JOINT STATEMENT
OF THE 32nd BALTIC COUNCIL

The Baltic Council declares the following:

On 23 October 2026, in Tallinn, the Republic of Estonia, the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers convened for the 32nd Baltic Council to address priority issues of cooperation among Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the current challenging security environment, the Baltic States reaffirm their commitment to strengthening regional security and resilience, enhancing connectivity and providing comprehensive and continuous support to Ukraine. Regular and results-oriented cooperation across key areas, including the economy, education, science and innovation, culture, health, the environment, and social policy, remains essential to ensuring coherent policymaking, advancing regional development and strengthening the resilience of our region.

Regional security, including food security and the resilience of supply chains

Security and defence

Russia remains the most significant, direct and long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security. Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine, military build-up, hybrid attacks and escalating malign activities demonstrate that Europe must continue and accelerate the strengthening of its deterrence and defence readiness.

Belarus also poses a growing security challenge to our region, primarily through its deepening military and strategic integration with Russia. Its territory provides Russia with an additional military presence on NATO's eastern flank, while Belarus also contributes to hybrid pressure, including the instrumentalisation of migration and support for Russia's military activities.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are determined to further strengthen their national and collective defence, which contributes to NATO's deterrence and defence posture on the eastern flank, including through initiatives such as the Eastern Flank Deterrence Initiative. We urge all Allies to continue increasing their defence expenditure. We will continue to increase our defence investments and develop the capabilities necessary to effectively deter and respond to conventional, hybrid and emerging threats, prioritising joint activities that contribute to strengthening our common security across the region. At the same time, we acknowledge that strengthening cooperation in scientific excellence and innovation is vital to enhancing our region's resilience and competitiveness.

We remain committed to the implementation of the defence investment commitments agreed upon by NATO Allies and will continue to strengthen our national capabilities, resilience and readiness. The strong transatlantic bond and continued Allied presence in the Baltic region remain essential.

We highly value the contribution of Allied forces and framework nations to the defence of the Baltic States. We consider that US presence is a part of effective deterrence and remains an important factor in maintaining security in Europe. Continued Allied presence and commitment, together with our further investment in host-nation support and military infrastructure, are essential elements of NATO's deterrence and defence posture.

The Baltic States will continue to develop the Baltic Defence Line and ensure close coordination of their efforts. The EU should complement and support NATO, particularly through its civilian, resilience and crisis-management instruments, and funding. As we defend the EU's and NATO's external borders, we underline the importance of ensuring that the EU's defence initiatives and financing instruments adequately address the specific security needs of the eastern flank, such as Eastern Flank Watch and drone and counter-drone projects. In 2024, all Baltic States signed an

agreement of the Drone Coalition to support Ukraine. We must continue to ensure that defence readiness remains one of the core priorities of the EU's current and next Multiannual Financial Framework, with the emphasis on countries bordering Russia and Belarus.

Greater EU attention to countries bordering on Russia and Belarus should address not only defence and security needs but also the socio-economic resilience, critical infrastructure and civil defence needs, as well as sustainable development of the EU's eastern border regions, including through adequate and territorially targeted support under the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

As a priority, we will continue to strengthen air and missile defence, situational awareness, protection against unmanned systems and counter-drone capabilities. Russia's increasing use of drones, electronic warfare and other emerging technologies demonstrates the need for rapid adaptation and closer cooperation among the Allies, Ukraine and other like-minded partners.

Military mobility remains essential for the rapid reinforcement and defence of the Baltic region. We will continue to develop dual-use infrastructure and improve cross-border procedures in close cooperation with NATO and the European Union.

Transatlantic cooperation

The Baltic States stand firmly committed to a strong, united and forward-looking transatlantic partnership, which remains an indispensable foundation for the security, stability, and prosperity of the whole Euro-Atlantic area. Together with our Allies, we will continue to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence, support Ukraine and build resilience against conventional, hybrid and emerging threats.

Strengthening economic ties of the European Union with the United States and Canada will contribute to sustainable growth, competitiveness, and prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. We will continue to work towards further advancing transatlantic cooperation in trade, innovation, energy security, including food supply, critical technologies, and resilient supply chains.

Food and essential goods security and resilience of supply chains

Drawing on our experience of external economic and energy pressure, we have strengthened our resilience, reduced strategic dependencies and invested in defence, critical infrastructure and regional connectivity. We will continue to deepen cooperation across these areas, recognising that economic resilience and security are essential to our collective ability to withstand pressure, respond to crises and protect our strategic interests.

The Baltic States will strengthen cooperation on food and water supply security and on the resilience of critical supply chains through improved information exchange, preparedness planning and public-private coordination. We will identify vulnerabilities affecting essential goods, critical inputs and transport routes, and strengthen our capacity to maintain vital supplies and essential services during major disruptions or crises.

Cross-border connectivity, including Rail Baltica, and the protection of critical infrastructure

Rail Baltica

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reaffirm Rail Baltica to be our common strategic project and a major European investment in security, military mobility, connectivity and competitiveness. Rail Baltica is a key component of North-South connectivity and contributes directly to the resilience and defence of NATO's eastern flank. We jointly commit to making Rail Baltica main line operational within the framework of the next Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU while keeping the ambition to continue building as close as possible to the currently agreed-upon schedule set out in the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1332. Continued and adequate EU support is indispensable for the successful delivery of the project. The Baltic States will continue close

political coordination and effective project management to ensure sufficient financing and the efficient use of available resources, including through the Connecting Europe Facility and the next Multiannual Financial Framework. The full potential of Rail Baltica can only be realised through an integrated cross-border railway link between the Baltic States and rest of Europe. Since the completion of Rail Baltica is of importance not only for the Baltic States, we will also coordinate closely with the European Commission and our partner countries involved in Rail Baltica development, namely Poland and Finland.

Strategic Air Connectivity

The Baltic States reiterate the continued strategic importance of air connectivity for security and economic development, not least in the promotion of international trade and investment, as well as the tourism and hospitality industry.

Security of critical infrastructure

The security and resilience of critical infrastructure, both onshore and offshore, are essential for our societies and economies. The Baltic States will strengthen cooperation in protecting energy, transport, telecommunications and other critical infrastructure, including through improved information exchange, joint risk assessments and contingency planning against cyberattacks, sabotage and other hostile activities.

We will continue to address threats to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) and essential communications, strengthen digital continuity and develop joint mechanisms for responding to cross-border disruptions, in close cooperation with the private sector. Public-private cooperation remains essential for ensuring digital continuity and protecting critical infrastructure.

Regional energy security and resilience

Strategic energy independence from Russia must remain irreversible. We should continue reducing remaining dependencies, strengthening regional infrastructure and diversifying energy supply sources. Energy security and geopolitical security are inseparable. The synchronisation of the Baltic States' electricity systems with the Continental European network marked a historic milestone in the strengthening of the region's energy security and strategic independence. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will continue to enhance energy resilience by pursuing more structured and strategic regional cooperation, including through regional integration, additional interconnections, protection of critical infrastructure, the development of the Baltic shared contingency reserve mechanism, the diversification of energy sources and the development of renewable energy and system flexibility.

Our interconnectors, pipelines and other energy networks may be nationally owned, but their strategic importance extends far beyond national borders. They are essential to the security, resilience and functioning of the European energy market. The Baltic States call for stronger EU coordination, closer regional cooperation and appropriate EU financing to protect and strengthen regional infrastructure.

Nuclear safety remains an important element of regional resilience. The Astravets nuclear power plant in Belarus continues to pose nuclear safety concerns for the Baltic States, underlining the need for continued coordinated action to strengthen nuclear safety and prevent the proliferation of risks to the Baltic region.

Comprehensive and continuous support for Ukraine at all levels

Supporting Ukraine

The Baltic States reaffirm their unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We will never recognise the illegal occupation or attempted annexation of any part of Ukraine's territory, either *de jure* or *de facto*. We

do not and will never recognise either the holding of the so-called "elections" by Russia in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or their results.

We remain committed to supporting a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in full compliance with international law, including the United Nations Charter. Any peace must fully respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and must not be imposed upon Ukraine. Ukraine must remain in the strongest possible position to defend itself and to determine its own future.

The Baltic States will continue to provide sustained political, military, financial, economic, energy, diplomatic and humanitarian support to Ukraine for as long as necessary, both bilaterally and through EU support. In parallel, we will support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction already during the war, strengthening the resilience of institutions, communities and critical infrastructure, also supporting Ukraine's EU integration. We will continue to contribute to international efforts aimed at providing Ukraine with robust and credible security guarantees.

We reaffirm that Ukraine's future lies in the European Union and commend the significant progress achieved by Ukraine in its European Union accession process under the most severe circumstances of Russia's war of aggression. We call upon all European Union Member States to act on the assessment of the European Commission and open the remaining negotiating clusters by the end of the year at the latest. Ukraine's full-fledged membership of the European Union would constitute an important contribution to the long-term security, stability and prosperity of Europe. We reiterate our strong commitment to supporting Ukraine's reform efforts and encourage further progress, in particular in the justice sector and the rule of law, which are essential to strengthening Ukraine's institutions and advancing its EU accession process.

As members of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, we will continue the efforts to address Russia's unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children, to secure their unconditional return to Ukraine, support their reintegration, and ensure accountability for the perpetrators.

We remain deeply concerned about Russia's occupation and militarisation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, condemn its deliberate attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and will continue to support the efforts to ensure nuclear safety and restore the plant to Ukraine's full control.

Ukraine Recovery Conference

The Baltic States look forward to the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2027 (URC27), to be held in Tallinn on 28–29 January 2027, led by Estonia and Ukraine and in close cooperation with the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8). Having rebuilt our states and joined the European Union and NATO within a single generation, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania stand ready to share our experience in support of Ukraine's recovery, which is already under way. Building on the legacy of Gdańsk and previous conferences, URC27 will bring together Ukraine's donors and partners to reinforce existing commitments, mobilise new support and turn them both into concrete results. We call on all partners to join us in Tallinn at the highest possible level and contribute to a conference focused on delivery, where commitments are matched by implementation and every discussion advances Ukraine's recovery, resilience and European future.

Pressuring Russia

We will continue to pursue a strong policy of pressure on Russia until a just and lasting peace is achieved in Ukraine.

We will focus our joint efforts on strengthening sanctions, countering Russia's shadow fleet, widening the scope of restrictive visa measures, including safeguarding the Schengen area from the entry of Russian ex-combatants and continuing to call for the suspension of tourist visas for Russian

citizens. We stand together in opposing any normalisation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on the international level, including in the fields of sports and culture.

Since Russia launched its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, repression inside Russia has intensified dramatically. The recent State Duma elections provide a clear example as the only political party with an anti-war platform was effectively excluded from the elections, denying voters the opportunity to choose peace instead of war. We strongly condemn the holding of so-called elections in Ukrainian territories illegally occupied by Russia, which constitutes a clear violation of international law and of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We will continue to counter sanctions evasion, advance economic decoupling from Russia, including through targeted import bans and transit restrictions, in order to reduce its ability to finance the war and other hybrid activities.

Russia must bear full responsibility for its war of aggression and the damage caused to Ukraine. Russia's political and military leadership must be held accountable for their crimes and aggression that they have committed in and against Ukraine. The burden of Ukraine's reconstruction must fall on Russia. We will continue to support finding a solution on the use of Russia's frozen and immobilised assets for the benefit of Ukraine, including to compensate for the damage caused by Russia's armed aggression. We will continue to support international accountability mechanisms and legally sound solutions ensuring that Russia pays for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. We encourage further efforts within the framework of the Council of Europe towards the swift operationalisation of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and entrance into force of the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

Ukraine's experience in defending itself against Russia's aggression is of immense value for the security of Europe. We will strengthen cooperation with Ukraine in drawing lessons from the war and integrating relevant experience into our own defence and resilience efforts, including in the fields of military technology, drones and counter-drone capabilities, as well as civil protection, resilience to disinformation, cyber security, healthcare, and safeguarding cultural heritage.

Due to Russia's escalation of the war against Ukraine and attacks on Ukraine's transport and port infrastructure and civilian vessels in the Black Sea region, we call on the European Commission to propose restrictions on the purchase, import and transit of grain through the EU exported from Russia or Belarus.

Russian combatants pose a long-term threat to the security of the European Union and the whole Schengen area. We encourage all Member States to join us in listing Russian combatants to the Schengen Information System to ban their entry to Europe. We are ready to lead, but we need support. Also, we invite to speedily implement the visa ban set out in the 21st sanctions package and to introduce restrictive visa measures envisaged in the EU visa policy strategy.

The Baltic Council has defined the following priorities for cooperation in 2027:

1) A secure and resilient Baltic region;

2) A competitive, well connected and future-ready Baltic region;

3) A stronger Baltic voice in the EU and NATO and sustained support for Ukraine, including through the 2027 Lithuanian Presidency in the EU Council.

The 33rd Baltic Council will be held during the Lithuanian Presidency on 25-26 November 2027 in Vilnius, the Republic of Lithuania.

Timo Suslov

President of the Baltic Assembly

Igor Taro

Minister of the Interior

Tallinn, 23 October 2026