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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
Priority Theme: Inclusive and resilient recovery from
COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity
for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and
dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda**

Statement submitted by the Baltic Sea Forum e.V, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Baltic Sea region is an example to cope with the COVID-19-pandemic by working towards the Sustainable Development Goals: by fostering social well-being and eradication of poverty and hunger – SDGs 1 and 2, through sustainable public health care systems – SDG 3, by providing good health and well-being, decent work, and economic growth – SDG 8, quality education – SDG 4, sustainable transport systems – SDG 9, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, as well as climate action – SDG 13

The current disruption due to the COVID-19-pandemic is comparable to the radical changes of the 1990s and the end of the cold war. While the turmoil of the 90s was limited to certain countries, the pandemic is experienced on a worldwide scale.

Experiences and past projects of the Baltic Sea region can be used as a blueprint for economic rebuilding and developing social well-being in different regions of the world to ensure the goal of eradication of poverty after the pandemic corresponding to SDGs 1 and 2.

Therefore, the success story of the Baltic countries during the last 30 years might serve as an example: after decades of separated and exclusive infrastructure, markets, health care, education, and political systems, the Baltic Sea Region was able to reach stable political systems, close cooperation with neighbouring countries and economic prosperity by setting up an efficient goal, nowadays SDG 17.

In order to bring countries, civil society and nonstate actors closer together economic cooperation has to be fostered. The logistic sector including maritime transport and railways play an indispensable key-role to create higher standards of living and with that eradication of poverty and hunger.

Close partnership between countries raises income levels domestically and incorporate countries in the global economy, trade systems and value chains, especially hinterland countries. Furthermore, economic assistance and development aid, technical standards, norms, and business development create an effective and functional infrastructure to connect hinterland- and developed countries and work towards SDG 8.

Political and cultural cooperation is linked with social well-fare and economic strength promote stability, democracy as well as human rights and thus recovery from Covid-19-pandemic-issues. In order to reach social well-fare and a working public health-care-system it is necessary to foster job creation, education, political representation on local, national, and international level, skilled labour work forces, and better social welfare systems.

Intense cooperation on the macro-level in the health sector is needed to achieve goals on the micro-level to effectively contain the pandemic and corresponds strongly with SDG 3. The healthcare systems need to be improved so that human resources and medical supply and maintenance have better access and health education can be achieved.

But the improvement of healthcare systems is not only important to stop the spread of the pandemic but also a necessary precondition for economic and social development and thus eradication of poverty. Developing a global public health governance model, which enables all countries to respond in an efficient and flexible manner is precondition. The Baltic Sea region meanwhile reached a strong infrastructure and healthcare systems, as well as the standardization of hospitals, cross border cooperation for exchange and can be used as template of knowledge and implementation.

Without sustainability eradication of poverty is not possible. Environmental and climate change issues like global warming and rising water levels can easily threaten all progress that has been made. Sustainability is an important directive for future projects, campaigns, and policies. Social and ecological well-being of the world and the people are closely intertwined. There is a need for modern technology and innovation to lower the carbon emission. Without breathable air staying alive becomes difficult and social gaps occur which lead to even more poverty and hunger. Therefore, science and renewable energy systems are significant. Maritime ecosystems are the substructure of our life and success, which matches SDG 13 climate action.

Restructuring and building new maritime connections is a new focus to reach a sustainable transport and sustainable traffic in the Baltic Sea region. In case of catastrophes like the pandemic the resilience of the transport sector needs to be enhanced. Developing stronger short sea connections lead to bypass possibilities, which keep transport operative. A protection against infectious diseases builds on the minimization of human contact by deploying information and communications technology. Ports need to be protected against the consequences of climate change. Reduction of fossil fuels by usage of low- to zero- emission energy as well as the adaptation of ports and vessels needs to be the next step leading to survival as well as eradication of poverty and hunger in the post-pandemic-time.
