

JAN LUNDIN: WHO WE WOULD LIKE TO BE WITH...



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DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE BALTIC SEA STATES



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It is true the historic background for the creation of the Council of the Baltic Sea States was difficult. The Soviet Union disintegrated and newly independent states emerged. Only Germany and

Denmark were European community members at the time. It was necessary to enhance the national component, establish new relations and maintain contacts in a completely new situation. The CBSS had to be created for that.

I believe the Council has operated successfully in the twenty years. A proof is that younger institutions come to borrow our experience. For example, a delegation of the Regional Cooperation Council from Sarajevo has recently visited our Secretariat in Stockholm. The RCC has been existing for ten years. The CBSS is the most successful regional interaction mechanism in the past twenty years. Despite problems which occasionally emerge in the Baltic region, there is a feeling of a single family and native kin of the peoples. Our mission is to enhance the feeling. Problems emerge in every family, but every year we are ready to meet each other again on a high level and stamp in the meeting in our family photo.

In 1992 it was necessary to help the newly independent states establish and develop cooperation. Today all countries, except the



Russian Federation, Norway, and Iceland have long become European Union members. They no longer need outside support to their domestic state institutions. Thus, the task has been accomplished. However there is a need in regional cooperation. Therefore, there is a need in the CBSS.

Various obstacles obstructing free movement still exist in the region. Many Russian citizens are well aware of them. Many citizens from European nations who would like to travel in Russia also encounter problems. Therefore, there are problems to be resolved by the European Union and the Russian Federation, as well as by the CBSS. We offer a platform to discuss various international problems. We are not the only platform, but the optimal one to discuss Baltic regional problems. The need for the CBSS will not disappear in foreseeable future because so far we have not returned to the freedom of movement which existed a hundred years ago. It was much easier to travel in the region at the time. Actually, you needed only money to travel. A hundred years ago it was

an ordinary thing for a Swede to travel to St. Petersburg. Numerous Swedes used to work in then Russian capital city at the time. Many of them were successful and made fortunes. We can recall the activities in Russia of the Swedish Ericsson telephone company. The Astoria Hotel built a hundred years ago by architect Lidval remains a highlight of St. Petersburg. It greatly resembles the Grand Hotel in Stockholm.

A hundred years ago St. Petersburg was the only place for young ambitious Swedes to do business, travel and entertain themselves. Your northern capital has not regained the previous status yet. I am convinced it will happen after the visa regime is lifted. It is a difficult, but possible task. I hope the problem will be resolved in the coming years. But effort has to be taken. The problem is not only in the freedom of movement and tourism. Citizens in the countries of the region should have a possibility to study, work, and invest where they want to.

The freedom of movement is not the only and most difficult task. Regional environment is much worse today than a hundred years ago.

Each epoch brings new challenges. Regional cooperation is necessary to properly respond to them.

The CBSS is both a political institution and an instrument of practical cooperation for which it has a wide range of tools.

Is CBSS a coordinator of regional cooperation?

I do not like the word 'coordinator'. The CBSS is no orchestra conductor. I consider cooperation in the Baltic region as something more complex. Numerous players participate in it, including governments, chambers of commerce and other organizations that want to operate in the Baltic context. There are regions in the world which want to have as many organizations and players as we have.

The CBSS is also a source of political signals. Every meeting of regional prime ministers, foreign ministers, transport or energy ministers is important for other players in the region. If we consider political signals as coordination, then the definition would be correct.

Besides, we have to recall the ministerial meetings of HELCOM which is an important player in the region regarding everything related to environment, water quality. High-level meetings are also held by the Northern Dimension. The Baltic Sea Action Summit also holds high-level political meetings sometimes.

The CBSS is the shaft-horse of Baltic cooperation, so to say. Naturally, we do not control everything taking place in the region. Thus, the influence of the Council is limited in the European Union Baltic Sea strategy as everything is decided in Brussels. Sometimes Russia joins discussions of related issues, however it is not an EU member. The same concerns the development strategy of the Northwestern federal district of Russia which the European Union cannot influence. However I believe both strategies are fruitful for the region and the CBSS can act as a platform for their implementation in the interests of all CBSS members. It is true when we speak about

sustainable growth and regional competitiveness in general, its transportation networks and environment. the CBSS plays a major role in all the aspects.

Do you agree with the statements voiced also here in Pskov that the first version of the strategy is being successfully implemented? How do you assess the implementation of the Baltic



Sea strategy of the EU? What are the prospects of its new version design and adoption?

The EU strategy is a successful addition to Baltic regional cooperation as it contributes to its transparency. All participants in the EU strategy annually meet. The discussions and documents of the meetings allow to better comprehend the developments in the region. It was much more difficult to do it before. There were many EU programs, but little information

on how and where they operate. Now the picture is clear. It gives a possibility to coordinate, even spontaneously. When a person knows what is going on he might wish to join. Nobody is against it.

But the strategy has weaknesses as well. Many EU countries may believe it was a mistake to exclude Russia. I will refrain from comment as

not shrink and will be more flexible so that the strategy can influence them. Strange as it may seem, the influence of the strategy on financing is weak at present. The situation may change in 2014. The European Union drew lessons from the first stage of the strategy. Now it works to determine concrete goals and target indicators for each strategy guideline. For example, how to organize cooperation indicators in the sphere of civil security? What shall be targeted and when the mission can be considered accomplished? Those dealing with planned economy know how difficult it is and what the consequences of erroneous indicators are.

So far transparency has been an achievement. In future it will be financial flexibility and financial improvements and target indicators. I am very much interested in the potential of the Russian strategy for the Northwest although it mostly targets domestic problems. Nevertheless, it has a trans-border element and various ideas about cooperation in the CBSS framework. The Secretariat would be glad to join the discussion and we are already in contact with the Russian regional development ministry.

Let's go back to the Council of the Baltic Sea States. It has become habitual of late that projects under the CBSS auspices are financed on a parity basis. It is a sign of normalized interaction. In an interview published in the third issue of the Amber Bridge Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov listed a series of new sources for project financing. There is a feeling the fi-

nancing of CBSS projects may increase several fold. How does the head of the Secretariat see the prospects of expanded financing of CBSS-supervised projects as well as of a bigger number of financial sources? If financing is to increase which goals do you see as priorities for joint effort of Council members?

It is a good but difficult question. My philosophy is as follows: you should not begin with money. You have to begin with an idea. If it is good you will find money for it. We are looking for such ideas and potentially beneficial regional cooperation projects, e.g. tourism, youth contacts, education, environment, and sustainable development. We have certain capabilities to implement them and we look for partners to share financing. I am an optimist regarding additional funds.

There is another important aspect of the issue. The CBSS has a fund to support projects. It is not big - only a million euro. However the money has a symbolic meaning. If CBSS allocates money to a project, it means all its members support the undertaking.

There is also another new and important element in CBSS activities - pilot financial initiative. It is no grants, but credit lines to develop Public-Private Partnership in important spheres for sustainable development in the Russian northwest, including small and medium business encouragement. Financing will be provided in cooperation with German and Russian state banks - KfW and Vnesheconombank. We hope other financial institutions of the Baltic Sea region will support the initiative. We plan to hold a conference in Kaliningrad in November to discuss implementation of SEBA partnership with all the interested parties to promote modernization in the southeast of the Baltic region. Pilot finance initiative together with SEBA is a new and concrete cooperation avenue.

Innovations in financing CBSS projects are a transformation of the whole organization to a certain extent. Which other transformation aspects do you believe are necessary?

The Secretariat constantly works to be more flexible and targeted at supporting not only political processes, but also cooperation with other players and sometimes at implementation of concrete projects. An important activity

guideline is to promote our media outreach abilities. We have a website which we work to upgrade through new Internet possibilities, such as Twitter, Facebook, and social networks. In my two years in office the CBSS communication capabilities have considerably expanded. We recently hired a Russian employee in charge of communications and we shall launch a Russian-language website during the Russian presidency.

Besides, we work to streamline the Secretariat itself and achieve more flexibility in cooperation with various regional institutions. We are switching to project work. Each newly hired employee must have considerable project implementation experience, speak Russian and be professionally communicative. We have high requirements to human resources. A lot of people want to work in the Secretariat and I am proud of it. We have a small staff - twenty people. Due to our available expert networks we have developed into a strong factor in the region.

By the way, other institutions dealing with Baltic cooperation also have small staff. As far as I know, the Commission in Brussels has only five people directly engaged in the implementation of the Baltic Sea strategy. The Northern Dimension Secretariat also has few people. These are small, but flexible institutions. Their interaction results in highly efficient regional cooperation.

Which problems inside and outside the Baltic Sea region are so far out of public awareness or receive insufficient attention?

Baltic cooperation priorities are well-known. The eastern part of the region pays more attention to economic issues while the western one to environment. I believe the difference has to be overcome as the first priority does not contradict the second one although the reasons for them have an objective character.

Iceland is an CBSS member. Is it an historic casus or something bigger? When the country joined the Council in 1995 was it planned to specify CBSS tasks and functions?

The admission of Iceland is a sign of a strong Nordic identity in the region. Nordic identity is stronger than Baltic identity. It is a result of century-long cooperation of Nordic peoples. We can only hope that a hundred years after CBSS creation the Baltic identity will

become as strong as Nordic identity today.

None of the CBSS members, including Russia, objected to Iceland admission. It is a small country and its contribution to cooperation is limited for objective reasons. I will repeat that Iceland's membership testifies to the wish of Nordic countries to operate in the Baltic Sea region. It is a positive factor.

When the two ministers initiated the CBSS creation in 1992 the elites of three newly independent states on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea expected something different. They hoped to be included into integration projects in the North of Europe which are discussed with growing vigor from time to time. But they were offered CBSS instead. Several years later Iceland joined the new CBSS format. Does it mean, even retrospectively, that the process of integrating two identities - Nordic and Baltic - has been launched in such a way?

Each human has several identities: I am a father, I am a chess player, I am a Swede, I am a citizen of the Baltic Sea, I am a member of the Nordic family, I am a subject of the European Union. I believe Baltic identity will strengthen. The European identity is also likely to strengthen. For an individual the significance of identity changes with time. For example, today I more a European citizen than twenty years ago. Another twenty years will pass and I may be likely to feel more as a Baltic citizen than European. It depends on political and economic development and on our own wishes - who we would like to be with. One Polish colleague told me: earlier



we were considered Eastern Europe, now when they speak about crisis in Greece we are perceived as Northern Europe. It is an example how quickly identity and its perception may change.

Naturally, I am no expert in the sphere, but I would like to take effort and promote the strengthening of Baltic identity. Germany included enhanced regional identity into priorities of its CBSS presidency and voiced its position on the issue. I hope Russia is ready to cooperate on the avenue. I am glad the Amber Bridge is interested in problems of identity in the Baltic Sea region.

Alexander Chechevishnikov,
for Amber Bridge