



Christel Liljeström, President CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

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**As we have already heard here today, there are many aspects to take into account when putting together a Baltic Sea Strategy and an Action Plan to go with it.**

The work on the BSS have moved on well, yes indeed even better than I, at least, did expect. In the initial phase we truly felt that we, as actors on the regional level, could participate and that we were heard. We have still maintained a constructive dialogue with representatives for the DG Regio. In parallel to this we, the stakeholders, within the region have come to realise the importance of cooperating, each one from their own perspective, all towards the same goal.

That strategy that is now soon to be made public is however a paper for which DG Regio carry the responsibility. It is in the name of the Commission the proposition is put forward to the EU Parliament in June 2009. The process have been an open one, with DG Regio welcoming input and activities made by actors and organisations, but at the same time withholding that it is DG Regio who will take the full

responsibility and also is the body formulating the final proposal for a strategy.

I understand, and I respect this attitude, while in the same time I am noting that in the final part of the process it has been more difficult to follow what is happening as the process is heading for its finalisation. We find various versions of the strategy on the internet as the work with the action plan is coming to the end. But, we are no longer actively bringing any more input to the final document. Also for this reason the discussions here today should be seen as a measure to anchor the strategy in the regions.

The action plan is formulated from a series of holistic approaches as well as from suggestions for actions and flag-ship projects. Some of them are prioritised while others are mentioned more vaguely. This way of formulating the strategy the BSC have underlined in our comments and input. A living document, that is concrete but still have various levels of realisations. The strategy and its action should, as the situation has been changing, be revised.

The goal of the work have been very ambitious:

An integrated process that allows the European Union and Member States to identify needs and allocate available resources thus enabling the Baltic Sea Region to enjoy a sustainable environment and optimal economic and social development.

The fact that the environmental objective is placed at the very beginning of the document is clearly demonstrating the overwhelming urgency of reversing the ecological and environmental decline of the Baltic Sea. In this paper it is also noticed that the HELCOM Baltic Sea

Action Plan addresses all the major environmental problems affecting the Baltic marine environment and it is also adopted by all the 8 Baltic Sea member states and Russia.

I would also like to congratulate HELCOM for a job well done. As we read through the Action Plan DG Regio is, time and again, referring to the HELCOM BSAP. Maybe this in turn will bring the Action Plan the status it needs for all member states to implement its content? I think it is good if HELCOMs, and its member states, through this get a "recite" on that their actions chosen in the BASP were the right ones. In the same time the HELCOM member states will be set under pressure from the EU Parliament to start making the decisions that will implement all the good intentions found in the BSAP.

In my intervention as president for the BSC I don't intend to address the entire 60 page long document with all its details. Instead I like to focus, bringing a few concrete observations. In this I like to stress that the details we can further develop even if we may be disagreeing on details. What is important is that we find a joint platform for action and that we are all bound to help realise our vision. Not sector-wise but with all four thematic-pillars and the 15 priority areas side-by-side. A good example is the importance of the environment: economy and environmental protection is not contradicting one-another. Through these concrete actions we have sustainable development that will generate economic growth and prosperity for our region. Tourism, innovation, a sustainable eco-system, with a multitude of species HAS a value, also in economical terms. – and to that I would like to add the security (it is less expensive to avoid accidents than to clean up after them) and also, last but not least, to secure the stability in the area.

But then, there is something that I can't understand. Why can't the demand for that no waste water, no sewage and no ship generated waste should be allowed – why can't all this be banned once and for all? Despite that environmental reason as well as for the good image of the Baltic Sea and Baltic Sea shipping speaks in favour of such a ban. This is also an action that would be easy to realise. If, as in the present draft version, the demand is not clearly set and mentioned as a only voluntary possibility, I doubt there will be any real result. On the other hand, the solution should not only be financed through harbour fees or taxation. There is the need for a more collective responsibility! The goal should be a shared feeling of responsibility among all who are travelling on or living around the Baltic Sea.

Today it is only Stockholm and Helsinki that handle ship sewage. The solution for the whole Baltic Sea region must be that all take a collective responsibility for the survival of our Baltic Sea to the benefit of the area surrounding it.

I realise that the realisation of all the good ambitions found in the strategy will need financing. The strategy has also listed the funds already available. Still, I must confess, that I pay very little attention to the size of the small and big amounts mentioned. I believe that if there is a will to move realise the strategy – there will be money found. And this will only be mobilised when we focus on concrete actions. This draft of a Action Plan is a very good tool for defining what should be done. The document does even tell us why it is needed. To consider the Baltic Sea Region as ONE region – to have a holistic approach – will support the development of a strong, sustainable and prosperous region – and this is what we shall attained thorough the Baltic Sea Strategy.

A demand on that all nations around the Baltic Sea should have a coordinated `first aid` plan in case of large accidents shouldn't either be too much to ask for.

While the strategy is a strategy of the European Union it is clear that many of the issues can only be addressed in constructive cooperation with our external partners in the region, and in particular the Russian Federation. However, the strategy cannot dictate action to third parties: rather it indicates issues on which cooperation is desirable and proposes forums where this discussion and cooperation would take place. As the European Council conclusions noted the Northern Dimension, a common policy of the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland, provides the basis for these external aspects of the strategy