

Speech by UBC President Anders Engström

CBSS Ministerial Meeting

Hamburg June 7th 2001

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UBC celebrates 10th year anniversary this year. During these years we have grown from the 31 founding cities to 99, and we will welcome our 100th member city this year. Our activities have also grown in quality and quantity. The importance of our organisation has also increased, also as a consequence of the ever-increasing growth of co-operation at all levels, which has become a hallmark in our region. The CBSS has, together with the other organisations, done a very good job to secure a stable democratic, economic and environmental development in the Baltic Sea Region.

There are, however, a number of issues where continuing political work has to be done. One of them is to involve the cities in the EU enlargement process in order to secure a success and not only carry out the negotiations as a National Government versus European Union matter. The involvement of cities is a responsibility to both sides in the negotiations. We also need far better possibilities to finance projects and activities in connection with the enlargement process. The existing ones are not adapted to the needs and not flexible enough.

UBC is working on several fields that are important for the future of the region and we hope for your support. We will for example increase our activities in connection with Kaliningrad and NW Russia, and we have also discussions regarding Belorussian cities. We will intensify our efforts regarding the EU enlargement and implementation of Agenda 21. We are also working hard to involve local government level in the Northern Dimension.

I have been president of UBC for 10 years now, and I have attended most of the CBSS Ministerial meetings during these years. At our next general conference, in October, I will resign and hand over to a new president. I have always been very well received at the CBSS ministerial meetings, and they have been very important events to meet people and to express the views and opinions of the cities in our region. I hope that my successor will be received as warmly as I have been received, and I would like to express my warmest thanks for these years, which have been very rewarding both for me and for UBC.

Thank you for your attention.