

Address by H.E. Mr. GUNDARS DAUDZE, Speaker of the Saeima, at the opening of the 26th Session of the Baltic Assembly

Reval Hotel Latvia, Omega 1 room

24 November 2007, 10:00 a.m., length of the speech – 3 min

Honourable Madam President of the Baltic Assembly,
Honourable delegates to the Baltic Assembly,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome participants and guests of the 26th Session of the Baltic Assembly to Latvia's capital city – Riga. I hope that all attendants of the Session had a chance to participate yesterday in the Baltic Assembly Prize Awarding Ceremony, as well as in the following reception, and thus to make new contacts and meet old friends.

Taking into consideration that this is the closing Session of Latvia's presidency in the Baltic Assembly, I will use this opportunity to give a brief summary of what has been done this year, as well as my vision concerning future plans.

I am a confirmed supporter of cooperation between the Baltic States. As it sometimes happens among neighbours, mutual competition tempers us and impels us forward; however, in decisive moments we have always been able to unite, and I am convinced that we will continue to be united. Therefore, I am gratified that the standard of parliamentary cooperation has been set so high. Besides, these are not merely politically declarative platforms, because there is ongoing work on the parliamentary level concerning topics, problems and positions important to our countries.

First of all, proof of such cooperation is this year's priorities set by the Baltic Assembly – energy, migration and the labour force, environmental protection and the

parliamentary contribution in implementing the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy. In compliance with these priorities, two high-level conferences were organized this year. The first conference on labour market issues took place this summer in Sigulda, and yesterday here in Riga we discussed the EU Neighbourhood Policy. Both conferences were the result of cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers. This is a new approach which, in my opinion, should be supported in order to make activities of the legislative and executive power more harmonious and, what is most important, more efficient within the framework of cooperation between the Baltic States.

This year, cooperation with the closest neighbours of the Baltic States – the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council – has been equally successful. A representative from the Presidium of the Nordic Council is also participating in today's session. Within the framework of the Nordic Council, there are discussions on how to use the cooperation mechanisms more efficiently and how to make decisions adopted during joint discussions more productive and accessible to society at large. I believe that issues raised during these discussions are also topical for the Baltic Assembly.

Therefore, we have to initiate a discussion about the Baltic Assembly's future work strategy and cooperation with other regional organizations. The next conference of the speakers of parliaments of the Baltic States and the Nordic countries will be held in Riga, and at this conference I will invite my colleagues to have a discussion about improving cooperation between the Baltic States and the Nordic countries.

Honourable delegates and guests,

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, the Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly and all colleagues for their work, and I wish success to our northern neighbours Estonians in taking over the presidency of the Baltic Assembly.