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**Framework Conditions for a Common European Maritime Policy in
the Baltic Sea Area**

Kiel, 21 September 2006

Honourable Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by conveying the best regards to all of you from our Minister of Transport and Communications, Mrs. Susanna Huovinen.

The conferences and seminars, which form a part of the on-going consultation process on the Commission's Green Paper on a common EU Maritime Policy, are truly important in bringing the different actors and stakeholders together.

Finland welcomes the Green Paper and supports the Commission's general objectives with regard to the preparation of the future European vision for the oceans and seas. The integration of a broad range of maritime related issues, based on a vision of "more jobs and better regulation" promotes the efforts to achieve a balance between different and sometimes competing interests.

Like other EU Member States we are presently analysing the Green Paper at national level. The work is done jointly with the relevant stakeholders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The making of the Maritime Policy is truly European and it is a learning process for all of us. Today the Baltic Sea has brought us together. Our task is to consider how this very unique area should be taken into account in the context of the future European Maritime Policy.

The aim of the horizontal, cross-sectoral integrated Maritime Policy is to bring added value to our common activities, also in the Baltic Sea area. The work has to have a holistic approach and it must promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of this area bearing always in mind environmental concerns and the need to improve the ecological condition of sea. The process will take a long time and we are only in the beginning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When considering the framework conditions for the future Maritime Policy in the Baltic Sea Region we can distinguish three key areas, namely, the **geopolitical**, the **economic** and the **ecological**.

Except for the Russian Federation all the countries bordering the Baltic Sea are members of the EU. This **geopolitical situation** has a clear impact on our future policy and actions, both regionally and internationally.

We live in a Region where the **economic growth** during recent years has surpassed all the expectations. The prospects of this region are impressive even on a global scale. The main reasons behind the boom are the enlargement of the EU and the development of Russia's economy and the growing markets in Russia.

Approximately 100 million people live in the Baltic Sea Region. It covers 46 % of the total EU area, 23 % of the total EU population and 16 % of the total EU GDP.

In 2003 the Baltic Sea Region countries trade was in total 1788 million tons. Of the foreign trade in the Region **nearly half was transported by sea**. The share of maritime transport is expected to further increase in the future. The main part of the cargo in the Region is transported through 200 commercial ports of which 50 are major ports. The increasing trade requires efficient, competitive and environmentally friendly transport solutions and well functioning ports.

In all our activities we need to take into account the special **ecological nature** of the Baltic Sea. It is globally unique and sensitive.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Aforementioned geopolitical, economic and ecological factors set the framework for developing and implementing the future Maritime Policy. We should work in **close cooperation** with all relevant stakeholders towards the adoption of appropriate strategies, effective measures, including potential legislation, establishment of pilot projects and the promotion of best practices.

We also need to work closely together with our non EU neighbours at all levels. We have already several good examples of productive cooperation with Russia on international and regional level. The most significant re-

sults of cooperation under the Northern Dimension Action Plan have been achieved in the environmental sector in the form of several environmental projects.

We should in our work in the outset make **use of existing structures internationally and regionally**. Increased **co-operation** and co-ordination are **key factors**. One excellent example of productive cooperation at regional level in the Baltic Sea Area is the work carried out in the framework of **HELCOM**. Different organisations in the Region could also build upon each others' work.

Taking into account the **sensitive nature of the Baltic Sea**, some areas need special attention. In addition to the serious problem of eutrophication of the Sea, the rapidly increasing transportation of oil and other hazardous goods by sea forms today one of the biggest risks from the environmental viewpoint.

Maritime safety is therefore one decisive area for the well-being of the Baltic Sea. When we look at the **regulatory framework** with respect to **maritime safety** it is in our interest to continue to work actively on safer ships and cleaner seas **in the International Maritime Organization (IMO)**. The shipping industry is global in nature and it is essential to utilise and support the existing international conventions and organisations. **Rules at EU level can complement** international rules where there is a clear need for actions.

With the increasing volumes of goods transportation **transport logistics** is also an area, which we should discuss in the Maritime Policy. Transport logistics represent a holistic approach to efficient and economic handling and transportation of goods. The development and use of transport logistics can play an important role also with respect to the reduction of environmental concerns caused by transportation. The avoidance of for example partly empty containers crossing the Baltic Sea would reduce transport volumes.

Transport logistics include the development of information technologies for monitoring purposes, the development of transport infrastructure, the further liberalization of transportation and the promotion of quality of transportation. The development of logistics is an area mainly for the relevant industry to work on, but it can be strongly supported by the governments and regional authorities.

Pilot projects to promote transport logistics should be encouraged in the Baltic Sea Region. The network of Short Sea Promotion Centres could form a part of such projects. The results of the pilot projects could in the future be used in a broader context at European level.

Maritime safety and efficient transport solutions can also be promoted by developing the concept of **maritime clusters**. Also here the relevant actors in the Baltic Sea Region could take the lead and engage in cross-national clustering.

A future Maritime Policy should also be built on the concept of **sharing best practices** and by doing so **broaden our knowledge base**. Only by joint effort can this be done and without heavy structures.

Maritime Policy is very much driven by the future prospects. We should not overlook the potential of **future technology** no matter how distant they seem to be now.

At this juncture, one can not ignore the **funding of all measures**. It is not just seeking extra funding but also using the present funds and instruments in a way which would support the policy and its implementation in the best possible way. One project, which is in the pipeline, is the research programme BONUS 169. The intention is to coordinate marine research and funding in order to achieve better understanding of complex environmental and socio-economic interactions and dynamics of regional seas.

Ladies and gentlemen

A future Maritime Policy without a specific reference to **winter navigation** in the Baltic Sea would not be complete. The Baltic Sea can be almost covered by ice during hard winters. Navigation in ice is very challenging. The safety of winter navigation can be considerably improved by jointly applied rules and recommendations. We have already now several regional projects under development, such as the Baltic Sea Masterplan MoS and the Baltic Icebreaking Management to secure safe and reliable shipping.

Also the technical development of navigation in winter conditions requires research in the field of arctic technologies. Cooperation and funding at EU level should be explored also in the respect.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would at this point like to say a few words about the Maritime Policy activities during **Finland's Presidency** .

The Green Paper is now in the consultation phase. In order to enable the Member States to share their preliminary views on the Green Paper, the Presidency is organising discussions in the Council in a Friends of the Presidency Group. Two to three meetings will be held this autumn and a report will be presented by the Presidency in the Council framework.

With respect to the Presidency agenda we will especially concentrate on *The Thematic Strategy for the Protection of the Marine Environment*. This will in the future form an environmental pillar of the EU Maritime Policy. We hope that we will be able to proceed as far as possible with both the strategy and the proposed Marine Strategy Directive.

Two priorities in the transport field which also support the Maritime policy are the development of transport logistics and the promotion of Short Sea shipping. These can be seen as vital projects for the whole Union both from a transportation as well as environmental viewpoint.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The creation of a Maritime Policy for Europe is now on the agenda of the Union and will stay with us in the future. The common European vision for the oceans and seas can become alive only if the citizens are active in the formation of it. We need to engage all stakeholders, including regional actors, and public and private decision makers as well as and island communities.

We hope that the discussions on the Green Paper will be productive and horizontal today here in Kiel and in the future.

Thank you for your kind attention