

Welcome Speech of
Mrs Erdsiek-Rave
Vice Minister President of the Government of Schleswig-Holstein

European Maritime Policy:
Conference of the Baltic Sea Area

21. September 2006

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Dear Mr Borg,

Mr State Secretary Hennerkes,

Mr Aldegren

Members of Parliament

Ladies and Gentlemen,

there are not that many parliamentary locations available that offer such a clear and wide view of the sea like the Landtag of Schleswig-Holstein. So I am particularly pleased to give you a warm welcome to your conference about "Maritime Policy".

Just by looking out of the windows you can easily get an impression of what a demanding task we all set ourselves when we embarked on the political mission of shaping that new field of European policy making. The Baltic Sea has been and still is the best protected ocean world-wide if you consider the history and the existing documents like HELCOM. That is on paper; reality tells a different story altogether.

The ferry and cruise ships that enter or leave Kiel harbour leave behind them emissions that no stationary power station would be granted.

- You can see the various and conflicting ways man makes use of the seas.
- There is still some fishing going on.
- Tourists love our sandy beaches and – given a summer with mediterranean temperatures like this year a dip into their sea.
- An ever increasing number of vessels enter Kiel Canal, the world's busiest waterway.
- Shipyards build double-hull tankers – a benchmark in environmental standards that started just around the corner.

- And submarines are powered by fuel cells that – for obvious reasons – you will neither see nor hear even if you have an excellent radar.
- Research plays an important role in the works of the world-famous Leibniz Institute, its diverse and highly specialised research vessels.

Many an interest, many a conflict: There is an urgent need to work on a coherent policy. It is most encouraging, dear Commissioner Borg, that you have so vehemently speeded up this process of policy making. And for the citizens and the Government of Schleswig-Holstein it is a very special honour that you came to this State and this city for a second time within a year to present and discuss the Green Paper that you are responsible for. Be assured that we all appreciate your commitment very much.

I am firmly convinced that at this get-together of representatives from all over the Baltic Sea we all not only value that highly but are willing to contribute and capable of contributions that can enrich your work.

It is the warmest of welcomes I give to all of you. You represent a broad spectrum of countries and interests, but are united by our common heritage: the Baltic Sea. Far too long sector interests and national interests have dominated. Hugo Grotius, the outstanding philosopher and lawyer, shaped the concept of the “Freedom of the Seas” as far back as 1635. It took nearly another 350 years before the United Nations started the “Conference on the Law of the Seas” that led to the International Treaty, a historic mile stone with regard to international cooperation. Greatly influenced by an eminent lawyer with the name of Arvid Pardo who like you, dear Commissioner, came from a small island in the Mediterranean: Malta. Your Green Paper most certainly follows the path Pardo has led. We should strive to incorporate that Maltesian spirit and integrate it into our Baltic Sea perspective.

Last night we were reminded of the most important impact an outstanding person like Elisabeth Mann-Borghese has had on the shaping of maritime policies. She has taught us that mankind in its handling of the seas is still on a level equivalent to the hunter-gatherers. It is our entire culture that needs to adapt to the importance of the

seas for our future, be it with regard to resources, be it with regard to the impact of climate change.

When about 3 years ago a few people, minister Döring and I were among them, proposed to our former minister president, Heide Simonis, to start an initiative that then was named "The Sea – our future", I dared not dream that within such a short period of time a broad public debate would bear such fruit as we see today. I am both grateful and happy of still being part of this exciting development.

We stand a very good chance to establish a new way of looking at and living with our seas. Many an artist, be it a writer, a painter, a composer has contributed to that. Their works should be encouragement for all of us! I this conference will be very successful and hereby declare it open.

Thank you very much for your attention.