



Baltic 21 – a useful forum for sub-state level authorities to pursue sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region

– Marek Maciejowski's statement at
the 10th General Assembly of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Naantali, Finland, 27 May 2005

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Baltic 21 is honored to participate in this general assembly of the Baltic Sea Commission and to share its views on how sub-state level authorities can benefit from Baltic 21 in their pursuit of sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. However, before I address that issue, I would like first to express our delight at and the appreciation of the BSC joining Baltic 21. As mentioned by President Inge Andersson earlier today, it was roughly two weeks ago that the Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group accepted the BSC as a member of our network and I am pleased to mention that the name of your organization has been included in the recently produced Baltic 21 CD-ROM 2/2005, which you can find among the information materials distributed at this meeting today.

I am sure that it would be helpful to those of you who are not familiar with Baltic 21, if I provided a brief introduction to the organization. Building on an agreement struck by the eleven Heads of Government of our region in 1996, Baltic 21 (or in full An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region) is a regional expression of the global commitment to a sustainable future, which was first articulated at the 1992 United Nations "Earth Summit," and reconfirmed in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Baltic 21's founding document was adopted by the CBSS Foreign Ministers in 1998. Our mission is to pursue sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region through regional multi-stakeholder co-operation. The diverse membership of Baltic 21, which is widely considered to be one of its strengths, includes the 11 CBSS member states, the European Commission, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, international sub-state and city networks, international business networks, international academic network and other international non-governmental organizations.¹ Baltic 21 focuses on 7 economic sectors of importance to sustainable development, as well as on education and spatial planning. One of our tasks spelled out in the Baltic 21 Action Program is monitoring and assessing the region's progress towards sustainable development. Consistent with this, Baltic 21 periodically prepares reports for submission to the highest political levels. One example is the report "**Five Years of Regional Progress Towards Sustainable Development**,"² which was developed specifically for the Heads of Government from our region who met a year ago. I should also mention that, while taking note of this report, **the Heads of Government underlined the importance of integrating the principles of sustainable development into policy-making by all relevant stakeholders and expressed their interest in the Baltic 21-proposed concept of making the Baltic Sea region an Eco-Region for Sustainable Development covering the economic, ecological and social spheres.**

Mr. President,

Achieving sustainable development requires commitment and concerted action at various levels of our society. One important level is the sub-regional level. Departing from my short introduction of Baltic 21, I would now like to share with this distinguished assembly a few points on how sub-state level authorities, or more specifically the BSC, can benefit from Baltic 21 in their pursuit of sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. I am confident that the BSC's membership in Baltic 21 will offer your organization a useful avenue which you may wish to use in your efforts to achieve the two fundamental objectives of the BSC, namely

¹ The full list of the members is available at the Baltic 21 website at: <http://www.baltic21.org/?organisation,2#sogmembers>.

² Available at the Baltic 21 website at: <http://www.baltic21.org/?publications,22#99>.

(i) contributing to the integration and progress of the whole region as well as (ii) achieving balanced development of our region.

As decided by the Senior Officials Group, Baltic 21 will dedicate part of its efforts during the coming nine months or so to the development of its next periodic report. This report is supposed to review regional progress towards sustainable development generally, and the recent achievements of the Baltic 21 process specifically. Unsustainable trends in the Baltic Sea Region will be identified and Baltic 21's contribution to addressing selected issues in policy areas of interest to us will be described. Looking farther into the future, conclusions and steps to be taken to implement the agreed upon goals and actions will be outlined based on the examination of new challenges to sustainable development in our region and in the Baltic 21 process. **As this report will be submitted to several high-level political events and will be widely distributed throughout this region and beyond, it offers an excellent opportunity for the BSC to channel your concerns and views and, in this way, draw regional attention to sustainable development issues on the agenda of your organization.**

Allow me to mention at this point that the process of developing this report will be in itself a useful occasion for the BSC to enter into a dialogue with a large variety of the Baltic 21 members on issues of importance to regional sustainability. Baltic 21 offers you a multistakeholder forum of partners, all of whom act on equal footing, and I do not hesitate to say that **the BSC's membership in Baltic 21 should be seen not only as an opportunity, but even as a duty to ensure that the voice from the sub-state level authorities be heard at that forum.** At this point I would like to refer to the Baltic 21 Strategy Guidelines¹ that were adopted last year. As stipulated by Guideline 1:

"Baltic 21 will work closely with the CBSS to promote the integration of sustainable development into regional policy making. It will also review regional trends and policies impacting the sustainability of the region, as well as make recommendations to the CBSS for regional discussion, joint action, or for further discussion with other bodies whose policies affect the region."

I sincerely hope that the BSC, which holds a "special participant" status with the CBSS, will be interested in contributing to the implementation of this guideline. From reading the conference documents, I can imagine that one policy area your organization might be interested in is the promotion of coherent transportation solutions across regional and national borders and across modes of transport, while focusing on shifting transport from road to railway and the sea.

Furthermore, **by contributing to regional processes such as Baltic 21, the BSC can also be instrumental in encouraging strengthened work on sustainable development at the sub-regional level.** Here, I would like to refer to Guideline 3, which stipulates that:

"Baltic 21 will adopt and act as the umbrella for a focused set of "Lighthouse Projects" designed to demonstrate sustainable development in action."

I am convinced that the BSC can contribute a great deal to the implementation of this action line of Baltic 21. I have taken note of the fact that the BSC is running many projects and is developing new ones, for example a transport project. With that in mind I would like to invite your organization to work together with other Baltic 21 Members in developing joint activities and, possibly, even a regional lighthouse project.

Mr. President,

I believe that Baltic 21 is a useful tool to promote sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region, which needs to be wisely used by all those concerned to the benefit of the societies of our region. Throughout the course of our challenging work we are eagerly looking forward to cooperating with and receiving support from all respective partners. I would, therefore, like to close by thanking the BSC for giving Baltic 21 an opportunity to participate in this conference and wishing the BSC fruitful cooperation within Baltic 21.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ Available at the Baltic 21 website at: <http://www.baltic21.org/?about#strategy>.