

Dear UBC friends, Mayors and Leaders of cities,

- It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the 16th General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities that is being organized virtually for the first time in our Union's history.
- This year marks the 30th anniversary of the UBC. From the very beginning the UBC was aiming to promote and develop the advanced, peaceful and prosperous region around the Baltic Sea and encourage the leadership of the cities in shaping the future of our region.
- Though during this mandate, the past two years, our activities have been **only** online, still our organization has been proactive in all daily activities, projects and initiatives. There are a number of projects started and still going on. The UBC has proved to be a reliable partner in various cooperational partnerships.
- **The number of UBC members has increased in 2021** – that proves the change we all create is on the right way and full of potential to the future. The aim of the UBC is to bring value to each and every member city. It is great that the member cities and feel the value and see how they can make the life of their citizens better. I am happy our team's established UBC structural instruments increase our proactivity intensity and deliver concrete results for sustainable performance of the Union.
- What is more, the together created strategy, advocacy guidelines full of content, activities and proactive performance in partnerships will drive us to the fields we all wish as one big family.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, we have what it takes: a pool of experts, hard working personnel, 30 years' of experience, a dedicated offices in Gdansk and Brussels, long lasting contacts in all our member cities, and most important – a platform of 69 member–cities in all the countries united by the Baltic Sea.
- You, as leaders of cities, very well know that cities have always been a combination of opportunities and problems solving initiatives. On the one hand, our cities are vibrant places, full of interesting education and business opportunities, culture and leisure time. On the other hand, cities are also facing more need of sustainability, air pollution, smart water management, social

inequality, to let alone the present global pandemic of Covid 19 that also poses many extra urgent problems. Nevertheless, by being together we every day keep striving to turn obstacles into chances for something new, advanced and useful in the leadership of the future.

- Let me wish you all an interesting General Conference, and I am sure next time we meet in person.