

European Maritime Policy Conference of the Baltic Sea Area
Kiel 21-22.09.2006

Speech by Jarosław Szczukowski

Chairman of the International Commission of the Pomorskie Voivodeship Parliament
On behalf of the 4th Parliamentary Forum of the Southern Baltic

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to pass to you apologies from Prof Brunon Synak –chairman of the Pomorskie Voivodeship Sejmik (or Regional Parliament) who was supposed to speak at this conference on behalf of the 4th Southern Baltic Parliamentary Forum but unfortunately had to change his plans and stay in Poland.

Let me assure you, too, that the Pomorskie Voivodeship is honoured to be able to participate in this very important conference and even more so, to share with you some information and conclusions from the forum held in May this year in Kiel and the work related to it.

I will start with saying who we are. The Southern Baltic Parliamentary Forum is co-operation of regional parliaments from Pomorskie and Zachodnio-Pomorskie Voivodeships of Poland, as well as Meklenburg Vorpommern and Schleswig Holstein from Germany, to which we invite our partners from Sweden and Kaliningrad Oblast. As you see it is a forum for regular meetings of politicians from both old and new members as well as EU neighbors from Russia. The forum was initiated by Schleswig Holstein and formalized at the first meeting held in Gdańsk in April 2004. We believed then that it was important to broaden our already very extensive bilateral co-operation, executed mainly by administrations, organizations and institutions, by providing support from the regional politicians' level. Since then we have had three more big meetings at which we discussed issues of cohesion policy, youth policy, tourism and recently maritime policy.

Our decision to concentrate on maritime policy was, of course, triggered by the announcement of the European Commission to issue the Green Paper towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union. We thought it essential for us - regional decision makers - to get involved in the dialogue and the awareness raising process. A working group was then established to coordinate our efforts. This working group guided us through two international hearings held in Germany and Poland between September 2005 and May 2006, during which the regional councilors had an opportunity to discuss maritime issues with international experts and exchange opinions. What is more, additional meetings were held in our respective regions and

within the “national platforms”. All this led us to the May Forum, at the end of which we published an official resolution summing up our joint opinions. The difficulty of the process was mainly in the fact, that our tasks and fields of responsibilities vary quite seriously. For us in Poland, for instant, a big scope of maritime related subjects are not within our responsibilities – they are dealt with on the central level. The great charm and value of this process was, that such a big group of people, throughout this period of time, were encouraged to get more acquainted with the maritime affairs so important to our littoral countries. I can show you how it worked in Pomorskie Voivodeship. As the result of this initiative, for the first time the regional authorities invited a group of experts whose expertise covered a broad range of maritime related subjects to hear from them what they considered important for our region and the country as a whole, especially in relation to the Green Paper. Then we had a series of working sessions which gathered politicians and experts both within Pomorskie and with our colleagues from Zachodnio Pomorskie Voivodeship. This work has not only broadened our knowledge and opened us to many new problems. In the process we also decided the Pomorskie Voivodeship Sejmik (Parliament) should look at our Regional Development Strategy and give it a more maritime angle. Last Monday we passed an official opinion prepared in close co-operation with field experts. In it we stress the importance of maritime issues when planning our development projects – including those with EU co-financing. I think it is a good proof of value added coming from international co-operation as well as of subsidiarity in action, so to say.

Now I would like to come to the text of the resolution itself adopted during the 4th Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum in Kiel. I will not go to all the details – the text is available in English, German and Polish. I will concentrate only on a few aspects of it – especially important for us – the four regions situated on one line along the Southern Baltic Coast.

We of course welcomed the European Commission’s ambition to work out an integrated maritime policy and expressed our hope for the White Paper as the result of this work. We did agree that it is essential “to establish a balance between the many complementary or competing economic benefits of the sea and adequate protection of the marine environment that will provide for economically and ecologically sustainable use of marine resource”.

I understand there is no need stressing, that for us regional politicians, it is vital – which we put into the resolution - to have measures and financial resources which will allow us – on one

hand to retain as much as possible –and in some spheres to develop – our maritime economies – including fisheries or shipbuilding, while on the other hand to keep the Baltic Sea clean for life to develop there and tourism and leisure activities to flourish. We are advocates of the solutions due to which littoral regions will be able to become more competitive, while retaining our maritime character – which is our huge asset and treasure.

In this connection we are also of the opinion that “greater attention should be paid to the hinterland connections of seaports within the framework of the Trans-European Transport Networks.

We are also advocates of maritime co-operative ventures, networks and strategic partnerships within the European Union, in particular between small and medium sized enterprises. In this respect, if we want to succeed, it is of high importance to have support measures at our disposal to support establishment and functioning of maritime clusters, also in innovative sphere.

When addressing the European Parliament in our document, we expressed our appreciation at the work of the Baltic Intergroup, but we called for involvement in their work of national parliaments as well. We are also of the opinion that an interdisciplinary parliamentary working group on an integrated European policy should be established for our joint work to be even more successful.

From the European Union we expect that full implementation of the existing legislation should be ensured – before we decide to have new regulations, and that, while finding new solutions, individual characteristics and particular interests of the regions should be met as much as possible.

National governments, according to us – should –among others – include the EU’s maritime policy in their and in the Council of the Baltic Sea States work programmes. And I would stress here, should involve local and regional authorities as well as civic society in their work. This will not only mean subsidiarity rule being put to life – it would also mean making bigger portions of society be aware of challenges related to maritime issues.

Well, we have also made commitments binding for us - the regional parliaments. Our plan is for the working group on maritime issues to continue its work and evaluate the outcome of our efforts. We are also planning to meet in Pomorskie at the 5th Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum to be held on May 21st-22nd. The subject will be this time “tradition and innovation in the Baltic Sea Region” – which means we will continue talking about maritime policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I finish I would like to draw your attention to one more thing. In all our work we have involved young people. Also in the discussions directly related to the Green Paper on maritime policy. We believe it has been a good investment and our input into the awareness raising process. We plan to continue along this line.

Thank you.