

**Seventh Conference of Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States,
Bergen, Norway, 26 – 27 September 2005**

Bergen Declaration

The Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States met in Bergen, Norway, 26 – 27 September 2005 for their seventh conference.

The main theme of the Conference was “Common Sea – Common Culture” covering new aspects of cultural co-operation in the Baltic Sea region.

The ministers expressed their satisfaction with the ongoing cultural co-operation in the region initiated at the first ministerial conference in Saltsjöbaden in 1993, followed by the conferences in Tallinn 1995, Lübeck 1997, Gdansk 1999, Copenhagen 2001 and St. Petersburg 2003.

The Ministers also expressed their satisfaction with the initiatives taken for the continuation of such co-operation.

The ministers agreed that initiatives taken had resulted in closer contact between the countries in the region, between cultural institutions, organizations, artists and operators in the cultural field. Common culture and historical bonds were taken as a natural basis for this positive development which was expected to continue also in the future including new fields of co-operation.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress in activity of Ars Baltica which has contributed to the development of fruitful co-operation within a continuously expanding framework. The work has given deeper insight into our common culture and established a durable dialogue between our countries.

The Ministers agreed that Ars Baltica should continue its work within the framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States with the goal to promote and deepen mutual cultural understanding, and requested Ars Baltica to discuss its future development.

The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the results obtained by the Monitoring Group on Cultural Heritage and asked the Group to continue its work and further develop the ongoing co-operation within the cultural heritage field.

The Ministers took note of the success of the Second Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum in Helsinki 9 – 12 June this year and thanked Lithuania for the invitation to host the Third Forum, “Tolerance and Responsibility”, in 2007.

The ministers took note of the importance of the underwater heritage in the Baltic Sea and supported the idea of strengthening co-operation through the development of a code of good practice on its protection.

The Ministers stressed the importance of involving children and young people in the preservation of cultural heritage and encouraged the Monitoring Group to examine the possibilities of co-operation between cultural heritage institutions and schools.

The Ministers agreed that they will continue to give priority to co-operation in the Baltic Sea region. They also stressed their wish to coordinate their efforts to participate in cultural programmes carried out within the framework of the European Union, The Council of Europe, UNESCO, The Barents co-operation, The Nordic Council of Ministers and other international organizations.

The Ministers referred to The Third Summit of Heads of States and Government of the Council of Europe which took place in Warsaw 16 – 17 May this year and its Action Plan where the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogue is an integrated element. The Ministers expressed their wish to follow up this point in the plan of action in their future co-operation in the Baltic Sea region.

The Ministers agreed, in view of the success of ongoing work, the stability of the co-operation and the effectiveness of digital communication, that ministerial conferences henceforth will take place every third year.

The Ministers expressed their wish that more countries in the region take part in the annual Baltic Sea Festival as an arena for cultural exchange and co-operation.

The Ministers agreed to accept the invitation from the Minister of Culture from Latvia to hold the 8th Conference of Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States in Riga in 2008.

A preparatory meeting will be hosted by Hamburg prior to the conference.