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DRAFT SPEECH

to be given at the Conference of the Baltic Sea Area

**“European Maritime Policy – The Baltic Sea Area’s Opinion on the EU Green
Paper”**

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**“The Green Paper on European Maritime Policy – Milestones for the German EU
Presidency”**

Duration: 15 minutes

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to attend this conference here in Kiel, a city with a rich maritime tradition in Germany and a major port on the Baltic Sea.

I would like to take this opportunity to express a few ideas about the development of a future maritime policy for the European Union from a German perspective.

This will enable me to give you a brief foretaste of the aspects on which we intend to focus when we assume the EU Council Presidency.

And so I would like to carry on where the honourable gentleman who has just spoken left off.

The Maritime Policy Green Paper, with its holistic approach to the entire spectrum of major sea-related issues, has met with great interest throughout Europe.

This is illustrated by the numerous conferences and events that are taking place during the one-year process of consultation on the Green Paper.

The Federal Government welcomes the Green Paper's integrative approach.

It welcomes the Commission's vision in developing, together with the Member States, the framework for a cross-sectoral maritime policy for the first time.

The Green Paper's cross-sectoral approach is especially advantageous when it comes to developing efficient and suitable ways of using the potential inherent in the oceans, seas and coastal regions.

We support the Commission in adopting this approach.

The main objective has to be to increasingly interlink sectoral policies beyond the boundaries of the individual sectors, and also to better consolidate the relevant scientific findings and make joint use of them.

Special coordination will be required to ensure that all policy areas can be included in the strategy for an integrated maritime policy for the protection and use of the seas.

In our deliberations on a common future maritime policy, we should pay particular attention to the following points:

On the one hand, a common EU maritime policy requires concurring objectives that can be jointly pursued.

On the other hand, however Euro-friendly we may be, we do not want to move away from the systematic application of the principle of subsidiarity.

Because the Federal Government believes that a common maritime policy of the EU Member States does not, per se, result in any changes to existing competencies.

When shaping, implementing and managing our future maritime policy, we should first and foremost fall back on existing international, national and regional structures.

Better cooperation and coordination are the key factors for achieving significant synergies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The development of the integrated approach to maritime policy must be based on a reconciliation of economic, ecological and social interests.

These interests have to be optimized and dovetailed.

A holistic approach should be adopted to conserve the marine ecosystems and ensure sustainable use of the seas.

The starting point and yardstick of a holistic maritime policy are substantiated scientific findings on the seas and their dynamic.

A holistic approach should also include the application of the precautionary principle, while leaving room for development prospects.

Another important aspect in this context is that we should not only consider the seas.

We have to include the coastal regions and their hinterland on the one hand and the maritime area off the coast on the other hand.

The causes of adverse impacts of human activities on the marine environment have to be identified and, wherever possible, prevented or removed.

It is of enormous importance to strike the right balance and harmony between a dynamic maritime industry, the use of the marine environment and the protection of natural resources.

When defining our marine protection objectives, we have to take into account that the seas surrounding Europe are very different.

Future EU rules should thus be confined to framework requirements or recommendations.

Tailor-made solutions to the actual problems of the various maritime regions of Europe have to be found locally.

This does not mean that each region should seek or invent its own solutions.

On the contrary, they should engage in a much more intensive exchange of ideas, so that they are all familiar with and can use the mechanisms and instruments of the other regions.

In Germany, for instance, voluntary Integrated Coastal Zone Management, in conjunction with regional planning, is a system that has proved successful in reconciling land-based interests, and so we can now also apply it to the seas.

Accordingly, our common objective should be an integrated maritime policy for Europe that takes into account the different levels of action and responsibility.

In addition, when the holistic approach is being fleshed out, there should be a thorough cost-benefit analysis for the authorities at all levels and for industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The seas are interlinked across the world.

This must also apply to maritime policy.

It is therefore right that the activities in existing international organizations have to be continued, especially in the fields of maritime shipping and maritime safety.

Our aim is NOT to divide the seas up into safe and clean seas around the territory of the EU and "laissez faire" for the rest of the world.

We want to have the same protection objectives for similar maritime situations throughout the world.

The standards for safe ships and clean seas must therefore continue to be set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Only by creating internationally uniform standards that are enforced by the competent bodies will it be possible

to prevent a situation where there are different protection objectives and competitive situations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about our plans for dealing with the Maritime Policy Green Paper during the German Council Presidency in the first half of 2007.

The consultation phase on the Green paper will be concluded by the end of June 2007.

During the German Council Presidency, no Council working party will be able to address this subject.

Instead, we intend to stage a high-level European policy conference in Bremen on 2 and 3 May 2007 at which the issue of maritime policy will be intensively dealt with.

The purpose of this event will be to set priorities for the salient features of an integrated maritime policy and identify possible solutions to conflicts of objectives between different uses of the seas.

We will ensure that a large number of relevant stakeholders can make their contribution to the decision-making process.

These include various industries, institutes, authorities and non-governmental organizations.

The Federal Government intends to discuss the following subjects as key issues at the conference: employment and competitiveness; research and innovation; competing and/or conflicting uses; and, if appropriate, protection of the marine environment.

Employment and competitiveness

The study recently published by the Commission on the growth and employment potential inherent in the maritime industry showed that the maritime sectors are crucial to the economic prosperity of the European Union.

1.9 million people are employed throughout the EU in the traditional maritime sectors alone.

If all the sea-related activities are added together, this figure rises to a massive 5 million.

If Europe is to maintain its competitive edge, the maritime industry has to have a large number of highly skilled workers.

What does this mean for maritime training?

How can we promote measures to manage change?

Finding answers to these and similar questions will be at the centre of this key conference topic.

Research and innovation

We have to intensify our common research activities at EU level, and scientific data and findings have to be better consolidated and jointly used.

It is essential that we widen our knowledge of the oceans and seas, in order to get a sound basis for a well-informed and cost-efficient decision-making process.

Competing and/or conflicting uses

We have selected the third set of issues in order to identify solutions with which the numerous maritime regions of Europe can address conflicting uses.

Thus, for instance, we intend to exchange examples of best practice, which can be taken as a basis for concretizing future maritime policy.

From a German perspective, the integrative approach of the Green Paper is reflected in regional planning.

Regional policy is used to plan and coordinate the diverse user interests in a balanced and forward-looking manner with the aim of identifying conflicts at an early stage and working together to find a durable solution.

All interests, but especially economic interests, are harmonized with the territory with its ecological functions.

The conference will have a focusing function, i.e. it will make clear, at an advanced stage of the process of consultation, where we need European priorities and activities – and that cannot be the entire spectrum of the Green Paper.

At the conference, we intend to adopt conclusions that identify European fields of action and that can be passed on to the subsequent Portuguese Presidency and the Commission as a compass for their future activities.

Looking forward

What could be the next steps in maritime policy?

When the Green Paper was presented, it was obvious that it would only be the start of a process that not only integrates maritime policy per se, but also – and much more intensively than is frequently the case – requires the exchange of ideas and cross-sectoral cooperation among all stakeholders.

This is something the Commission, and especially you, Commissioner Borg, can be proud of.

Germany has supported you, Commissioner, right from the outset and will do everything it can to ensure that this positive momentum continues.

We see maritime policy at the start of its voyage.

We see a great potential, but if this potential is to be used, the strengths have to be strengthened, for instance in maritime clusters.

We see an even more lively exchange of ideas between the regions in Europe, reflected, for instance, in the activities of the Committee of the Regions and in the numerous cross-regional activities, for instance within the framework of INTERREG.

We see that a reconciliation of conflicting user interests is necessary and possible, and instruments are available for this purpose.

The voyage still has a long way to go until it reaches its destination – optimum interlinking and an optimum degree of integration – but the need for a holistic approach and the interlinked optimization of all policy areas and policy levels is becoming increasingly apparent and is being increasingly practised.

I therefore hope that at this conference we all pick up speed, find happy fishing grounds and secure the freedom of the seas in a positive sense for the future.

Thank you very much