensure safety and security in the Baltic Sea. In this context the Council welcomed the organization of the meeting of Legal Advisors in Stockholm on 6 May 2026 focusing on threats emanating from the shadow fleet and the protection of critical undersea infrastructure and underlined the importance of continuing discussions between the CBSS members, and when relevant including Legal Advisors, on the domestic and international legal framework of the law of the sea.

The Council reiterated its unwavering commitment to the law of the sea as set out in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including the freedom of navigation. Particular emphasis is placed on enhanced dialogue and closer cooperation with the European Union. The cooperation within the EU, NB8++, and the G7/NB8++ Shadow Fleet Task Force remains of the highest importance.

The Council highlighted the unique role that the CBSS has played in bringing together all democratic countries of the region, as a platform for high-level political dialogue on foreign and security policy, information sharing and messaging on regional security-related issues. The CBSS could also serve as a useful informal forum for ad-hoc discussion ahead of other regional meetings. In this regard, the Council welcomed the organization of the CBSS Political Directors’ meeting on 15 January 2026 and an informal ministerial meeting of the CBSS in Warsaw on 4 March 2026. The Council underlined the importance of the upcoming NATO Summit in Ankara to demonstrate transatlantic unity.

The Council appreciated the achievements of the CBSS’ expert groups, networks and projects and their contribution to cross sectoral regional integration and resilience. The CBSS Project Support Facility should continue with a special focus on security and cooperation in building resilience. In this context, the Council welcomed enhanced cooperation with the CBSS observer states, in particular strengthened and mutually beneficial cooperation with Ukraine.

The Council agreed that its future work will continue to focus on security related issues both on political and expert level. Concrete cooperation should promote Member States resilience and facilitate coordinated response to current challenges, including hybrid threats, while ensuring complementarity with the work of other international organizations. The cooperation in the area of civil security and preparedness should be developed, including public-private dialogue and meetings of the relevant Ministers when appropriate. Regional awareness raising and coordinated responses regarding FIMI as a particular threat for all CBSS members should be a matter of utmost importance.

The Council emphasized the valuable contribution of young people to decision-making processes concerning the future of the Baltic Sea region and took note of the Youth Ministerial held in Warsaw on 20-22 April 2026 and its recommendations.

The Council took note of the report presented at the request of the Polish Presidency by the Centre for Eastern Studies as a continuation of the review of the future role of the CBSS in line with the Vihula Declaration of 16 May 2025.

The Council encouraged the incoming Icelandic CBSS Presidency to continue the reform process by strengthening dialogue and cooperation on security-related issues, based on the discussion and common basis developed during the Polish CBSS Presidency.

The Council expressed its gratitude to Poland for its successful 2025 – 2026 CBSS Presidency and acknowledged the Permanent International Secretariat for its effective contribution to achieving the CBSS' priorities. The Council welcomed Iceland as the incoming Presidency from July 2026.