

Address by Mr. Gediminas Jakavonis, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Environment Protection of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, member of the PACE Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs at the Conference of the Baltic Sea Area European Maritime Policy

20 – 22 September 2006 Kiel

Dear Conference Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I welcome all of you who have come to this Conference, which, hopefully, will be a significant move towards the practical implementation of the common integral Baltic Sea policy of all international organizations and states. It is my conviction that a complex solution of the Baltic Sea problems is the political priority of all the states at the Baltic Sea. Therefore, I am happy to be here at this international forum and present my statement on the subject.

I am Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Environment Protection of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and member of the PACE Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs. Saving your time, I would like to focus on the topical issue of the present day, namely, disposal of a chemical weapon and its imminent threat to the entire sensitive ecosystem of the Baltic Sea. To tell the truth, the countries still avoid expanding on the subject even after half a century has passed since World War II. Yet, the forecasts of the scientists who have been examining the condition of a chemical weapon disposed do not promise anything optimistic. Many competent science people are warning about the spills, in the forthcoming years, of elements of the chemical weapon posing threat to the marine ecosystem and human health. I believe, today is the day when we have reached the line where we cannot “close our eyes” on this delayed-action bomb (about 300 000 tons of the chemical weapon) in the Baltic Sea. Especially today, when we notice ever increasing tendencies to use the seabed for economic purposes of the countries and with the specific international arrangements made for the gas pipeline close to the potential chemical weapon dumps. May I note that the international community avoiding to make a decision about the future of the chemical weapon disposed during World War II increases the threat to the whole marine ecosystem, which is also a major concern for the majority of the citizens of the countries. In this respect, further ignoring this problem may also entomb the work of this important conference as a set of impracticable tools. This year, our parliamentary delegation assisted by politicians of other Baltic countries managed to convince the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to analyze the situation and to adopt relevant decisions. The decision of this international organization delegated me to prepare the statement and draft resolution on the Potential Threat to the Baltic Sea Ecosystem by the Sea-Dumped Chemical Weapon After World War II. This issue was regarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as one of this year’s priorities in the environmental policy.

As far as I know, the working group set up at the initiative of HELCOM in 1994 carried out a complex research regarding the dumped chemical weapon. With the specific intergovernmental arrangements to use the Baltic Sea bottom for economic purposes, these HELCOM recommendations for fishers on active fishery, focusing on the potential threat to the Baltic Sea ecosystem posed by the dumps, are apparently insufficient. It requires reconsidering the problem of the dumped chemical weapon anew from the present day perspectives with the solution being adopted on the international level rather than by an individual state. In a fortnight, the parliaments of the Baltic countries and international organizations will receive my letter and a questionnaire on the subject. Taking this opportunity, may I request your assistance, where available, in developing this important document for the international community.

After all, it has been centuries that the Baltic Sea connected the countries and became an integral part of our cultures. Therefore, its preservation is one of our most serious commitments both to our forefathers and future generations. The spirit of this conference already shows that we are ready to solve the Baltic Sea problems hand in hand. This is a welcome example of the progressive policy of the twenty-first century to be followed by all politicians and citizens. "Closing the eyes" on the threat to the Baltic Sea posed by the dumped chemical weapon due to the unwillingness to recognize the fact of non-performance of the Potsdam Conference resolutions should not overwhelm the common sense in individual state policies today and the need to eliminate the delayed-action death bomb in the Baltic Sea. After all, living in the twenty-first century obliges us all to stay out of the past political peripeties for the sake of all the people at the Baltic Sea.

Thank you for your attention.

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