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**“Assessment of the Green Paper – Expectations of the Baltic Sea Area on a Future European Maritime Policy”**

Commissioner,  
Mr Chairman,  
Dear colleagues,

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation that this conference is being held. It is one of the first opportunities after the adoption of the green paper to discuss and debate its content in a broader context.

We have just embarked on a very interesting voyage. Like many other Member States, organisations and stakeholders, we have just started the consultation process in my country. From the Swedish side, we believe that we must take full advantage of this consultation period to debate and analyze the ideas, thoughts and questions in the green paper. I therefore believe that it is too early to make any conclusive statements, but I will try to convey to you some of my reflections and expectations on the paper concerned. I think the green paper forms a very good and sound basis for discussions on all levels all over Europe.

We live in a corner of the world where the sea and activities connected to it play an important role in our daily lives. We are to great extent involved in areas like transport, fisheries, ship building, and tourism, and we all depend on the same possibilities the sea gives us and the resources it brings us.

In using this common resource, we encounter problems. We cannot however find answers or solutions to these challenges on a national basis. It is my firm belief that we need to have a common understanding on how to manage the vast resources of oceans and seas in a sustainable way for generations to come.

One of the best ways to achieve this is thorough cooperation. Sweden and its neighbours around the Baltic Sea have a longstanding experience of close cooperation in many areas and across many sectors. With the enlargement of the European Union, there are even better possibilities to tackle environmental problems, maritime safety matters, and enhance growth and employment in a more coordinated way.

The green paper could therefore, in my view, contribute to lay an important foundation for structured trans-national and trans-sectoral cooperation in order to protect, to develop and to coordinate the maritime resources. This is new basis for our common task, namely to manage our common inland sea, the Baltic Sea.

From a Swedish point of view, we have been keen to point out that we must maintain a holistic approach when discussing a future maritime policy. We agree that there is an added value in bringing sectoral policies together as outlined in the green paper. But as I am representing the Swedish Maritime Administration, and that the shipping sector will most likely play a major role in a future maritime policy, I will elaborate on some of the more maritime transport related issues.

Maritime transports constitute a vital link in the trade both within the EU and with countries outside the Union. During the last decades we have witnessed an increase in maritime transports, for example in the Baltic Sea area. The Baltic

Sea area is one of the world's most dynamic growth areas. As can be learnt from the recent study Baltic Maritime Outlook, cargo transport in the region is increasing with growth of economy and trade,

Increased trade and development within the Union are positive signs. At the same time more dense traffic with larger ships, including oil tankers, increases the risk of incidents. To avoid severe damage to our common marine environment, it is important to prevent and to respond to these incidents. The maritime safety packages, where the third package is being discussed in Brussels, are examples of initiatives in this connection.

The ecology of the Baltic Sea is particularly sensitive and extremely vulnerable to the impact of shipping and other human activities, including land-based activities. We have been successful in addressing the sensitiveness of our common inland sea. For example the Baltic Sea Area is designated as special area as well as a particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA) by the International Maritime Organisation, IMO. While taking a holistic approach, the specificities of the different sea areas should continue to be taken into account, not least the Baltic Sea, with its particularities such as susceptibility to eutrophication.

By introducing the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) in the beginning of the 1990's the European dimension of infrastructure planning was highlighted. The role of maritime transport in the transport chain was strengthened in 2001, when the seaports were included in TEN-T. The Motorways of the Sea concept, which is now integrated in the revised TEN-T guidelines, will even more emphasise the role of maritime infrastructure in developing an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly transport system.

The Motorways of the Sea concept aims at improving cohesion and access to peripheral and island regions and states and/or reducing road congestion.

Projects within the Motorways of the Sea concept contain infrastructure projects of wider benefit (icebreaking, information systems etc.) and projects developing infrastructure in specific corridors containing ports, fairways, and rail and road links.

The Motorways of the Sea concept in the Baltic Sea is being developed and will contribute to the establishment and development of an integrated maritime and land based infrastructure across the Baltic. Initiative and programmes of this kind have inter alia a catalytic effect – contacts are being taken across the border, but also cross sectoral, - and should be further developed. I am very pleased that a call for consortia consisting of at least ports and transport operators to propose Motorways of the Sea projects in the Baltic Sea region was jointly launched together with all EU Member States around the Baltic Sea last Thursday.

In order to ensure an economically efficient and long-term sustainable supply of transport for citizens and for business and industry, it is important that fairways to all ports of importance are accessible and safe. The cold climate is a particular challenge in the northern parts of Europe. Efficient winter navigation is one prerequisite for ensuring accessibility by means of a smoothly functioning maritime transport system in the Baltic Sea region and between this region and the rest of Europe, throughout the year. For example, Swedish and Finnish icebreakers have in close co-operation been serving the industry on both sides of the northern part of the Baltic Sea so that essential ports in the north can remain open also during severe winters.

The ice breaking cooperation in the Baltic Sea region can serve as a good example of cooperation between countries of mutual benefit in a specific area. With the current and expected increase in trade and sea traffic on the Baltic Sea it is of utmost importance that all Baltic Sea countries are strengthening the ice-breaking cooperation and make use of the existing ice-breaking resources in the most efficient way. Other possible areas of regional cooperation, both trans-national and cross-border, as well as cross-sectoral, are search and rescue, and common traffic monitoring.

In the context of a maritime policy it is important not to focus all attention on the areas where there is community competence, but to take advantage of the diversity of Europe and learn from each other. Benchmarking and sharing each other's best practices can often be an effective and operational complement to community legislation.

As I said in the beginning of my intervention, we will use the coming year of consultations to analyse, to debate, and in various ways comment on the green paper, and hopefully, as a result of these activities, also put forward constructive ideas and proposals in order to implement "the establishment of an all-embracing EU Maritime Policy".

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