



**BRITISH-IRISH
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY**

**COMHLACHT IDIR-PHARLAIMINTEACH
NA BREATAINE AGUS NA hÉIREANN**

REPORT

from

COMMITTEE B (European & International Affairs)

on

**LINKS BETWEEN THE BRITISH-IRISH
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY AND THE NORDIC COUNCIL**

1 Introduction

1. On 25 November 2002, at the end of a debate on the Nordic Council held during the Manchester Plenary, the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body passed a Resolution:

"That the Body congratulates the Nordic Council on its 50th anniversary; notes the benefit that the Council has brought to the peoples, regions and nations of the Nordic area in terms of social, political and economic cooperation; and believes that links between the Body and the Nordic Council should be developed."[\[1\]](#)

2. During the debate, it was pointed out that the Nordic Council had brought the peoples of those countries tremendous benefits, and the view was expressed that the Body could learn lessons in cooperation and interaction from the Council, and its example showed how progress could be made by inter-parliamentary and inter-governmental cooperation.[\[2\]](#)

3. At our meeting the following day, this Committee, having responsibility for European affairs, noted the Resolution and agreed that developing links between the Body and the Nordic Council would indeed be an appropriate subject for us to pursue. The fundamental aspects to the inquiry were identified as: what could the Body learn from the Nordic Council; could any of the Council's practices be adapted to suit the Body's practices; and how could we develop the existing links between the Body and the Council?

4. In order to set the scene for the inquiry, we visited the Headquarters of the Nordic Council in Copenhagen, so that the Secretary-General of the Nordic Council and her staff could provide the necessary background briefing. Whilst there, we took the opportunity to speak also to the Chairman and the Secretary-General of the Danish delegation to the Council.

5. During our discussions in Copenhagen, we agreed that further visits would need to be undertaken in order to get the whole picture of how the Nordic Council works; to Finland, which had inspired the Council to become more "eastwards looking" and to provide help and assistance to the emerging democracies in the Baltic region; and to Norway, which was one of the two Council member states which did not belong to the EU and, therefore, may have had a different outlook than EU member states. As we quickly became aware of the close links between the Nordic countries and the Baltic states, and consequently between the Council and its equivalent organisation, the Baltic Assembly, we therefore paid a final visit, to Latvia, in order to hold discussions with the Secretary-General of the Baltic Assembly and with Latvian delegates to the Baltic Assembly.

6. A list of the meetings held during our visits are appended to this Report.[\[3\]](#) We wish to place on record that, without exception, we were met with unfailing courtesy, assistance and generosity by the Members of Parliament, Parliamentary

officials and diplomatic staff in all four countries we visited, and by the staff of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia and of the Latvian War Museum. We extend our grateful thanks to all those who have helped us with our inquiry.

7. As well as the information received during our meetings, we have been able to call on a good deal of factual material contained in published documents and from various websites. A list of these sources is appended to this report as Annex 2.

2 Background

8. The Nordic countries, Denmark (including the autonomous territories of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Finland (including the Åland Islands), Iceland, Norway and Sweden, share many cultural, religious, political and linguistic similarities - although a somewhat dry comment made to us in Finland was that a "Scandinavian" language simply meant Danes, Swedes and Norwegians speaking to each other in their own mother tongues.

9. Despite the many similarities between the Nordic countries, they are not absolutely homogenous; for example, Sweden and Finland do not belong to NATO; Sweden and Denmark have not adopted the Euro; and Norway and Iceland are not members of the EU, although they do have access to its inner market through the European Economic Area treaty. During our discussions, we gained the distinct impression that it was only a matter of time before Norway did join the EU. The other Nordic countries would welcome them, and the majority of Norwegian politicians - at least, those from the mainstream parties - are in favour of joining. However, a small majority (in the 1994 referendum, 52%) of the Norwegian electorate still remain to be convinced; we were informed, however, that a further referendum is unlikely for several years.

10. We heard also that it is not realistic to expect Iceland to join the EU in the foreseeable future; its economy is totally dependent on fishing, and Iceland would be unable to cope with other EU member states fishing its waters.

11. The Nordic states do not have a common foreign and security policy, and there is no common Council policy on asylum seekers, as each country holds its own separate views. For example, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finland (in contrast to Sweden) has maintained very strict immigration controls.

12. Somewhat surprisingly, for countries often held up as epitomising peaceful co-existence, cooperation between Nordic countries is a relatively recent development, as prior to the Napoleonic wars, Nordic history was one of frequent hostilities between the countries, particularly between Denmark and Sweden.

13. Denmark ruled Norway until 1814, followed by a period of Swedish rule until 1905. Denmark also ruled Iceland until Iceland was granted independence in 1944. Sweden, in turn, ruled Finland until the beginning of the 20th century. Nordic cooperation did not truly begin until all Nordic countries had been granted

independence, and a relatively settled political climate had emerged. However, when the Committee asked the Council's Secretariat if Nordic countries shared the same kind of "baggage" which had bedevilled relations between the UK and Ireland, the illuminating response was that the last war fought between Scandinavian countries was in 1814 - "which was a long time ago".

3 The Nordic Council

14. The Nordic Council was formed in 1952 as a forum for cooperation between the Nordic parliaments. Nordic cooperation is channelled through two organisations, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers (established in 1971).^[4] The Nordic Council is a consultative forum, and its recommendations are put forward to the Nordic Council of Ministers. Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden were the original members of the Council, which emerged out of growing recognition that the Nordic states shared common political standpoints and common problems. For example, a shortage of medical staff in the early 1950s led to agreed policies on qualifications for healthcare and teaching professionals. Agreements on labour market legislation followed and this, in turn, led to support for further cooperation. The Nordic Passport Union was established in 1954, giving citizens of member states the right to take up residencies in other member countries without needing resident permits.

15. Finland became a member in 1955, with the Faroe and the Åland Islands joining in 1970, within the Danish and Finnish delegations respectively. Greenland was granted status within the Danish delegation from 1984. Cooperation is regulated by the Helsinki Treaty of 1962, amended in 1974 (when environmental issues were added to the list of areas covered) and in 1995, when the committee structure of the Council was modified.

16. During the early 1990s, interest in the Nordic Council had waned, and Denmark had expressed doubts that there would be a future for the Council unless all its member states joined the EU. Norway and Iceland became concerned that the Council could dissolve, and the Nordic Governments that a Nordic "bloc" could develop within the EU. There were also concerns that traditional Nordic institutions, such as the high rate of social security benefits, would disappear.

17. However, the Council became revitalised later on in the decade due, in part, to it starting to look eastwards, rather than introspectively, and strong links were established with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and with Russia. However, we were informed that, although such initiatives had been successful, they had created an unfortunate side-effect; West Norden (ie, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had started to feel neglected, and as a consequence the Nordic Council of Ministers had set up a working group to consider cooperation between the Nordic countries and their neighbours to the north and west.^[5]

18. Ironically, it was during our discussions in Finland, that it was conceded that perhaps the Nordic Council had now become *too* eastwards looking, and closer links

with the British-Irish Body could help to redress this imbalance, especially in light of the Baltic states' impending membership of the EU when, perhaps, they may not need as much support from the Nordic countries as previously.

4 Activities of the Nordic Council

19. The Nordic Council takes policy initiatives and advises and supervises the member countries' implementation of these. Initially the Council only sought to consult on practical matters, but it has since initiated several schemes of cooperation, and passed formal agreements applicable to the member countries. It also supervises the work of a number of specialist agencies, such as the Nordic Council for Arctic Medical Research, the Nordic Development Fund and the Nordic Investment Bank.

20. The Nordic Council comprises 87 members, elected annually by the national parliaments. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden each have 20 members, and Iceland has 7 members.^[6] Party representation is proportional to that in the national parliaments, as far as is practicable.

21. Members work together in four cross country party groups - Centrist, Conservative, Social Democratic and Socialist. To be recognised, a party group must have at least five members and be represented in the national parliaments of at least three member countries or autonomous territories. Consequently, not all members of the Council are members of recognised party groups, but this does not affect their ability to contribute or vote in Sessions. Party groupings do not dictate the business of the Council, and there are no whips or leaders within the party groups. However, we were advised that members tended to work together as members of their party groups, rather than as members of their national delegations.

22. The business of the Council is organised by the Presidium, comprising thirteen members, including a Chairman (the President) elected for a term of one year. The Presidency rotates around the member countries, and the President must come from the country or autonomous region hosting the next Session. Ordinary members of the Presidium are elected by members of the Council in plenary Sessions. The Presidium is the chief decision making body between plenary Sessions, and serves as the point of contact for the adjacent areas and other regional or international organisations.

23. Session (ie, the Plenary) is the decision making body of the Nordic Council. 'Ordinary' Sessions are held once a year, usually in October or November and in the country of the President for that particular year, and are open to the public. Members of governments often attend Sessions, where they can speak and be questioned, but they do not have the right to vote. An ordinary Session sets the political agenda for the coming year as well as reviews the implementation of previous decisions.

24. The Council's Session approves the budget, debates proposals and recommendations, elects the Presidium and the Chairs of committees. Special Sessions or themed conferences take place annually in spring on a topical political issue. Such a conference is attended by parliamentarians, government representatives and experts, but it is not a decision making forum.

25. In addition to the session, the Council usually holds three or four full meetings a year. Party groups, committees and the Presidium also meet during these gatherings, and the committees usually organise seminars at the same time and venue.

26. The Nordic Council operates on a parliamentary model. Members, party groups, committees, the Council of Ministers, or national governments, submit proposals to the Council, which are considered at ordinary Sessions of the Council. Proposals are often put forward by party groups, with common areas of interests, limiting the number of proposals introduced out of particular national interests. Proposals are first submitted to the Presidium and then referred to a committee.

27. For the 7 years from 1995, the Council had only 3 Committees - Nordic Affairs, Adjacent Areas and European Affairs. However, the Committee system now focuses on subject matters, rather than on geographical areas; there are now five committees, reflecting the committee structures in the national parliaments to a large extent:[\[7\]](#)

- the Business and Industry Committee has within its remit internal markets, freedom of movement, trade and industry, commerce, regional aid, the labour market and employment, transport, communications and IT;

- the Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee covers democracy, human rights, civic rights and equal opportunities (including issues of racism), consumer affairs, crime (including international crime and terrorism), legislation, asylum and immigration, and food safety;

- the Culture, Education and Training Committee's remit covers the arts and culture generally in the Nordic countries and further afield, the media, sports, languages, the voluntary sector, children and young adults, education and training (including lifelong learning), and (relevant) research;

- the Environment and Natural Resources Committee is concerned with the protection of the environment, natural resources and sustainable development. The Committee was cooperating with the Body's Environmental and Social Committee on issues such as Sellafield. There had been several exchanges of views and information between the two Committees, and the Chairman of the Council's Committee was invited to the Body's Plenary in Manchester to discuss various matters; and

— The Welfare Committee covers welfare and care, healthcare, social security, housing, the family (including children and young people), and drug abuse (including alcohol and other substances).

28. In addition, there is a Control Committee, which controls work financed by the Nordic Council and monitors use of the budget, and is composed of a Chair, a Vice-Chair and three members - each country has one representative on the Committee, and no member of the Presidium may be a member of the Control Committee.

29. The relevant committee then considers the proposals before making recommendations to the Session. During consideration of a proposal the committee can request additional information, or may refer the proposal to the national parliaments it would affect or to the appropriate Nordic organisation.

30. The Session considers the proposals and votes on whether or not to recommend them to the Nordic Council of Ministers. Once adopted by the Council of Ministers, national governments must then decide how to implement a decision. This may require the passing of new legislation at a domestic level. The relevant governments are obliged to report back to the Council at the next Session on steps taken to implement the proposal.

31. One matter which is regularly raised during the Body's Plenaries is the attendance (or otherwise) of British and/or Irish Ministers - particularly the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister. We think it worth noting that, during the Council's last Session, held in Oslo on 27-29 October 2003, the agenda included:

- a two-and-a-half hour general debate and report by (all five of) the Nordic Prime Ministers (when any member of the Council was able to question or take issue with any of the Prime Ministers);
- a question hour with the Ministers of Cooperation; and
- three hours allocated for reports by the Foreign Ministers and by the Ministers for Defence.

32. As noted in paragraph 19 above, the Nordic Investment Bank comes under the remit of the Nordic Council. During our visit to Helsinki, we had the opportunity to meet with Mrs Siv Hellén, the Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB). The NIB is an excellent example of how the Nordic countries work together - not only to provide mutual support, but also to help their neighbours and other countries throughout the world. A brief summary on how the NIB operates is included as Annex 3 to this report.

33. In non-political matters, the Council is way ahead of the Body and, for example, sponsors many cultural and other prizes; we were told that, as the Council enters its second 50 years, it was becoming more outward looking; a "Nordic umbrella" had been created covering, for example, cultural matters and sport. There were some 1700 Nordic projects, and many other Nordic institutions. Some of the Dkr800m

(£80m/€130m) cost of the Council went towards projects such as the Nordic Cultural Fund, prizes for literature, music, the environment and, most recently and for the first time, film making. Recent events to celebrate the Council's 50th anniversary in 2002 included not only opera but also a rap concert.

5 The Nordic Council of Ministers

34. As stated in paragraph 14, the Nordic Council of Ministers was established in 1971; it coordinates the inter-governmental activities of member governments when agreements are reached, and is legally the most powerful body of the Nordic institutions. It submits proposals on cooperation between the governments of the Nordic states, implements the Council's recommendations and reports on results, whilst directing the work carried out in the targeted areas. The Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries assume overall responsibility for the cooperation measures, which are coordinated by the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation (who all have additional, not necessarily the same, portfolios).

35. During our meetings, the comment was made that whereas making recommendations to the Council of Ministers was all well and good, little was done to actually implement them on a national level. The Nordic Council of Ministers had made a commitment that it would consider all recommendations made by the Council; it was reported, however, that some Ministers were more scrupulous than others in honouring that commitment, but there was the mechanism whereby a simple majority in Parliament could force a reluctant Minister to implement a recommendation. A recent success had been that an item to consider the transfer of funds between Nordic countries had been placed on the Agenda for a meeting of Finance Ministers.

36. Although the Council does not usually include Ministers, once a year they are invited to attend - however, the Council is not invited to attend meetings of the Council of Ministers. We pointed out that the British-Irish Council (of Ministers) operates on an inter-governmental level and, like the Body, tends not to pursue confrontational issues, its operation being based on cooperation and consensus.

37. Without the ability to put pressure on the Council of Ministers, it was claimed that the Council would be little more than a talking-shop. We, reluctantly, had to advise our interlocutors that there were no equivalent links between the Body and the British-Irish Council - consequently, the Body was indeed becoming just such a talking-shop on matters like the situation in the areas alongside the border of Ireland and of Northern Ireland, where exchange rates were causing problems for industry and business.

38. Through the Nordic Council, it is possible for Members from one Nordic country to raise matters of concern about the situation in another Nordic state, and Members can even propose legislation to be introduced in countries other than their own. Similarly, in areas of common interest, models of procedure, etc, in each member country can be of use to other countries. The governments of each country

take into account whether any proposed legislation is in place already in other member states.

39. Decisions made at meetings must be unanimous to be taken forward, and are (subject to individual national constitutions) binding on the member countries. The Council of Ministers expects to be informed of constitutional barriers before decisions are made; it reports each year to the Nordic Council.

6 The Nordic Council and international cooperation

40. Cooperation with the Baltic states began in 1991, following the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference of 1990 (which had included not only the Nordic and the Baltic states, but also Poland, Germany and Russia). An important area is growing cooperation with Russia - and once the relationship between the EU and the Baltic states has moved onto a more equal footing, it is felt that there should then be a bridge built between the EU and Russia, rather than having the existing barriers. The Nordic countries, however, do not have an organisation equivalent to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Although the Council has been represented at conferences of the Commonwealth of Independent States on how to combat crime, there is, as yet, no formal cooperation on combatting, eg, the trafficking of people or of narcotics. We were told that increasing attention will be given to the situation of the Kaliningrad enclave, a small pocket of land which, although actually part of Russia, is sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania, and that the Nordic Council of Ministers has established an information office in Kaliningrad.

41. European enlargement is seen as an opportunity to promote and perpetuate basic values and human rights, and to encourage and strengthen small states' cooperation. There is a need for the EU to adopt a "Northern Dimension" policy, ie, to protect and develop the Arctic and Barents Seas' areas and northern Russia. Some members of the Council believe it should become more actively involved in the work of the Standing Committee of Parliaments in Arctic Regions. It is hoped that the Nordic Region can play a greater international role in future, and the idea of a North European Region, including the Baltic states, is an interesting possibility.

7 The Baltic Assembly

42. When the Baltic states were still part of the USSR and it was not, therefore, possible to open Embassies in them, information offices were established instead. These dealt with matters such as exchange programmes for students, civil servants, etc. Upon achieving independence, the Baltic states had expressed an interest in joining the Nordic Council; however, some of the Nordic countries were unable to support such a move, and, as a consequence, the Baltic Assembly was set up instead.

43. The Baltic Assembly was established in November 1991 to promote cooperation between the Parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It is a consultative and coordinating body set up to discuss joint projects and issues of common interest. Both its structure, committee system and its working methods are similar to the

Nordic Council. The Assembly consists of 60 members, 20 from each member state, elected in accordance with the principle of PR in each national Parliament.

44. The Baltic Assembly's committees, together with their current priorities, are:

- Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee: development of transport infrastructure - ports of the Baltic states;
- Education, Science and Culture Committee: quality of the education system;
- Environmental Protection and Energy Committee: development of energy infrastructure, including Nordic-Baltic cooperation in the energy field;
- Legal Committee: cooperation of the Baltic states' police in combatting the trafficking in narcotics and women;
- Security and Foreign Affairs Committee: contribution of the Baltic states to promoting relations between the EU and NATO and Eastern European countries; and
- Social Affairs Committee: enhancing cooperation in the fields of healthcare and social services.

45. The Assembly's member states cooperate extensively in order to maximise their influence in international affairs, and it is felt that the significance of Baltic cooperation will increase once the states have become members of both the EU and NATO. Baltic-Nordic and Baltic-Benelux cooperation will continue and develop, and the Assembly intends to become more actively involved in the Nordic dimension, which will provide the opportunity to develop comprehensive dialogue with the EU, especially on education, energy, transport and logistics issues.

46. During our discussions in Riga, it was apparent that the Assembly values greatly its partnerships with the Nordic Council and with the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council,^[8] not only as allies in enabling the views of the smaller countries to carry more weight in the enlarged EU, but also because both organisations had provided invaluable support and advice during the time when the Baltic states were emerging from half-a-century of occupation and repression by two totalitarian regimes. We consider it a matter of regret that the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body was only in its infancy at that time, and so could not itself provide support to the new Baltic democracies.

47. The Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly have issued an agreement on Parliamentary cooperation,^[9] and hold joint meetings every two years; and members of both organisations had been invited to meetings of each other's Committees. At the last such joint meeting of the Council and the Assembly, held in Sweden in April 2003, the Agenda included matters such as the fight against organised crime, including narcotics, and measures to counter corruption; civil

security and civilian crisis management; and the development of regional policy in the EU, including Northern Dimension issues and the EU Convention.[10]

48. To include such matters on the Agendas for the Body's Plenary sessions, as is done in the case of the Nordic Council, would surely satisfy even those British and Irish Members - and this Committee's members include themselves amongst them - who look forward to the Body showing its maturity by discussing more weighty, and controversial, matters.

49. The Assembly's committees work closely with those of the Nordic Council; at the joint meeting referred to in paragraph 47, the two bodies' committees announced their cooperation priorities. An example, *Memorandum of Understanding for Baltic Assembly, Environment Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council, Environment and Natural Resources Committee*, is attached to this report as Appendix 3. The joint statement issued by two Committees is attached as Appendix 4.

50. The Assembly, like the Nordic Council, also sponsors prizes for literature, the arts and science. Such prizes consist of a monetary award, a certificate and a special statuette. Since 2002, the Assembly supports the publication of those works which have won the literature prize. It is somewhat sobering to note that the Assembly has been in existence a shorter time than has the British-Irish Body, (and its member states are less wealthy), and yet is able to support and encourage its citizens in the same way as does its Nordic neighbours.

8 Learning from the Nordic Council: Possible changes to the working practices of the BIIPB

51. **It is interesting to contrast the arrangements for the Nordic Council's Sessions, outlined in paragraph 31 above, with those for the Body's Plenaries, when the only input by Ministers is usually the hour, or so, address by, and questions to, either the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, depending on in which jurisdiction the Plenary is being held. Of course, this Committee does not belittle or downplay the importance of Northern Ireland and, of course, the appropriate Ministers should continue to report to Plenary on the situation in the Province. However, Northern Ireland should be only one of the important - admittedly, possibly the most important - matters the Body discusses, and not the sole *raison d'être* for its existence.**

52. **We accept, absolutely, that the Nordic Council has only one Plenary a year, whereas the Body has two, and therefore it would not be a viable proposal for both Heads of Government to attend both of our Plenaries - but the obvious compromise would seem to be for the Taoiseach to attend the Plenaries held in Ireland, and for the Prime Minister to attend the UK Plenaries.**

53. **The time may even be opportune to consider a more radical way that the Body operates, and introduce arrangements along the lines of how the Nordic Council**

conducts its business. For example, the Body could hold only one Plenary a year - say, in autumn - with the time currently occupied by the spring Plenary being given over to a two or three days special meeting or conference - perhaps on a specific topic decided by the Body after proposals made by the Committees - and the appropriate Minister(s) would be invited to attend. Both the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister could then attend the one Plenary session.

54. We do not, of course, suggest that only one country should always host the Plenary, with the other one only ever hosting the "conference", but perhaps an option could be that, for example, the new arrangements start in 2005, when Ireland hosts both the conference and then the Plenary, and then the UK hosts both in 2006, etc. Another option could be that the UK hosts the Plenary, as planned, in autumn 2004 and then the spring 2005 conference. Ireland would then host the 2005 Plenary and the 2006 conference, and so on.[\[11\]](#)

55. Referring back to the relationship between the Body and the British-Irish Council, as mentioned in paragraph 37, **visitors to the British-Irish Council's website are informed that the valuable work undertaken by the Council includes action against illegal drugs, on the environment, health, the knowledge economy, social inclusion, tourism, transport and minority and lesser-used languages; but if those same visitors were to attend a Plenary session of the Body, they would have no idea that the Council's remit was so wide ranging. There has to be better cooperation between the Body and the British-Irish Council, and both organisations should raise their own profiles, and publicise each other's work. The Secretariats of the Nordic Council and of the Nordic Council of Ministers share the same building in Copenhagen; the two organisations share the same website - in stark contrast, there is not even a link between the Body's and the British-Irish Council's websites.**

9 Future links between the Body and the Nordic Council

56. During our meetings, we were struck by an analytical observation made by a senior diplomat, to the effect that the Nordic countries were similar to each other, the Baltic states were similar to each other and to the Nordic countries, and that all of the Nordic and Baltic countries were similar to the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands. There are, therefore, eleven alike countries at the northern and western edges of Europe; it must, surely, be in all our interests to work more closely together.

57. Having studied the workings of the Nordic Council closely, we believe that the Body would be rather limited in its ability to operate as an equal partner to the Nordic Council, due to the unequal resources available to the two organisations - a matter pointed out by Kevin McNamara MP during the debate in November 2002.[\[12\]](#) For example, the Nordic Council's secretariat consists of a Secretary-General and 15 staff; each national delegation lists a secretariat of between 2 and 13 staff,[\[13\]](#) making 36 in total; and, as stated earlier in paragraph 33, the Nordic

Council's budget is DKr800m (approx. £80m/€130m), of which DKr30m (approx. £3m/€5m) is spent on the Parliamentary Assembly.

58. In contrast, the UK Secretariat is 1½ persons, the Irish Secretariat is 1; there is no equivalent to the Secretary-General, and there are no delegation staff as such; instead, 5 Officers of the House of Commons/House of Lords, 1 from the Oireachtas, and 2 from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs act as the Clerks of the Body^[14] and as Clerks of the Committees (all these officers have other official Parliamentary or governmental duties in addition to their work for the Body), and the Body is able to call on perhaps a further 5 or 6 officers from the devolved legislatures. As to funding, the Body receives only a fraction of what the Nordic Council receives from its parent governments; the British government gives a grant-in-aid of £210k (€313k) to the Body, with a similar amount being allocated by the Irish government.

59. Nevertheless, we are pleased to note that, over the past few years, there have been ever-increasing informal links and cooperation between the BIIPB and the Nordic Council, and it has become an established practice that the Body invites the Council to attend its Plenaries, and such invitations have been reciprocal. For example, as noted in paragraph 27, Asmund Kristoffersen MP, the Chairman of the Council's Environment Committee (whom we were pleased to meet again when we were in Oslo) addressed the Body's Manchester Plenary and the Vice-Chairman of this Committee, Séamus Pattison TD, attended the 4th Joint Meeting of the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly, held in Lund in April 2003, as an observer. Most recently, in October 2003, Harry Barnes MP and Alistair Carmichael MP attended the Nordic Council's 55th Session, held in Oslo, as observers.

60. However, **we believe that it is now an appropriate time to reevaluate, and move forward the current arrangements with both the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly, by putting the existing contacts on a more formal level. We believe the Body should follow the example of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, where Canada, Israel and Mexico have "observer" status. The Assembly specifies the size of these delegations,^[15] and Members are entitled to sit in the Assembly and its Committees (although they do not have the right to vote), and may address either - although observers do need the authorisation of the President to address the plenary, and committees may decide in advance to exclude them from their meetings.**

61. **The Committee therefore recommends that the Body extends to the Nordic Council and to the Baltic Assembly a more enhanced status by designating them "Special Guests", along the lines of "observer" status to the Council of Europe, as set out in paragraph 60 above.**

62. As stated in paragraph 46, the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council (BICC) is a partner of the Nordic Council and of the Baltic Assembly, and shares many of their aims and aspirations. It was created in November 1955, holding its first meeting in Brussels in 1957. Its 49 members^[16] submit opinions to their national governments on the implementation and functioning of their three states' economic

union, their cultural integration, cooperation in foreign policy matters, legal harmonisation and other matters of mutual interest.

63. As we wished to agree our Report in time for the Cork Plenary, we were not able to complete our inquiry absolutely by meeting representatives from the BICC. Therefore, we do not feel able to recommend that the BICC also be accorded "Special Guest" status immediately. However, we do not consider there to be any good reason why the BICC should not be invited to send observers to attend future Plenaries on the same, informal, basis that the Nordic Council are currently invited - and we have little doubt that, in due course, the BICC will also be designated a "Special Guest".

64. As these new arrangements would be an invitation from one Parliamentary organisation to another to attend (and participate in) its proceedings, we believe that the Body is entitled to decide such a matter for itself, and do not consider it an appropriate matter for government to decide. We hope that the Body will, therefore, make its decision at the earliest opportunity. We invite the Steering Committee to consider this Report, and to bring forward proposals for its implementation at the next Plenary session.

1 See Official Report of the Twenty-Fifth Plenary Conference, pages 27-31

2 Ibid

3 See Annex 1

4 See paragraphs 34 - 39 for a description of the Nordic Council of Ministers

5 West Norden's neighbours include mainland Scotland, Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles, all of the island of Ireland and the Isle of Man, as well as areas of, eg, Russia and Canada

6 The Danish delegation includes 2 members from the Faroe Islands and 2 members from Greenland, and the Finnish delegation includes 2 members from the Åland Islands

7 The Business and Industry Committee has 14 members, the other Committees have a membership of 15

8 Sometimes referred to as the Benelux Parliament

9 See Appendix 1

10 See Appendix 2 for joint statement issued after this meeting

11 This second option would have the benefit that, as now, each jurisdiction would host only one event during both a calendar and a financial year

- 12 Official Report of the Twenty-Fifth Plenary Conference, *op cit*
- 13 On their individual pages on the Nordic Council's website, Denmark lists 9 staff, including 1 from the Faroe Islands and 3 from Greenland, Finland 13, including 2 from the Åland Islands, Iceland 2, Norway 6 and Sweden 6
- 14 The most senior Officer of the House of Commons and the Officer of the Oireachtas act as the joint Clerks of the Body
- 15 Currently 6 for Canada and for Mexico and 3 for Israel
- 16 The members of the BICC are designated by their national Parliaments. There are 21 each from Belgium and from the Netherlands and 7 from Luxembourg

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is interesting to contrast the arrangements for the Nordic Council's Sessions with those for the Body's Plenaries, when the only input by Ministers is usually the hour, or so, address by, and questions to, either the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, depending on in which jurisdiction the Plenary is being held. (Paragraph 51)
2. We accept it would not be a viable proposal for both Heads of Government to attend both of our Plenaries - but the obvious compromise would seem to be for the Taoiseach to attend the Plenaries held in Ireland, and for the Prime Minister to attend the UK Plenaries. (Paragraph 52)
3. The time may be opportune to consider a more radical way that the Body operates, and introduce arrangements along the lines of how the Nordic Council conducts its business. For example, the Body could hold only one Plenary a year - say, in autumn - with the time currently occupied by the spring Plenary being given over to a two or three days special meeting or conference - perhaps on a specific topic decided by the Body after proposals made by the Committees - and the appropriate Minister(s) would be invited to attend. Both the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister could then attend the one Plenary session. (Paragraph 53)
4. Visitors to the British-Irish Council's website are informed that the valuable work undertaken by the Council includes action against illegal drugs, on the environment, health, the knowledge economy, social inclusion, tourism, transport and minority and lesser-used languages; but if those same visitors were to attend a Plenary session of the Body, they would have no idea that the Council's remit was so wide ranging. There has to be better cooperation between the Body and the British-Irish Council, and both organisations should raise their own profiles, and publicise each other's work. The Secretariats of the Nordic

Council and of the Nordic Council of Ministers share the same building in Copenhagen; the two organisations share the same website - in stark contrast, there is not even a link between the Body's and the British-Irish Council's websites. (Paragraph 55)

5. We believe that it is now an appropriate time to reevaluate, and move forward the current arrangements with both the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly, by putting the existing contacts on a more formal level. We believe the Body should follow the example of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, where Canada, Israel and Mexico have "observer" status. The Assembly specifies the size of these delegations, and Members are entitled to sit in the Assembly and its Committees (although they do not have the right to vote), and may address either - although observers do need the authorisation of the President to address the plenary, and committees may decide in advance to exclude them from their meetings. (Paragraph 60)
6. The Committee recommends that the Body extends to the Nordic Council and to the Baltic Assembly a more enhanced status by designating them "Special Guests", along the lines of "observer" status to the Council of Europe. (Paragraph 61)
7. We do not feel able to recommend that the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council (BICC) also be accorded "Special Guest" status immediately. However, we do not consider there to be any good reason why the BICC should not be invited to send observers to attend future Plenaries on the same, informal, basis that the Nordic Council are currently invited - and we have little doubt that, in due course, the BICC will also be designated a "Special Guest". (Paragraph 63)
8. As these new arrangements would be an invitation from one Parliamentary organisation to another to attend (and participate in) its proceedings, we believe that the Body is entitled to decide such a matter for itself, and do not consider it an appropriate matter for government to decide. We hope that the Body will, therefore, make its decision at the earliest opportunity. We invite the Steering Committee to consider this Report, and to bring forward proposals for its implementation at the next Plenary session. (Paragraph 64)

ANNEX 1

Visits undertaken in connection with the inquiry

COPENHAGEN, 16-17 JUNE 2003

Monday 16 June 2003

Meeting held at the Folketing

Mr Henrik Hagemann, Secretary-General of the Danish delegation to the Nordic Council

Tuesday 17 June 2003

Meetings held at the Headquarters of the Nordic Council

Mr Ole Stavad MP, Chair of the Danish delegation to the Nordic Council and member of the Nordic Council Presidium

Ms Frida Nokken, Secretary-General of the Nordic Council, Mr Jan Widberg and Mr Jens Nytoft Rasmussen, Senior Advisors, Nordic Council

HELSINKI, 15-16 SEPTEMBER 2003

Tuesday 16 September 2003

Meetings held at the Eduskunta

Mr Seppo Tiitinen, Secretary-General of the Finnish Parliament

Mrs Outi Ojala MP, Chair of the Finnish delegation to the Nordic Council and Mr Patrick Zilliacus, Secretary-General of the Finnish delegation to the Nordic Council

Mr Kimmo Kiljunen MP, Vice-Chair of the Grand Committee and Mr Peter Saramo, Committee Counsel and clerk to the Committee

Mr Karl Johan Krokfors, Chief of the Secretariat for Nordic Cooperation and Mr Ingmar Ström, Counsellor, Secretariat for Nordic Cooperation

Meetings held at the Headquarters of the Nordic Investment Bank

Mrs Siv Hellén, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Nordic Investment Bank

HE Mr Matthew Kirk, British Ambassador to Finland and Mrs Caroline Delahunt, Chargé d'Affairs, Embassy of Ireland

OSLO, 7-8 DECEMBER 2003

Sunday 7 December 2003

Working dinner held in the Forgnerseteren Restaurant

Mr Arne Lyngstad MP, Chair of the Norwegian delegation to the Nordic Council and Mr Kjell Myrhe-Jensen, Secretary-General of the Norwegian delegation to the Nordic Council

Monday 8 December 2003

Meeting held at the Storting

Ms Berit Brørby MP, member of the Nordic Council Presidium and Vice President of Odelstinget and Mr Inge Lønning MP, President of the Nordic Council, Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs

Meeting held at the Residence of the British Ambassador

HE Mrs Mariot Leslie, British Ambassador to Norway and HE Mr Donal Hamill, Irish Ambassador to Norway

Meetings held at the Storting

Ambassador Kjell Halvorsen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr Asmund Kristoffersen MP, Chair of the Nordic Council's Environment Committee

Mr Olav Akelsen MP, Chair, Ms Rigmor Andersen-Eide MP, Ms Aud Gaundal MP, Mr Olaf Gjedrem MP and Mr Erland Nornes MP, Standing Committee on Business and Industry

RIGA, 19-20 JANUARY 2004

Monday 19 January 2004

Meeting held at the British Embassy

HE Mr Andrew Tesoriere, British Ambassador to Latvia and Mr Michael Bourke, Irish Honorary Consul

Tuesday 20 January 2004

Museum of the Occupation of Latvia

Ms Gundega Michele, Director, and Professor Valters Nollendorfs

Latvian War Museum

Mr Valdis Kuzmins

Meeting held at the Headquarters of the Baltic Assembly

Ms Baiba Moïðika, Secretary-General of the Baltic Assembly and Mrs Marika Laizâne-Jurkâne, Project Manager of the Baltic Assembly Secretariat.

Meeting held at the Saeima

Mr Jānis Reirs MP, Head of Delegation, Mr Valçrijs Agešins MP, Mr Ainārs Latkovskis MP, Mr Pçteris Ontužāns MP, Mr Leopolds Ozoliðš MP, Ms Anna Seile MP and Mrs Jevgenija Stalidzâne MP, members of the Latvian Delegation to the Baltic Assembly

ANNEX 2

List of Background Material

PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

- *The Baltic Assembly - Let's Get Acquainted*, Baltic Assembly information leaflet
- *Cooperation Nordic Strength*, Nordic Council of Ministers factsheet, 2002
- *The Helsinki Treaty 1996*, Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers
- *NIB 2002 Annual Report*, Nordic Investment Bank
- *The Nordic Agenda*, Nordic Council factsheet, 2002
- *Nordic Council Rules of Procedure*, adopted 2001
- *Parliamentary Systems: The Nordic Council*, SPICe Briefing 02/134, Scottish Parliament, 2002
- *Sub-regional organisations and their parliamentary dimension - Part II: Northern Europe*, Document A/1739, Assembly of WEU, 2001
- *West Norden and its Neighbours*, ANP 2003:733, Nordic Council of Ministers
- *The West-Nordic Region in Nordic Cooperation*, Report, ANP2003:747, Nordic Council of Ministers

WEBSITES

- Baltic Assembly - www.baltasam.org
- British-Irish Council - www.british-irishcouncil.org
- British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body - www.biiipb.org
- Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers - www.norden.org

ANNEX 3

The Nordic Investment Bank

The Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) is a multinational financial institution, owned by the Nordic countries, in order to further strengthen and develop Nordic cooperation and to promote the Nordic economies by medium and long-term financing of projects of mutual interest in both the public and the private sectors. It was established in 1975, and commenced operations the following year. The Nordic Council of Ministers can amend the Bank's Statute. The Bank's ownership structure is

based on the Nordic countries' individual GDPs. Therefore, Sweden owns 38%, Denmark 22%, Norway 20%, Finland 19% and Iceland 1% of the Bank.

NIB loans are granted in various currencies at fixed or floating market-based interest rates, for up to half of the project's total cost. It finances projects in the manufacturing sector; infrastructure; environmental improvement; research and development; cross-border investments; and foreign investment.

The Bank gives loans for projects in emerging markets in Asia, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa, although priority is given to the financing of public and private infrastructure and industrial investments in the areas neighbouring the Nordic region. The Bank participates in the financing of projects in the Baltic states through investment loans to companies investing in Baltic countries. Since 1996, special environmental investment loans may be granted to environmental projects in the Baltic states, Poland, Kaliningrad and north west Russia.

The member countries appoint representatives to the Bank's Board of Directors and to its Control Committee. NIB acquires the funds to finance its lending by borrowing on the international capital markets, and its bonds enjoy the highest possible credit rating (AAA/Aaa). NIB's capital stock is €4,000m/£3,000m; its maximum lending facility is 250 x its authorised capital, ie, €12,500m/£9,615m. Its total lending capacity is €15,800m/£12,150m.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO THE REPORT

Tuesday 24 February 2004

The Committee met at the House of Commons

Members present:

Rt Hon Andrew Mackay MP, in the Chair

Mr Séamus Pattison TD, Vice-Chairman
Mrs Rosemary McKenna MP
Senator Pascal Mooney
Mr Damien English TD
Senator Francis O'Brien
Baroness Harris of Richmond
Mr Conor Lenihan TD

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [Links between the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body and the Nordic Council], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read and a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 64 read and agreed to.

Annexes 1 to 3 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be made to the Body.

Several papers were ordered to be appended to the Report.

The Committee deliberated further.

[Adjourned till a date and time to be fixed by the Chairman.]

APPENDIX 1

Agreement on Parliamentary Cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council

In view of the established cooperation of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council (referred to as the Parties), **based upon** the 1992 Agreement on Parliamentary Cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council, and **being aware** of the necessity to further develop cooperation between the respective parliamentary bodies to strengthen common concerns regarding security and stability in the Baltic Sea region, the Parties agree on the following principles of cooperation:

— Parliamentary cooperation

— The two Parties work both individually and closely with each other and the respective parliaments for the development of parliamentary cooperation and parliamentary democracy, exchange of experience and the promotion of mutual understanding.

— Areas of cooperation

The two Parties through their respective presidiums shall, on regular basis, agree to the priority areas for cooperation. Areas of special interest for cooperation include the political, economic, legal, ecological, cultural and educational development of the region, security and the fight against organised crime and illegal migration.

— Mode of cooperation

In order to achieve the objectives set by this Agreement the Parties agree to the following modes of cooperation:

Statutory sessions: The Parties shall invite the representatives of each other to participate at the respective plenary sessions, held by the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council as well as to seminars, whenever matters of mutual interest are discussed. The Parties shall also hold joint meetings on a regular basis.

Other international events arranged by the Parties: whenever matters of mutual interest and concern are discussed.

Cooperation at a political level and between the two Secretariats: whenever required, and securing continuous flow of information of activities of both Parties.

— **Exchange of documentation**

The two Parties shall exchange official documentation, resolutions and recommendations relevant to their cooperation and in the spirit of this Agreement without undue delay.

The Chairpersons of the two Parties will exchange the Agenda of plenary sessions.

This Agreement contains the framework for cooperation between the two Parties. It shall in no way prevent or hinder the development of cooperation between the Parties in other areas of mutual interest.

This Agreement may be revised and/or amended by consensual agreement of the two Parties' presidiums.

Signed on 26 September 1997 in Kalmar, Sweden, in two authentic copies in English, both having the same effect.

On behalf of the
Baltic Assembly
Mecys Laurinkus
Chairman of the Presidium

On behalf of the
Nordic Council
Olof Salmén
Chairman of the Presidium

APPENDIX 2

Nordic-Baltic Parliamentary Cooperation Towards New Challenges—Joint statement

Lund, 29 April 2003

Joint statement by the Presidium of the Nordic Council and the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly

Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly held their fourth joint meeting on April 27 - 29, 2003, in Lund, Sweden. More than 100 Baltic and Nordic parliamentarians as well as ministers and experts gathered in the old university town to address a wide range of topical issues, such as the fight against organized crime, civil security, and the Northern Dimension of the EU.

The Lund meeting constituted a reaffirmation of the close and fruitful Nordic - Baltic parliamentary cooperation dating back to the early 1990's. It also pointed the way towards an even closer relationship and cooperation in the years to come.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are on the threshold of EU membership. The enlargement of the Union will bring about new conditions and opportunities for cooperation in Europe.

Nordic-Baltic cooperation has a central role in promoting regional cooperation, in addressing the political challenges of northern Europe, and in strengthening the position and voice of the small states in the Union.

The close cooperation on a wide range of societal areas—such as infrastructure, health, IT development, research and education—and on an everyday and equal basis is an integral and mutually beneficial element of the Baltic—Nordic relations.

The Presidium of the Baltic Assembly and the Presidium of the Nordic Council have agreed on the following priorities:

- Combating organized crime is a fundamental prerequisite for securing democracy, for the safety of the citizens, and for the growth and just distribution of welfare. Corruption is an insidious obstacle for political, economic and social progress. Urgent and concerted action must be taken to stop the detestable trafficking in human beings. Society can not accept the suffering nor afford the waste of human resources caused by the trade in and use of narcotic drugs.

Environmental protection is a prime objective of Nordic - Baltic cooperation. Implementing Agenda 21 is vital. Protecting the sensitive marine environment of the Baltic Sea region from all kinds of man-made hazards is crucial for the survival and sustainable reproduction of natural resources, as well as for biodiversity and the recreational potential of the Baltic Sea region.

Civil security should be strengthened by joint efforts to augment the capacity for preventing and managing natural and technological disasters. Civil security rests upon a credible ability to handle a range of threats against society and its citizens, which is bolstered by international cooperation.

Northern Dimension holds a natural and significant position in the Nordic - Baltic parliamentary cooperation. Increased weight should be placed on measures that yield practical results for the citizens of the region. Cooperation between the EU- and non-EU- members of the Northern Dimension should be intensified, and the promising initiatives of various parliamentary and governmental organizations in the region should be supported.

Having evaluated the influence of the EU enlargement on the regional development, Northern and Baltic countries highly support the processes of cross-border cooperation of their countries, and seek balanced development of all the regions of an enlarged Europe. For this purpose, it is necessary to successfully make use of EU financial assistance, including INTERREG, and to promote cooperation in all countries of the Region, taking into account emerging priorities and seeking sufficient national financing of these processes.

EU enlargement will open a new chapter in Nordic - Baltic parliamentary cooperation. The growth of the Union underlines the need for enhanced regional cooperation, which draws attention to the particular challenges of Northern Europe, jointly addresses these challenges, and yet contributes to the overall development and objectives of the Union. Joint steps should be taken to ensure that the influence of small states in the Union is safeguarded.

The Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council welcome the enhanced cooperation of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Council of Ministers, and encourage them to apply it to all fields of activities, by involving sectoral ministries and holding regular meetings of the eight countries on various issues and on different levels.

The Presidium of the Nordic Council and the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly have agreed to define the following areas of cooperation between the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly for the period from 2003 to 2005:

Northern Dimension, with emphasis on its practical implementation; The development of the European Union, with focus on regional cooperation and development; Environmental issues, including maritime security; Social development cooperation issues, including infrastructure, health, IT development, research and education, and civil security; Combating organized crime, with emphasis on drug issues, trafficking, and corruption, Protection of cultural heritage of the Baltic and Nordic Countries.

The Presidium of the Nordic Council and the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly have also agreed to support joint activities of the working bodies of the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly.

Inge Lønning
President of the Nordic

Giedrė Purvaneckienė
Chairperson of the Presidium of the Baltic

APPENDIX 3

Memorandum of Understanding: Baltic Assembly, Environment Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council, Environment and Natural Resources Committee

With reference to the Agreement on Parliamentary Cooperation Between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council signed on 26 September 1997 in Kalmar the undersigned committees agree:

Baltic Sea environment and shipping

Based on the mutual concern for the maritime environment in the Baltic Sea, based on the information given from IMO and HELCOM representatives, the proposed motions, and on the discussion among the members of the two committees on 29 April 2003 in Lund, Sweden we hereby agree:

- each of the two committees in 2003 will work on recommendations/resolutions concerning the improved protection of the Baltic Sea environment in relation to shipping and
- further investigation on the behaviour of chemical munitions in the Baltic Sea.

Mode of cooperation

- Each of the committees will finalise the draft motions in the appropriate format due to the statutes of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council, respectively
- The two committees will inform each others on the progress in English language
- Members of the Baltic Assembly committee will participate in the Nordic Council committee meeting in Lund in April, and members of the Nordic Council committee will participate in the Baltic Assembly committee meeting in May in Tallinn
- The two committees will present their recommendation/resolution to the plenary sessions of the 55th Nordic Council and the 22nd Baltic Assembly sessions in October and November 2003 respectively. The recommendation and resolution, respectively will refer to each another.

Future Cooperation

The two committees agreed to:

- inform of activities by exchanging work plans on a regular basis
- meet regularly (once or twice annually) and/or to send representative to the meetings of the corresponding committee
- to enter into specific cooperation on issues of common interest whenever appropriate.

Friday, 23 May 2003 in Tallinn, Estonia

Mr *Asmund Kristoffersen*, Nordic Council Mr *Indulis Emsis*, Baltic Assembly

May 2003

APPENDIX 4

Statement of the Baltic Assembly, Environment Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council, Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Baltic and Nordic parliamentarians of the Baltic Assembly Environment Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council Environment and Natural Resources Committee during their common meeting 29 April 2003 in Lund, Sweden and 22-24 May 2003 in Tallinn, Estonia agreed on the following statement:

Focus on shipping and oil transports in Baltic Sea must be maintained

Shipping on the Baltic Sea constitutes an ever growing field of activity with a considerable impact on the environment. Approximately 2000 vessels sail in the Baltic every day.

Especially, the Helsinki Commission, HELCOM is expecting that the frequency of large oil-tanker traffic will increase considerably as increasing amounts of oil is shipped through the Baltic Sea. The risk of serious oil spills is growing. New energetic measures will be required to prevent spills. According to the UN body, International Maritime Organisation, IMO, a marine area with a particularly sensitive ecosystem under threat from maritime transport activities can be classified as a "Particularly Sensitive Sea Area" (PSSA). This designation opens possibilities for imposing specific regulations of shipping in order to protect the environment.

Baltic and Nordic parliamentarians urge the

- Nordic Council of Ministers;
- Baltic Council of Ministers; and the
- governments of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden,

through HELCOM, IMO, and other international bodies

- to apply stricter regulations for discharges from vessels in the Baltic Sea

- to apply for recognition by the IMO of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area.

Further, the Nordic and Baltic parliamentarians will call on the members of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference to further the above mentioned initiatives.

Friday, 23 May 2003 in Tallinn, Estonia

On behalf of the members of the two committees

Mr Indulis Emsis, Baltic Assembly
Chairman of the Environment and
Natural Resources Committee

Mr Asmund Kristoffersen, Nordic Council
Vice-chairman of the Environment
Protection and Energy Committee