

II. UBC TODAY

19TH MEETING OF THE UBC EXECUTIVE BOARD

The 19th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on the 28-29 October 1997 in the City of Aalborg, Denmark, upon the invitation of Mr Kaj Kjær, Mayor of the City of Aalborg.

The first day of the meeting was attended by the members of the Executive Board and the Chairmen of the Commissions. The second day was open for the representatives from all member cities.

New Executive Board

The meeting was opened by Mr Anders Engström, the President of the Union. Mr Engström introduced the new Executive Board elected by the IV General Conference in Gdańsk, 12-13 September 1997. The Board consists of the following cities: Aalborg, Bergen, Gdańsk, Kaliningrad, Klaipėda, Pärnu, Rzeszów, Rostock, Stockholm, Turku.

Election of Secretary General

President Anders Engström proposed Mr Paweł Źaboklicki from Gdańsk as a candidate for UBC Secretary General. The Board elected Mr Źaboklicki as a Secretary General of the Union for a 6-years period.

Evaluation of the IV General Conference

Mr Anders Engström underlined that the IV UBC General Conference titled „Baltic Sea Cooperation Forum” was attended by the highest number of member cities so far - approx. 250 participants representing 63 member cities and 50 international organisations. The keynote speakers - leaders of major Baltic organisations, foreign ministers and EU Commissioner - significantly contributed to



The UBC Board discussed perspectives upon commencing their work on the new UBC strategy.

the conference success. During four workshops the conference discussed the most challenging topics of the Baltic Sea region. The Board expressed cordial thanks to the City of Gdańsk for hosting the conference underlining Gdańsk hospitality and its unique atmosphere.

Union Policy and Strategy

President Engström stressed that in the beginning the Union's main goal was to initiate cooperation and exchange of experiences between its members. Now, after six years of activity, there is a demand for UBC to review and develop its policy and strategy of work. During extensive discussion the Board highlighted the following issues, which must be reflected in Union's policy:

- * Development of the network cooperation and exchange between the member cities
- * Promotion of democratic, economic, social, environmental and urban development
- * Safeguarding and promoting the in-

terests of Baltic Cities towards national and international organisations especially the EU.

The Board urged all member cities to contribute to the process of forming UBC policy by answering the following questions:

- * what does your city expect from UBC membership ?
- * what aims do you consider important to be included in UBC general policy and the working programme ?

The Board decided to establish a working group responsible for formulating the policy on the basis of the above questionnaire. The working group shall consist of the UBC Presidents and representatives of four cities appointed by the President.

EU enlargement

The President informed that four member cities from Latvia and Lithuania requested the Board to express support for

their countries in the efforts to begin the negotiations for EU membership at the same time as other applicant states. Mentioned cities are of the opinion that all applicant states from the Baltic Sea region shall start negotiations at the same time, in order to assure equal conditions for future development of those countries. The members of the UBC Executive Board gathered in Aalborg issued a statement supporting the cities in applicant countries in the efforts to support their states to qualify for EU-membership and for equal negotiation chances.

UBC and LA 21

Mr Mikko Jokinen, chairman of UBC Commission on Environment, informed about the latest developments in Baltic Local Agenda 21. The process is developing on two levels i.e. Baltic 21 - the governmental level and Baltic LA 21 Forum - the local level. UBC is represented at both levels. In September 1998, UBC will organise a Baltic LA 21 Forum conference in Turku. Mr Jokinen also informed that a working group consisting of 7 member cities have been appointed to work out the UBC Local Agenda 21 strategy.

UBC-EU Project

Mr Bartłomiej Sochański, UBC Vice-President, reported from the UBC-EU

Conference in Tallinn attended by 200 participants from over 30 member cities. The conference was the major event of the UBC-EU Information Project aimed at preparing UBC member cities from applicant countries for the EU enlargement. Mr Sochański stressed that in order to achieve its objectives the project should be continued.

Mr Anders Engström informed that following UBC initiative, the leaders of major Baltic organisations i.e. UBC, BSSSC, CPMR, BCCA held an informal meeting. The major Baltic organisations agreed to hold annual meetings in order to discuss common actions and policies.

Ms Petra Hamann, Rostock, informed that the Commission on Social Affairs included the health issues to the scope of its activities. The Commission discussed cooperation possibilities with the WHO Healthy Cities Office in Turku. Moreover the Commission started the project called the UBC Social Market Place - member cities have been asked what used equipment (medical, school etc.) they could donate to other cities.

Mr Paweł Szaboklicki introduced the last issue of the Baltic Cities Bulletin which brought information on extensive cooperation between the Baltic cities, latest

Union's activities, UBC „who is who” directory, news from member cities and more. The Board expressed its appreciation to the Editorial Board for the professional level of the bulletin and encouraged all member cities to contribute actively to the next issues of BCB.

Ms Sonja Hilavuo, chairman of the UBC Task Force for Public Relations and Communication, reported from the second TF meeting held in Kalmar on 5-7 October 1997, attended by over 30 participants from 25 member cities.

Additionally the Board stressed that more emphasis must be put on propagating successful projects carried out by member cities, so other cities could implement similar projects at home. The Board suggested to use for this purpose the UBC Internet homepage managed by the city of Kalmar. The UBC website could also be used as project partner search forum. The Board authorised the Project Manager to prepare regular written information on EU and other programmes available for the cities, including the deadlines.

Following an invitation from Mr Anders Engström, Mayor of Kalmar, the Board decided to hold its next (20th) meeting in Kalmar on 27-28 March 1998.

COMMISSION ON BUSINESS COOPERATION

The UBC Commission on Business Cooperation had its first meeting in Stockholm on March 13 - 14.

The meeting agreed on the goals of the commission, discussed the working methods and made the commission's first decisions. Over twenty member cities were represented.

Goals of the Commission

The UBC Commission on Business Cooperation aims at increasing the exchange of experiences and information

between the UBC member cities. Promoting contacts between the business communities is also an important goal. In addition to serving the mutual cooperation between the member cities the commission will act as an opinionmaker towards the European Union.

Working Methods

The commission will arrange one meeting per year. A network of civil servants dealing with trade and industry in the member cities will be established. City of

Stockholm will build up an information system for the network. An information page will be prepared for every issue of the UBC newsletter.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be organized in Gdańsk/Gdynia, Poland in March/April 1999. The main topic of the meeting will be working with the European Union funds. There will also be presentations about cooperation between municipal authorities and business communities in the member cities.