



Christel Liljeström, President CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Opening Speech: BSC Seminar on BSS - Visby, May 11, 2009

During the past winter the Baltic Sea regions have been stirring with activities concerning the Baltic Sea. Organisations of all kind, individually and in cooperation, have rallied to rise to the challenge the region is facing.

At the moment the EU Parliament decided that a Baltic Sea Strategy should be developed, the Parliament took a distinct step into the Europe of Regions. The Commission and DG Regio have accomplished this task in an involving manner. BSC have direct discussions with DG Regio Director General Mr Dirk Ahner and the people at DG Regio directly responsible for writing the basic structure of the strategy. Together with other stockholders and organisations BSC have participated in talks stressing the importance that the strategy shall take stance in the knowledge base we have regarding our region.

Soon DG Regio will present the action plan for the Baltic Sea Action plan. That we are gathering here today, with our own seminar on the topic, is a natural step in the line of activities that we, as an

organisation, have had vice-á-vie the strategy, its content and the process of realisation.

As the point in time of revelation of the action plan quickly is growing near, it is with great pleasure that we greet Mr David Sweet, Adviser to the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, welcome. And we hope he will lift the curtain to reveal to us some of the points of the action plan – as it stands today. In the following presentation, and in our open debate, we look forward to a good exchange on the roll of the regions in the future process and, not the least, the roll regions could have in implementing the strategy.

In the seminar today we do also have the pleasure to receive an input from Ms Gabriella Lindholm, ambassador for Maritime Environment, representing the Swedish Ministry of the Environment and Mr Jari Luoto ambassador for Baltic Sea Issues.

The Swedish input is of special interest as it is during the Swedish presidency that the BSS shall be under debate and also adopted. In Finland we have an ambassador for Baltic Sea Issues, “issues” indicating the holistic approach. As Mr. Jari Luoto, responsible for this, is placed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, one can draw the conclusion that Mr Luoto is well aware of the different aspects of this issue.

One of the organisations with witch we have a close cooperation and an organisation that, no doubt, have a very good knowledge of the

state of the environmental issues of the Baltic Sea, is the Helsinki Commission HELCOM. HELCOM has also presented a Baltic Sea Action Plan, adopted by all nations around the Sea, and that to en large is forming the foundation of several arts of the Baltic Sea Strategy. As the chair of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plans implementation group, Mr Ole Norrback is sure to be able to bring us a good picture on how these plans and strategies could be implemented.

BSC is constantly concerned with that all discussions on strategy shouldn't land in theory only. The concrete, earth down approach shall always be present in everything we do.

Mr Erik Glörsen shall present to us the "Northern Sparsely Populated Areas Foresight 2020" and this is off course a reality that we in our regions need to be concerned with.

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And, as the most important item on the agenda, "the sugar on the cream" we have reserved time for an open debate after the coffee break. This seminar have some 60 pre-registered participants and looking out I recognise many familiar faces but also unknown ones. This I take as a sign of the importance the Baltic Sea Strategy for all of us around the Baltic Sea.

So, let us begin...