

Speech

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European Maritime Policy – Conference of the Baltic Sea Area

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**Specific Conditions of the Baltic Sea area –
Impacts on a European Maritime Policy”**

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Addresses,

I am pleased that so many of you have taken up our invitation to Schleswig-Holstein.

I am saying this also in the name of my colleague Reinhard Stuth, State Secretary in the City of Hamburg, who is the third host of this conference.

It gives me particular pleasure to see that we have succeeded in attracting representatives from all of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea, and from various key areas of action on a European maritime policy to this conference.

One reason for this, I am sure, is the fact that today we have an opportunity to discuss our ideas for a future European Maritime Policy personally with the appropriate Member of the European Commission.

Thank you, and a very warm welcome to you, Commissioner Borg!

I firmly believe that we stand at the beginning of a maritime century.

Without a sustainable maritime policy, we cannot hope to resolve the great challenges facing mankind in the twenty first century.

To respond to the dramatic changes in our climate, we need the regulating power of the seas.

To find answers to the shortages of coal, oil and gas, we need to find new sources of energy from the sea.

To satisfy the hunger of a growing world population, we need new foods - food that the seas can provide.

In short, the sea has a future. The sea is our future.

Anyone who still believes that the maritime sector is a dying, low-tech branch of industry has failed to read the signs of the times.

Maritime industry, marine technology and maritime research are all high-tech branches of industry. Our task is to spread this message!

I very much welcome the Commission's plans to set up conferences in all of the maritime areas of the European Union as part of the process of consultation on the Green Paper.

Taking into account the regional view, and integrate regional concerns into the formulation of European policy will help to improve acceptance of and support for European policy.

What are the special requirements of the Baltic Sea Area?
How important will they be in shaping our ideas for a future European Maritime Policy?

To begin with, perhaps I could make one or two basic points:

The first question posed by the EU Commission in its Green Paper is "Should the EU have an integrated maritime policy?"

The answer to that is an unconditional YES from Schleswig-Holstein!

And I am not just speaking for political interests here. Supported by the Land Government's "Sea our Future" initiative, maritime economy and science in Schleswig-Holstein have already pooled their skills and resources into a Maritime Cluster. That even got a mention in the Green Paper.

A successful maritime policy must be integrative.

It is clear to everybody that we must protect the sea if we want to make use of it. And experience tells us that pooling all maritime-related political interests and areas of action makes the individual sectors stronger and creates synergy effects.

From a political and historical perspective, the Baltic Sea Area is in a very good situation: overcoming the division of Europe, the end of the Cold War and the EU enlargement have all played a part in bringing the cohesion of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea, their cultures and their peoples an important step closer in a short time.

The Baltic Sea has practically become the European Union's inland sea.

Eight of the ten countries bordering the Baltic Sea are members of the European Union. Norway is an integral part of the Baltic cooperation through its membership of the European Economic Area, as is the Russian Federation through the strategic partnership between the EU and Russia.

The sea is once again free to unfold its full integrative potential.

Now, what belongs together can once again grow together.

During the consultation process on the Green Paper, Germany and Finland will both have held the EU Presidency.

This great opportunity is one that we must not allow to pass us by.

We should, however, also discuss how we in the Baltic Sea Area can organise a common maritime policy for our region.

I do not mean that we should set up new structures. Baltic Sea Cooperation has a long tradition and deep rooted working structures, and we can build on these.

The Baltic Sea Area has maritime roots that are centuries old.

The late Middle Ages saw the rise of the Hanseatic League in Northern Europe. The Hansa was a powerful regional maritime alliance, one that existed for several centuries.

So what was it that finally caused the Hanseatic League to fall apart?

The Hansa failed to adjust to competition from the new trade links with America – today, we would say that it failed to wake up to the challenges of globalisation.

We can, and we should learn from history. We need a strong EU Maritime Policy if we want to be in a better position to bring our maritime interests to bear globally in international agreements and institutions.

It is just as important to reach out to the heads and hearts of the people in our regions. And to do that, we need a common vision.

I am certain that we can develop the Baltic Sea Area into Europe's maritime best practice region.

To do that, we need a common maritime identity. It will not happen overnight. To make it happen, we need inspiration on a new, higher level.

- Wouldn't the World Ocean Day on 8 June be a wonderful annual point of reference for looking out to sea by way of maritime events in the Baltic Sea Area?
- Shouldn't we give more thought to organising major maritime events in the region? A sailing competition, perhaps, a "Baltic Sea Cup" to rival the Admiral's Cup?
- Isn't it time to take up the idea of the church project "Bread and Fish"? A project linking water and land, seeking to turn "Bread and Fish Days" outside great churches and cathedrals in Baltic towns and cities into fixed cultural institutions and inspiring media events?

These are just three ideas for a greater maritime identity. There is still a lot to do. Let's get it started!

We know more about outer space than we do about the depths of our oceans.

Something has to be done about that!

It is therefore high time for us to pay more attention to marine research, and to give it more financial support.

Future technologies such as

- generating power from the seas,
- exploring and exploiting the wealth of the seas, or
- environmentally sustainable aquaculture

must be selectively promoted.

European maritime policy also means promoting cross-sector cooperation in the field of maritime industry.

By doing so, small and medium-sized enterprises in particular could improve their economic success.

To turn our vision of the Baltic Sea as a maritime best practice region into reality, we must do more to protect it.

We have managed to cut pollution levels in the Baltic Sea over the last few years. But pollution is still a major problem.

I therefore welcome the Marine Strategy Directive presented by the Commission. This must form a cornerstone of the future European Maritime Policy.

I also welcome the initiative from HELCOM for a Baltic Sea Action Plan.

At the same time we have to reduce pollution from the air and from surface water, because eighty per cent of the pollution discharged into the seas is created on land.

We can only stop the decline in the variety of species found in the Baltic Sea if we preserve the marine habitat, and if we impose tighter restrictions on our fishing industries in order to conserve fish stocks.

We must not forget: We will only be able to make work to our advantage if we preserve the natural basis of this commercial sector.

Think for example of innovative industrial sectors such as Blue Biotechnology, or other booming marine-related sectors like cruises or coastal tourism.

The "New Hansa of Sustainable Ports and Cities" project, which aims to reduce air and noise pollution in ports and docks by means of so-called "power points for ships", is an excellent example of how we can achieve practical progress.

The Baltic Sea is particularly sensitive to contamination and pollution.

Prevention of accidents at sea is especially important here, particularly as the economic upturn in the Baltic Sea Area has brought with it a rapidly rising volume of sea transport.

Every day, there are ten million tonnes of chemicals being transported on the Baltic Sea.

Every day, there are already two and a half thousand ships criss-crossing the Baltic Sea, two hundred of which are oil tankers.

The oil tanker Prestige, which was wrecked off the Spanish coast in 2002, was on its way from Latvia to Singapore – through the Baltic Sea.

In my view, therefore,

- We need fixed sea routes in the Baltic Sea.
- We must make it obligatory to use pilot boats in dangerous shipping lanes.
- We need radio or radar instruments for surveillance.
- And we have to talk about a common coastguard service.

Our aim should be to make the Baltic Sea Europe's cleanest and safest sea by 2015. Let us therefore work together to make this vision reality.

While we are talking about maritime safety, we should not forget that ships are the most environmentally friendly form of transport there is.

This means that we also need:

- sustainable development of ports and harbours
- expansion of the motorways of the sea
- to promote short sea shipping, and
- to improve links between the hinterland and sea ports.

My brief review shows that an integrative European Maritime Policy must incorporate many political interests and areas for action.

In my opinion, we need to set up pilot projects to stay on track.

One such pilot project could be to develop a European Clean Ship, combining

- energy efficiency
- low emissions

- minimal impact on bodies of water, and
- high safety standards.

European shipbuilders cannot hope to compete on price, but they could well do so on quality.

I would like to think that this conference is just the curtain raiser for cooperation within the Baltic Sea Area on a common maritime policy.

Let us therefore work together to make the twenty first century a maritime century!

Allow me, if you will, to end my speech with a quotation from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry:

“If you want to build a ship,
don't drum up people together to collect wood
and don't assign them tasks and work,
but rather teach them to long
for the endless immensity of the sea.”

Thank you very much for your attention.