Sara Kemetter

Honourable Chair,

Dear colleagues,

Dear guests of our 27th annual conference,

It is my great pleasure to present to you what I have learned during the latest year as reporter on the topic Stainable Tourism. Together with, Ms Sylvia Bretschneider, President of the Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Chair of the working group on Sustainable Tourism we have

I am pleased to give you a summary of what I have done and my political recommendations.

Let us look back. Our theme of sustainable tourism, is still highly topical. As you know, the year 2017 was the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation has contributed deeply to the topic. During 2018 we can see a deeper implementation on the topic I all our regions. I have on a local level not only on the Åland Island but both I Finland and in Sweden seen how political decisions become reality on the ground floor. This is maybe the most exciting feature to experience as a reporter.

During our sessions you have had the opportunity to hear our The Vice Deputy Head of Government of Åland, Camilla Gunell, present our Development and Sustainability Agenda that is central to these developments, featuring seven strategic goals and how the Åland Government is with a firm hand leading the Sustainable work with in the region. I will therefore not analyse this work furthermore. I would like to give a short overview on a few topics I find very interesting.

Firstly I would like to comment on the latest EU ban on some single-use plastics a success for the environment and the economy. This is a large step tuords sustainable tourism.

The European Commission recently proposed a Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment. As Single Use Plastics represents about half of all marine litter items found on beaches in Europe. I strongly support taking actions to reduce their impact on the environment. This is necessary to preserve Europe’s tourism ecosystems and competitive advantage. Nevertheless, replacing single-use plastics will be a difficult task for many small hospitality businesses which commonly use single-use straws, plates, glasses, food containers and cutlery, in particular for take-away food services and external catering events.

Unfortunately here are currently no satisfying alternatives to single-use plastic food containers and beverage cups. In other cases, such as single-use plastic cutlery or plates, alternatives do exist but comes at a much higher price. Switching to such alternatives may therefore be an expensive move for many small hospitality businesses which operate with very low profit margins. As 90% of hospitality businesses are micro-enterprises, we must still consider that the Commission proposal goes in the right direction, it should be amended to take into consideration that economic reality without compromising the overall aim of reducing single-use plastics impact on the environment.

Honourable chair,

Distinguished delegates,

It is essential that we put sustainable tourism on top of the

EU policy agenda as well as in our home parliaments for the benefits of society. With international tourist arrivals forecast to rise by 250 million over the next decade, the challenges facing Europe’s destinations ant the Baltic Sea Region should urgently be addressed, and consequently the ones facing the tourism sector. The World Tourism Organization stated

in August 2017: “Tourism growth is not the enemy; it’s

how we manage it that counts”. Indeed, one of the most

pressing issues is to measure tourism flows, as well as the

exponential growth of short term rentals through online

platforms, which have so far taken place ‘off the radar’ of

destination authorities.

The global rise in the number of travelers to, and around

The Baltic Sea for the purpose of tourism is, in principle, good news for the hospitality industry, and the tourism sector

as a whole. However, the main challenge is that demand

has not yet evenly spread. Instead, it is concentrated in a

few destinations, especially cities where citizens live and

work, and which therefore suffer from pressure on public

infrastructure and the environment as well as from the lack

of available rentals and the rise of housing costs. However,

the negative effects of this concentration cannot all be

attributed to tourism alone. What is often reduced to the simple issue of ‘tourist overcrowding’ should also be linked

to complex challenges such as population growth and its

concentration in cities.

To sustain tourism and its many benefits to all stakeholders

alike, solutions are to be found in the diversification o f the

tourism offer throughout regions and seasons, while giving

back the cities to their residents and facilitating the creation

of even more jobs and growth.

It is therefore crucial to map the causes and consequences of

Over tourism in our destinations, taking the example of case studies and to put forward recommendations on ensuring the sustainable management of increasing tourism flows.

Honourable chair,

Distinguished delegates,

During the time since the final report on Sustainable Tourism was presented to you we have due to our long-standing political engagement in tourism policy –continued our engagement in this field. Together with our governments we have achieved a lot what was pointed out earlier. To orient our work along the principle that sustainability is the guiding principle and standard practice in all types of tourism in the Baltic Sea region and

work towards the vision that the Baltic Sea Region will become the first eco-region in the world, conceiving of the BSR as the first region where ecology and economy work together in a balanced and integrated manner to sustain societies and culture.

Thank you.