

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the Russian Federation's proposals
regarding security aspects, confidence-building measures
and regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region**

The European Union has noted with interest the Russian Federation's proposals regarding security aspects, confidence-building measures and regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. It stresses its commitment to the principles of the indivisibility of European security and the fundamental right of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and all other sovereign States to choose their security arrangements freely.

The European Union welcomes the Russian Federation's wish to develop its relations constructively with the countries of the region, especially the three Baltic States, by embarking on a policy of good-neighbourliness between sovereign States, based on cooperation and mutual trust. The European Union notes with satisfaction the announcement by the President of the Russian Federation that the latter intends to make substantial reductions in its armed forces in the regions adjacent to the Baltic States.

The European Union notes the readiness of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to move towards establishing or strengthening, as appropriate, good-neighbourly relations, bilateral political dialogue and, within existing fora, confidence-building measures and mutually beneficial cooperation in all areas of common interest.

The European Union urges Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation to start or, where already started, to continue discussions, both bilaterally and together with other States in the region, on mutually beneficial regional cooperation in areas of common interest, particularly in the economic, social and environmental areas. It considers that the Council of the Baltic Sea States has an important role to play in implementing such cooperation.

Following the signing of the border agreement with Lithuania, the European Union considers that early signing of similar agreements with Latvia and Estonia would demonstrate the Russian Federation's resolve to engage in relations based on multidimensional security and mutual trust.