

Dear Baltic Sea Region Friends, UBC Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today in representation of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and of Baltic 2030, the Unit which I coordinate at the Secretariat.

The Council Baltic Sea States, as many of you know, is a forum for inter-governmental cooperation, and I am pleased to say that - among many of the shared grounds between the CBSS and Union of the Baltic Cities - there is also “age”!

Just like Union of the Baltic Cities, Council of the Baltic Sea States celebrates this year its 25th Anniversary - and I am very pleased to say that during these 25 years, our collaboration has been positive and fruitful.

In particular – and taking into account the theme of this Conference - “*Leadership for the Future – Cities as Leaders for Glocal Sustainable Development*” - I would like to highlight our cooperation on sustainable development, that dates back 20 years, when Baltic 21 process was initiated by the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea Region Countries and the President of the European Commission and we all started working together for a sustainable and prosperous Baltic Sea Region.

This long time of cooperation is something our region must be proud of, because it is a successful example of multilevel partnership in Europe as well as at the global scale. At the same time, we need to make sure that our work *continues* the processes that started 25 years ago, share the success and the lessons we have learnt. We also need to *adapt* to the current times, deal with old and new challenges that are emerging - like demographic changes, youth unemployment, political instabilities and climate change. But we also must take advantages of the new opportunities that innovation and digitalization provide us with. Most importantly, we need to do all this in a *sustainable* way.

How to achieve this?

With the launch of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and the new Urban Agenda we have now a global framework which gives us new incentives for cooperation. Coming back to the Baltic Sea Region, it is important to highlight that in June this year, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CBSS Member States endorsed the Baltic 2030 Action Plan which presents a new, *common vision* of sustainable development for the Baltic Sea Region. It applies the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals to our macro-regional context and provides a roadmap for working together — across all countries, sectors, and levels of governance — to achieve them.

Here I would like to stress a special role of the cities. Cities are at the heart of today's economic, environmental and social challenges. More than 70% of EU citizens live in urban areas while about 85% of the EU's GDP is generated in cities. The urban areas are the engines of the European and the BSR economy and act as catalysts for innovative sustainable solutions, promoting

the transition to a low-carbon and resilient society. Sustainable development depends also on the ability of local and regional governments to promote integrated, inclusive and sustainable territorial development. Therefore, it is clear that investments to achieve sustainability are led by the cities and towns.

Some of the cities in the region are already true frontrunners and many – e.g. Växjö, Karlstad, Lahti, Århus, Turku, Malmö – have set ambitious goals for CO2 reduction. The host of today's Conference – the city of Växjö is also one of the best examples of integrated approaches to sustainable development.

I would also like to highlight the importance of sustainable development strategies and transnational cooperation between the cities - the UBC Sustainability Programme 2016-2021 (adopted by the XIII UBC General Conference in October 2015 in Gdynia) is a positive example on setting a common strategic vision for the UBC cities towards a smart, safe and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. The UBC (Sustainable Cities Commission) has during the last 2 years been part in several transnational cooperation projects, that are working with sustainable mobility, promoting innovative transport services, non-polluting lifestyles and attractive cities for all ages. For example, projects like "Carpe Essence" that promotes cooperation between universities and cities to solve societal challenges or "Skanssi" that develops a network of open innovation platforms for the creation of new expertise, business and jobs in the service sector.

I would like to thank the UBC for a good and fruitful cooperation. During the years, UBC and CBSS have been cooperating on climate change, disaster risk reduction, soft security, youth and culture and we intend to continue on this path.

The UBC Committee on Culture contributes to our work on sustainable development, through e.g. the "Culturability" project. The UBC Sustainable Cities Commission is one of the most active members of Baltic 2030 Expert Group on Sustainable Development; we also share work in the frame of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region - in the fields of climate change and resilience (UBC is part of the Steering Group of the Policy Area Secure in the EUSBSR). Here, I would like to mention iWater, which is a Flagship project under the Horizontal Action Climate within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and which aims to increase urban sustainability for better resilience to climate change.

Last but not least - we highly appreciate that the UBC has committed to climate change efforts also globally by officially cooperating since November 2016 with CDP, the world's leading organization on voluntary Climate reporting, involving more than 500 cities and more than 5500 companies. We also welcome the State-of-the-art Climate Leadership report, launched during this conference, as one of the outputs of this partnership.

Let me conclude with stressing the importance of a Leadership. Leadership in the 21st century not only requires the ability to continuously manage crisis and change – but also the vision to see around, beneath and beyond the obvious, in order to anticipate the unexpected before circumstances force your hand.

As Malcolm Gladwell describes in his book, “The Tipping Point“ (quote): “*The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts*”. These people are also called as a Change Agents. In Today’s complex and turbulent world, every Leader must be a Change Agent.

Change Agents have a Clear Vision, they take responsibility for resolving difficult challenges, they are patient yet persistent, they ask tough questions and they ensure accountability over time.

Dear participants of the Conference – you are the Urban Agents of Change. You are the ones who stimulate, facilitate and coordinate the change effort to ensure the wellbeing, prosperity and sustainability of the BSR communities.

I wish you good discussions here in Växjö. Thank you!

Krista Kampus
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