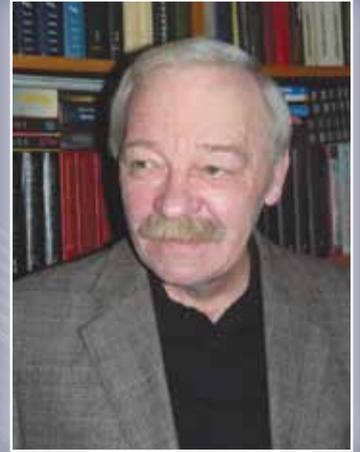


# Baltic partnership: bridges become more endurable



**T**his time I would like to begin with an announcement: on April 5-6 St. Petersburg will host a conference on environmental protection of the Baltic Sea. It is a remarkable event through which Russia as rotating president in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) attracts international public attention to a complex of environmental problems in the region. Russia took over the presidency in the summer of 2012.

At present the mechanism of the CBSS which unites eleven countries of the region and the European Commission operates better than a Swiss watch. It is well-oiled and partners are quick on the uptake in most issues. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov provided most exact description of the understanding in an exclusive interview with the Amber Bridge. He said in 20 years of activities the Council of the Baltic Sea States fully justified its initial idea, developed into a full-fledged cooperation forum, and demonstrated an ability to upgrade.

It is easy to understand why environment is on the agenda. The problem is a kind of a wellbeing camertone and is vital for all Baltic littoral countries. Statistics cause concern of most people in the unique region who attentively follow the situation in the sea. The last world war dumped a lot of "surprises" in the Baltic Sea which threaten it with major environmental catastrophes. The talk is about hundreds of thousands of tons of shells and mines buried on the seabed, but periodically washed ashore. There are also bombs with toxic agents. If their hulls are destroyed they can kill fauna and flora on a major scale.

Scientists have already discovered mutant fish in the Baltic Sea and explain the growing numbers by a possible leak in shells with toxic agents. Experts said the problem was discussed rather than handled for a long time. Complex joint effort was taken during the construction of the Russian-German Nord Stream underwater gas pipeline. Russia and other countries possess technologies that can efficiently defuse the deadly cargo on the Baltic seabed.

Now back to the April conference in St. Petersburg. There is no doubt it will be a landmark in the laborious but urgent joint work of scientists and scholars of Northern Europe. If we turn back several pages of the latest history we shall see that when the CBSS was founded in 1992 few people believed the institution was viable. If Germany, Denmark, Norway, Finland and other western countries initially treated Russia as an equal and valuable partner, some neighbors in the east of Europe continued to display increased caution towards it.

But time always puts everything in place. "Seabed sediments" were gradually washed out of politics while the work of the CBSS becomes more substantial and productive with years. The substantive portfolio of vital solutions for the region is constantly augmented. Joint efforts of regional leaders promote efficient cooperation in economy, science, environment, healthcare, culture, and in the fight against organized crime...

I lived in Lithuania for thirty years and worked as a correspondent of a central newspaper. I still have many Lithuanian friends there. They often visit me in Moscow and I often go to Vilnius. They love their country and are upset by mistakes in the home and foreign policy while I feel all developments in Russia with my heart. It is only logical as each of us is a patriot of his country. But we are also patriots of our unique region. The world is a tiny place while the Baltic Sea coast is a small golden dune on its surface.

Naturally, partnership among Baltic Sea countries presupposes a broader cooperation level and integration in resolving common regional problems. That is taking place. The flow of time convinces us there is no alternative to partnership. All CBSS members are sure of it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Morgun'.

**Alexey Morgun,**  
Editor-in-Chief, Amber Bridge