



31 YEARS
BSPC
BALTIC SEA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

The 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

The Future of the Baltic Sea Region

12. - 14. June 2022



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*The answer to Russia's invasion of Ukraine:
Strong democracies, protection of human rights
and sustainable development*

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*The Future of the Baltic Sea Region –
 The answer to Russia's invasion of Ukraine:
 Strong democracies, protection of human rights
 and sustainable development*

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The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) was established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea Region. BSPC aims at raising awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region. It promotes and drives various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea Region. It strives at enhancing the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and its issues in a wider European context.

The BSPC gathers parliamentarians from 10 national parliaments, 7 regional parliaments with legislative powers and 5 parliamentary organisations (supranational parliaments, parliamentary bodies and organisations) around the Baltic Sea). Adherence to and advocacy for compliance with the recognised rules of international law are a sine qua non for participation and cooperation in the BSPC and its work.

The BSPC thus constitutes a unique parliamentary bridge between the EU- and the democratic non-EU countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

The BSPC external interfaces include parliamentary, governmental, sub-regional and other organisations in the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension area, among them CBSS, HELCOM, the Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS), the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF), the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC).

The BSPC shall initiate and guide political activities in the region; support and strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states; improve dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by means of close co-operation between national and regional parliaments on the basis of equality; and initiate and guide political activities in the Baltic Sea Region, endowing them with additional democratic legitimacy and parliamentary authority.

The political recommendations of the annual Parliamentary Conferences are expressed in a Conference Resolution adopted by consensus by the Conference. The adopted Resolution shall be submitted to the governments of the democratic Baltic Sea Region countries, the CBSS and the EU, and disseminated to other relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and its neighbourhood.

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THE OPENING

Chair:

Mr Pyry Niemi, President of the BSPC

Co-Chair:

Mr Johannes Schrap, BSPC Vice President

Dr Andreas Norlén

Speaker of the Riksdag, Opening speech

Ms Ann Linde

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Mr Pyry Niemi

President of the BSPC 2020–2022

Introduction

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** addressed the Speaker of the Riksdag, government representatives and excellencies, colleagues and friends of the BSPC, saying that it was a great honour and privilege for him in his capacity as the president of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the chair of the Swedish delegation to the BSPC to welcome all of them to the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. With that, he declared the Conference open. He was very happy to see all of them in the former Second Chamber in the parliament and in Stockholm. For two years, the Swedish delegation had been preparing for this Conference and were finally able to meet altogether. Without any further ado, he gave the floor to the Speaker of the Riksdag, Dr Andreas Norlén.

Welcome Speech by Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Riksdag, Sweden

Dr Andreas Norlén said he was delighted to have the opportunity to greet all of the attendees at the Riksdag on this day. This was the fourth time that Sweden was hosting the Conference but the first time that they were welcoming the BSPC Conference to Stockholm. This was also the first physical Conference to be held since 2019, as the 2020 and 2021 Conferences had been conducted online on account of the pandemic. This was the first time in several years that democratic discussions in this constellation and of this scale were possible. He truly welcomed that the possibilities were back.

During the previous year's Conference, the pandemic had posed a huge challenge, but they were now facing another kind of challenge in the form of Russia's war against Ukraine, a development that had had a big impact on the Baltic Sea region, on cooperation in the region in general and on the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. They were now meeting at in times of great trouble, in times of large-scale war in Europe – times that would continue to affect their part of the world for generations to come. When people had woken up on 24 February 2022 to the news of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, they had been filled with horror at the human suffering and with rage at the unjustifiable war. They had also realised that the European security order was being undermined by Russia, which was also breaching both the laws of war and international humanitarian law. **Dr Norlén** was proud that the democracies of Europe, the transatlantic partners and many other countries had



Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Riksdag, Sweden

acted swiftly and forcefully to impose sanctions on Russia for its vicious war and to support the Ukrainian people's brave efforts to defend their homeland. The Swedish government and parliament had also taken action. Decisions concerning supporting the Ukrainian defence, including military support, had been considered and adopted, and Sweden had been a strong advocate for ever stronger sanctions against Russia. Less than three months after the outbreak of war, on 16 May 2022, the Swedish government made the historic decision to apply for membership of NATO. The application had very solid support in the Swedish parliament, **Dr Norlén** explained. Nearly 90 % of the members were in favour – one of many signs that this is a time of great change. This decision was, as the members of the BSPC knew, taken in close dialogue with Finland. On 18 May 2022, the government submitted its letter of intent to apply for NATO membership at the same time as Finland's.

Dr Norlén stated that Russia's invasion entailed challenges to Western society and to the Baltic Sea region. He wished to stress the importance of parliaments that safeguarded and protected democracy, basic democratic values and international law. He believed that democracy was a prerequisite for lasting global peace and security. Many of the tensions and conflicts one could see in the world in the present day, within countries and between countries, originated from a lack of democracy, a lack of respect for freedom of speech, for minority rights, for the rule of law and for other fundamental aspects of a democratic society. Since around 1980, a positive trend had been witnessed with more and more states moving from authoritarian to democratic rule. However, during the last few years, that positive trend had been reversed, and a larger proportion of citizens on this planet were now living in authoritarian countries.

This Conference addressed the important question of freedom of expression and free media. Not long ago, many had hoped that freedom of expression was being strengthened in many countries where this previously had been limited. But also in this regard, the opposite development had been seen in many parts of the world – a development that was deeply worrying. The media had a vital role to play in promoting transparency and accountability and had to be able to operate in an environment free of fear. Threats to journalists were a major threat to democracy.

Dr Norlén said that in these troubled times, there had also been a reminder of the importance of cross-border cooperation and parliamentary cooperation, solidarity and joint efforts to promote peace and democracy. In the face of this, the democratic and parliamentary assignments were becoming increasingly important. The first Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference had already been held in 1991, but promoting cross-border regional cooperation and working together to achieve common goals continued to be as important today as they had been more than 30 years earlier. Sharing best practices and working together to deal with common challenges such as climate change or Baltic Sea environmental issues remained on the agenda. And the need to preserve cooperation and protect democracy remained strong. Parliament was at the heart of democracy, the speaker underlined, just as the Baltic Sea was at the heart of their region. It was necessary to continue to protect and preserve both.

The current Swedish presidency went under the title Sustainable Democracy, pointing to democratic institutions, strong cooperation and environmental and social sustainability as cornerstones of the organisation. Another key issue for the Swedish presidency was

youth participation. For the second year in succession, a youth forum was being organised back to back with the Conference – the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum. It was important to offer young people in the region the opportunity to engage with issues for a better Baltic Sea region. Young people were the future. When listening to young people, **Dr Norlén** was always filled with hope. They had the engagement, the compassion and the courage to take on the challenges that lay ahead. The theme of the Swedish presidency was also connected to the Swedish parliament's commemoration and celebration of 100 years of democracy, which was now approaching its end. In 1918, the first decision had been taken in parliament to introduce universal and equal suffrage. The reform had been carried out after a long struggle and intensive advocacy efforts for democracy in practice. Sweden was ending this celebration in 2022, one hundred years after the first five female members of parliament had taken their seats in the Riksdag.

When reflecting upon historical events, **Dr Norlén** said, one tended to take the outcome for granted. But the breakthrough for democracy had never been something that could be taken for granted – in his country or in other countries. The democracy centennial had served as a reminder: Democratic values, participation, equality before the law and trust in the democratic system were nothing that one could take for granted. It was always a necessity to try to protect and develop their democratic systems. Russia's war against Ukraine was another stark reminder of this. On this note, **Dr Norlén** wished the BSPC a successful Conference with fruitful discussions and debates. He welcomed the parliamentarians once more to Sweden.

BSPC President **Pyy Niemi** thanked the speaker very much for his impressive and important contributions. He went on to introduce his dear friend, the esteemed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden,

Speech by Ms Ann Linde, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Minister of Foreign Affairs **Ann Linde** thanked the BSPC for the opportunity to address them here on this day, against the extremely serious backdrop of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggressions against Ukraine. Sweden condemned Russia's aggressions in the strongest possible terms. It was a flagrant violation of international law. Together with the international community, Sweden demanded that Russia cease its military invasion immediately and unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. Sweden stood in solidarity with Ukraine and its people. Their support to Ukrainian sovereignty, independence and



Ms Ann Linde, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

territorial integrity was steadfast. They were appalled by the repeated unacceptable attacks on civilians by Russian forces. The humanitarian disaster caused by Russia's aggression was devastating. All violations of international law had to be systematically documented and investigated and the perpetrators held accountable. Respect for the fundamental role and principles of international law lay at the core of all international and regional cooperation. Through its action in Ukraine, Russia had for the foreseeable future disqualified itself for valuable opportunities in international cooperation, including in the context of the Baltic Sea parliamentary cooperation.

The Western world's joint political and practical support to Ukraine had to continue, both during and after this war. Together with a wide coalition of countries, Sweden had already contributed with substantial humanitarian aid as well as economic support and defence equipment to Ukraine. Russia's aggression against Ukraine went hand in hand with increased repression within the country. **Ms Linde** was deeply worried about the further increased restrictions of freedom of expression and other human rights. It was abundantly clear that Russia's state media offered a distorted image and narrative of events not only in Ukraine but in the western world at large. The challenges to democracy and danger to peace and security are not unique to Russia and our own region. Whenever respect for democratic principles is compromised, the risk of armed conflicts around the world increases. Regions where democratic governance is strong are more peaceful than other regions. Where there was accountability, there were constraints for government use of violence. Autocratic rulers had made sure that they were not bound by checks and balances, such as free media and an outspoken civil society or an independent judiciary or the risk of being voted out of office.

Therefore, Minister **Linde** underlined, that democracies delivered peace while autocracies did not. It was thus of utmost importance that democratic societies cooperated and protected their region's democratic institutions. It was a question of their survival as a free region, as free nations, as free citizens. They had to unite behind those whose voices had been silenced by the Russian invasion – free media, independent journalists and human rights defenders in Russia and war-affected areas in the region. In 2019, Sweden had launched a Drive for Democracy as a foreign policy priority. **Ms Linde** strongly welcomed seeing that drive echoed across the Baltic Sea region. There could be no sustainable peace without democracy. Russia's aggression against Ukraine had fundamentally changed the prospect for regional cooperation, now and for a long time to come. And this had happened at a time when climate change, a global pandemic and other borderless challenges had further increased the need for regional and international cooperation. The Council of the Baltic Sea States had an important role in bringing the citizens of its region closer together, working against organised crime – including trafficking of human beings –, assisting the vulnerable women and children and strengthening civilian preparedness and response cooperation in the region. They were determined to continue this important work even after Russia's decision to leave the Council. The CBSS Action Plan which had been finalised during the Lithuanian presidency formed a solid basis for further concrete and focused work.

Sweden saw three areas where there was a particular need, and indeed an opportunity to reinforce the cooperation: Firstly, directly linked to the theme of this Conference, the CBSS had comparative advantages to support Ukraine – for example, on combating the trafficking of human beings and protecting vulnerable women and children. Secondly, people-to-people cooperation, not least between the young people in the Baltic Sea region. The democratic nations should meet the current challenges to international cooperation by fostering even more bonds between them by building long-term relationships and increasing mutual understanding. The Baltic Sea Youth Platform was a valuable contribution to this end, and Sweden was encouraging young people to take part in the Council's work on all levels. The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, being organised for the second time, is a valuable opportunity for regional builders of tomorrow to meet decision-makers of today. Thirdly, the environment: The Stockholm +50 United Nations Conference had given them new impetus to accelerate the green transition of their society. For the people of the Baltic Sea region, it was important to scale up action to reduce and decarbonise emissions, safeguard a healthy Baltic Sea, increase cooperation on renewable energies and phase out the use of Russian gas, oil and coal as soon as possible.

To conclude, Minister **Linde** pointed out that Russia had launched an unprovoked attack and aggression against Ukraine, and the Western world's joint reaction to it clearly demonstrated that regional cooperation between the region's remaining states was more important than ever. Together, they had to continue to build and develop their joint endeavour to conserve their freedom and democratic societies and increase mutual understanding by bringing the people of the Baltic Sea region closer together.

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** thanked Ms Linde very much for these important and encouraging words. He then took the floor himself.

Presidential Address by BSPC President Pyry Niemi

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** mentioned that in his welcoming speech the year before, he had referred to the difficult times they had been living in and that they had already done so for a long while because of the COVID-19 pandemic, together with the restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the virus. In August 2021, the vaccine had arrived, and all of them had been looking forward to and hoping for better and brighter times. And now, here they were – once again in challenging times, facing a brutal, cruel and horrible war in Europe. Day by day, the attacks on Ukraine were imposing a more dangerous threat to peace, stability and democracy across Europe and the world, defying the rights and freedoms of all Europeans. The year before, he had mentioned that he had been very proud of the work of the BSPC during the pandemic and how they had continued their work and truly done their best for the future of the Baltic Sea region, not letting the pandemic interrupt their intense cooperation and contacts. This year, he would like to repeat that: He was very proud of how steadfast and united they had been, from their initial tackle of the horrifying situation. On 25 February, together with Mr Schraps and Mr Bahr, the presidium had at once adjourned the meeting of the Standing Committee that had been scheduled for 28 February. In a statement on 25 February, they had condemned in the strongest possible terms the completely unjust and full-scale military attack by the Russian Federation against the sovereignty, independence and people of Ukraine. They had appealed with all possible urgency to the Russian Federation to immediately stop the aggressive armed force against countless civilian victims and arrive at peaceful solutions in compliance with international law. On 12 March, the heads of the BSPC delegations of the parliaments repeated in the strongest possible terms their condemnation of the completely unjust and full-scale brutal military attack and invasion by the Russian Federation against the inde-



BSPC President Pyry Niemi

pendent people of Ukraine. They had also decided to freeze all their relations with the Russian parliaments. In April, the Standing Committee had met in Warsaw, reaffirming the statement and deciding to continue to suspend the memberships of the Russian parliaments as well as amending the BSPC's Rules of Procedure to underline the BSPC's democratic and peace-oriented core values and principles based on international law. Earlier this morning, that was exactly what they had done. For 31 years, the BSPC had been the platform for cooperation, commitment, competence and political dialogue between parliaments, governments and civil society in the whole of the Baltic Sea region. Their main goal had been to overcome the Cold War and to contribute to stability, peace and democracy in the whole Baltic Sea region. The current situation with the brutal war in Europe had underlined the importance of continuing this fight for peace and democracy. The BSPC had to remain to promote a democratic development in their region.

President **Niemi** pointed out that the present Swedish presidency went under the headline Sustainable Democracy and had focused on how to face common challenges in a changing world. Democratic institutions, solid cross-border cooperation and environmental and social sustainability were cornerstones of the BSPC, preserving these had been their priority throughout the year. These priorities were also connected to the Swedish parliament's commemoration and celebration of 100 years of democracy. 100 years before, the Swedish parliament had decided to introduce universal and equal suffrage. After the election of 1921, five women had entered the Riksdag, and this was when the Riksdag

had finally achieved a system of democratic representation for the whole population. This had been celebrated from 2018 to 2022 with many different activities in the Riksdag. **Mr Niemi** pointed out that their speaker, Dr Andreas Norlén, had been very engaged and involved in these efforts for which the president extended his gratitude. The celebration of 100 years of democracy, President **Niemi** went on, was a reminder that the right to vote, to equal rights and democratic values was nothing that one could take for granted. They needed to continually strive for democracy and democratic values every day.

One of the core issues for the Swedish presidency had been trust in the democratic system, inclusion, and participation. For this reason, **Mr Niemi** was very happy and proud to say that this Saturday, the BSPC had held an online Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, for the second year in a row back-to-back with the Annual Conference. About 60 young participants from 10 countries had taken part, some of whom were attending the Conference as observers. The headline for this Conference was The Future of the Baltic Sea Region. He asked what was more important for the future than the young people in the region. The participants of the Youth Forum had shown their engagement and commitment, and he was looking forward to the conclusions later on that day.

In November of the previous year, the BSPC had held their first meeting in the framework of the organisation for twenty months. During the meeting, they had discussed how to strengthen the cooperation with the Baltic Sea NGO Network and climate change. The Standing Committee had adopted a statement on the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian border, voicing their concerns about the insufficient access for humanitarian organisations to provide basic humanitarian services to refugees and migrants. At the Standing Committee meeting in Warsaw in April, the main issue had been the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the consequence for both the Baltic Sea region as well as their future parliamentary cooperation. During the meeting, they had also discussed migration – more specifically, Ukrainian migration to Poland.

President **Niemi** said that climate change and biodiversity had also been at the top of the BSPC's agenda throughout the year. The current working group chaired by his esteemed colleague, Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, had continued to focus on how to protect the environment and how to safeguard the Baltic Sea and the biodiversity in the region. More would be said about the results of the working group later on that day.

Further, the BSPC had further deepened their cooperation with partner organisations at the executive and parliamentary levels. The chairman of the Senior Officials of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, under the Norwegian presidency, and the Director General of the CBSS secretariat had provided very valuable input at the Standing Committee meeting in Warsaw. The BSPC had been in close contact with HELCOM whose chair under the current German presidency would give a speech later on during the Conference. On the parliamentary side, the BSPC had based their cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and signed a memorandum of understanding with them. **Mr Niemi** noted that the president of the PAM was also at the Conference and would speak later on. Traditionally, the BSPC was in permanent close contact with the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly, marked by permanent bilateral contacts and discussions as well as participation in their assemblies and meetings. The results of their work were constantly fed into the BSPC's work, and the president of the Baltic Assembly and the former president of the BSPC would also chair this Conference's general debate.

The president mentioned that he had read somewhere that the Baltic Sea was not just a sea; rather, it was a bridge between neighbours. He believed this was very true. Their cooperation was to a large extent built on concrete issues related to the Baltic Sea – the heart of this region. More than that, it was about political democratic dialogue and an exchange between neighbours and friends. He expected his audience to agree with him when he said that the Russian invasion of Ukraine had wounded the work of the BSPC. The Conference is not the same as it had been the year before. However, with their new strength and revised Rules of Procedure and their united ambitions to continue to fight for peace and democracy as well as environmental sustainability, the BSPC is in many ways stronger than before. They had maintained and intensified the parliamentary dimension of international cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

President **Niemi** once again welcomed the attendees to the Riksdag and to Stockholm. He was looking forward to fruitful and important and constructive discussions on this day and the next.

FIRST SESSION

Peaceful and reliable neighbourliness and intense cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in times of crisis – how do we go forward?



Chair: Mr Pyry Niemi, President of the BSPC

Co-Chair: Mr Johannes Schraps, BSPC Vice President

*Mr Jan Eliasson,
Former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and
Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden*

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** welcomed everyone again to the first session of the 31st BSPC. His dear colleague, Vice-President Johannes Schraps – always side by side, as both had also demonstrated at the youth forum – and **Mr Niemi** would continue to chair together this first session as well. The president would chair until the coffee break, at which point Mr Schraps would take over. He explained that this session would focus on peaceful and reliable neighbourliness and intense cooperation in the Baltic Sea region in times of crisis, raising the question of how to go forward. In the opening session, they had already been honoured by the speeches of the speaker of the Riksdag

and the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs. In this session, they would continue on that level. **Mr Niemi** was deeply honoured that **Mr Jan Eliasson**, the former deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and former minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, would give an incentive speech to the BSPC. This would be followed by addresses of the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs as current president of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the German Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as representatives of other parliamentary assemblies and BSPC observer organisations.

The president pointed out that they were living through a fundamental turning point – confronting them with the greatest challenges of their generation and their consequences: first the pandemic, now the cruel war in the middle of Europe, the likelihood of an upcoming catastrophic global famine, and before that, alongside it and in the future, the climate crisis and its effects becoming ever stronger. Even though politicians had been discussing climate change for decades, had been taking measures against it for decades, they were now realising that all that they have done and were doing had not been and was not enough by far, and that climate change required a fundamental rethinking in everyone's societies in order to prevent the worst in the long run.

To see all this from an overall perspective, he considered it ideal to listen to former UN Deputy Secretary-General and former Swedish Foreign Minister **Jan Eliasson** and his perspective on the pressing challenges of our times.

Incentive Speech by Mr Jan Eliasson, former UN Deputy Secretary-General and former Swedish Foreign Minister

Mr Eliasson first joined the speaker of the Swedish parliament in welcoming the BSPC attendees to Sweden at the best time of the year, with as much light as possible available. He noted he did not have to enlighten his listeners any more. He was very honoured to be invited to speak to the BSPC at this crucial moment – in his view, a crucial moment of contemporary history. The steps that politicians and parliamentarians were taking would be of great significance not only for their countries but also for their region in the Baltic-Northern area and moreover for Europe and the world, with their implications.

He conveyed that all of them had woken up on 24 February 2022 in the morning with the horrible news about a case of brutal aggression waged by Russia against an independent democratic country in Europe. This was only hours away for all of them, he pointed out. Suddenly, the spec-

tre of war had come upon them in a completely unhistorical way. Did anyone need war of this nature, he wondered, in today's world, with the challenges already facing them. Of course, that was not the case. In this situation, **Mr Eliasson** noted that all of them had been – and still were – impressed by Ukraine and its people in the way that they had met this brutality, the courage that they had exposed, the resistance that they had mobilised, and the resilience that they had shown. To him, this had also become a challenge for all of them, a challenge for them to show courage, to show resilience, to show resistance and standing by Ukraine in this moment of crisis. He tasked his audience to ask themselves what was at stake. He answered that a number of things were at stake which were extremely important. First of all, there were the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Secondly, the European security order was affected, including the strengthening of the Baltic-Nordic area. **Mr Eliasson** noted that he had been a young diplomat in Helsinki in 1975; all those principles had now been completely gone. He had also been undersecretary and deputy secretary general of the UN, and the UN charter was also being neglected, both in the span of use of force and in not pursuing a peaceful settlement of disputes.



Jan Eliasson, *former UN Deputy Secretary-General and former Swedish Foreign Minister*

The third thing at stake was something offering good news, he believed, namely the cohesion and strength of the European Union and of NATO. They had shown more unity than anybody had seen in a long time. He chuckled, explaining that this was the paradoxical result of Putin's aggression. The fourth thing at stake was the respect of international law and principles and norms for international cooperation. Connected to this was something one could follow in the news every day – and if one did not, as a former undersecretary for humanitarian affairs at the UN, he could explain the enormous effects on the food situation in the world. There was hun-

ger and starvation, growing by the millions while the BSPC was meeting here in Stockholm. There were people paying 50 per cent of their income for their food, and if there was an increase of 30 to 40 per cent of food prices, one could imagine what this did to a family like that. All of this, he summarised this aspect, was an outcome of this horrible, brutal, unnecessary war.

Another matter at stake was basically – perhaps, in the long run, it would prove the most important for the future – the standing of democracy and also the standing of democracies. That was because democracy was fighting an uphill battle in today's world. He believed people did not quite realise the backwards steps that could be seen both among great powers but also inside countries that had authoritarian rule and were turning rather quickly into totalitarian societies. This trend had to be stopped, **Mr Eliasson** underlined. A polarisation could be seen, both between countries and inside countries. When looking at this whole list of what was at stake, it was a pretty serious matter – and a serious agenda for all of them.

For the people from the Baltic Sea region, they should look back at history as well and see what had united them in different periods. That went back a very, very long time. The matters uniting the people were extremely strong. First of all, there was geography; secondly, history; and then, there were the interests: economic, political, social. These also included the cooperation among civil societies. Today, more important than ever, there were the values that they shared. He summarised: geography, history, interests and values. This was pretty strong glue, he stressed. All of this went back a long time, he repeated, to the times of the Hanseatic League, of Germany and some others around the Baltic Sea. It had been a factor of great importance to the region. With the Polish friends, Sweden had once been united under their royal families; the Vasa castles in Sweden were very similar to the Vasa castle in Warsaw. The Nordic countries had been united in different unions, although sometimes, they had also had their battles, even military ones, a long, long time ago. They had lived through this horrible nightmare of history between 1930 and 1945, in different ways. To **Mr Eliasson**, that represented the darkest period of human history. If one added up the gulags of Stalinism and the camps in Siberia and the victims of fascism both in Asia and Europe, not least Germany – unfortunately –, and then added that up to the Second World War killing 50 million people, half of them civilians – for the first time in history.

After all of that, the world had seen the light: the UN charter, the UN itself, the Declaration on Human Rights, the Refugee Conven-

tion, the Geneva Conventions. All of this had been done to show another direction. For some of the people here, that was not a good direction – the Baltic states had paid the price with the Soviet occupation, and there had been the Cold War period which had acted almost as a wet blanket on the forces of freedom and democracy. Then, the Wall had come tumbling down in 1989, and hopes had been rising. Fortunately, some of the people here had gained the independence that they should have had from the beginning. That had led to a period of hope and expansion of possibilities. That was why looking back at this history with its ups and downs of their cooperation and the possibilities of influence as well as their future and now seeing the Russian move changing everything in such a drastic manner – or trying to do so –, that meant they had to look into what they could do from this situation.

Mr Eliasson wished to try to mobilise a few positive factors that could be taken into account and built on apropos the title of this session. They had now the possibilities – the Nordic and Baltic Sea countries – to strengthen their role in communities, in organisations like the European Union, like NATO, like the OSCE, like the UN – because they were united more than ever now by interests and more importantly values. They could prove the power of values now more solidly than ever. Sweden and Finland had chosen the road of applying for membership in NATO which meant that all the five Nordic countries would be having the same security policies, basically. That would mean that they could move much more actively, also in matters of strategic significance like the Arctic area. There, the five Nordic countries had a tremendous interest and also affinity, even more so or at least of the same magnitude as Russia. Furthermore, for all of them to see the potential that lay in all of their cooperation, because they were now united by – again – interests and values, apart from history and geography.

As a former deputy secretary of the UN, **Mr Eliasson** appealed to his audience to also seize this opportunity of strengthening multilateralism. He thought there were three major battles in the world at this point: first of all, the existential issue of climate crisis which had unfortunately moved into the background because of the Ukraine aggression; secondly, the battle for democracy that he had just mentioned; thirdly, the fight for international cooperation. That cooperation had been threatened by external and internal forces in their societies. Now, though, there was a chance of taking on this battle and building on a very broad and deep basis – namely that of the BSPC, of parliamentary support, of democracy, of people-to-people contacts, of popular support. All of them had popular support for their cooperation, and they should now drive it for-

ward. Not least as a way of protesting the aggression of Russia, they should prove the dynamics of their society.

Mr Eliasson described this as his message and his great privilege of conveying it to you. He thanked them again for gathering in Stockholm, adding that he had just published a book in Sweden. The last sentence of that book, in spite of the bad news all around them, said that the most important word in the world today was “together”. If one took that word seriously and saw the power and strength of “together” among nations and peoples who had their heart and their mind set on democracy, then they were a very strong force, and they should convey that to their peoples and share a little bit more optimism and hope for the future than they had had in the last few months. With that, he concluded his speech.

President **Pyy Niemi** thanked **Mr Eliasson** for his impressive and inspiring speech. Before opening the floor for comments and questions, he noted that the first time he had met **Mr Eliasson**, that had been at the UN when the latter had worked as deputy general secretary. **Mr Niemi** remembered one thing the elder politician had shown to the ones attending the meeting room that day, something that **Mr Eliasson** had worn in his back pocket, slightly worn out but still readable. He asked the guest speaker to comment on that. The president added a second question, considering that **Mr Eliasson** had negotiated for peace many times and had met very strange and sometimes very hard people, autocratic leaders and so on. **Mr Niemi** wondered what his positive message during this crisis was to the BSPC, referring to finding sustainable peace in Europe in the nearest future.

Mr Eliasson explained that he had used the UN Charter as a way to send a message of the power of the norms and rules and principles. Regretfully, he had forgotten it this morning, noting that he should have brought it along, in light of the friendship with **Mr Niemi** and their meetings in New York. What he had always brought up – and what he considered of interest to the BSPC – was to remind people of the first three words of the UN Charter. These first three words were, “We, the peoples”. It was not “We, the governments”. He pointed out that he had also been a minister once, at which time he had of course stressed the role of governments. Still, it was “We, the peoples” – in other words, it was the parliamentarians and the people behind them. If an international organisation did not work in the spirit of helping the individuals, of helping people in need – whether it was peace, development or human rights –, then that organisation had lost its compass, in his view. That was why he had taken that charter around with him, to remind people and to underline the importance of their work.

As for the second question, **Mr Eliasson** said they could keep unity. In his view, unity – or the word “together” as he had concluded his presentation – was absolutely crucial. It had been a healthy reminder of the importance of unity when one looked at how the European Union and NATO had come together. In a moment of crisis, that was when one was tested. As of this point, it seemed that the European Union and NATO had stood up to the test. In addition, it was also necessary to take the consequence of the solidarity they were expressing in their speeches. That meant the support given to Ukraine which had to be tenacious and had to be consistent. They must not give up, he underlined, because the Ukrainian people certainly were not giving up. That was going to be a test for them. Democracies were always criticised by authoritarian states for not having a long-term strategy. **Mr Eliasson** called for the democracies to prove the contrary. In this case, with democracy at stake, they should stick to their principles and to their support. Speaking of the BSPC, he pointed out that the organisation already had a tremendously impressive agenda – environment, education and all the elements in there. He was sure the members of the BSPC could understand the list he had presented, and that was his encouragement to them to understand that list, to take advantage of their common interests and to build on their common values. That gave them tremendous potential. Then, the parliamentarians would be connecting this to their own people. The speaker said that their nation’s support for the Nordic and Baltic cooperation, in the case of Sweden, was free of problems. If there was a referendum on EU membership, there would be none needed for the kind of support that Nordic-Baltic Sea countries could extend. **Mr Eliasson** encouraged the BSPC to go on and build on what they had already achieved – taking advantage of the crisis that was existing currently and channelling the energy from that in a positive rather than a negative and fearful direction.

As President **Niemi** gave the floor to the Norwegian representative, he picked up on **Mr Eliasson**’s comment regarding a referendum and – somewhat in jest – hoped that Norway would hold a referendum on the European Union in the near future.

Mr Himanshu Gulati thanked **Mr Eliasson** for the introductory remarks but also the Swedish presidency for hosting the BSPC in the Swedish parliament. **Mr Gulati** referred to Sweden and Finland now bidding to join NATO, which the Norwegian side appreciated very much. He asked **Mr Eliasson** how the dynamics had changed and what other changes he saw coming up to previously established facts and borders. He wished to know what other paradigm changes there might be in the security situation.

Mr Eliasson asked for specification if he meant the Swedish policies or in the policies of the region. **Mr Himanshu** clarified that he was interested in the general view of changes that they had previously not allowed themselves to discuss but could now see as possible in the European security issues. **Mr Eliasson** noted that he had mentioned one area where he believed the Nordic countries in particular had a tremendous potential: That was the future of the Arctic. The Arctic could be a playground for military interests and power interests. It already was in a way – but in a rather quiet and subdued manner. He knew that Norway, Denmark and Iceland had an immediate vicinity to the Arctic area. He believed it important that they maintain some principles for the policies vis-à-vis the Arctic. The environmental concerns were absolutely crucial for that area, and, of course, so were the risks related to militarisation of that area as well as the exploitation of resources. That was another reason for economic potential but also for rivalry and crises and confrontation. This was just one area where **Mr Eliasson** thought one could identify changes. Primarily the Baltic Sea/Nordic countries should see that they were now unified in their interests and values. When one was unified in their interests and values, one could play a much larger role vis-à-vis the European Union and NATO. He remembered from his time as foreign minister of Sweden how happy he had been that the three Baltic States were entering the European Union in 2004. The five Nordic ministers had met with the three Baltic foreign ministers before the European Union meetings, so they were eight nations gathering their views and ideas and supporting each other at the meeting. The BSPC had a similar opportunity at this point, with the common security policies on all the countries around the Baltic Sea. There was a tremendous opportunity to play the same role by deciding what could be the common position vis-à-vis the EU and NATO. He did not wish to go into details but was sure that the attendees' imaginative approaches and discussions could find out new areas to pursue.

Ms Bryndís Haraldsdóttir thanked **Mr Eliasson** for a very inspiring speech. She also appreciated his earlier answer regarding the Arctic. Coming from Iceland, she apologised for shifting the focus away from the Baltic Sea, but in her mind, it was very important for all of them – both those living in the Arctic and everyone else. With respect to the security aspect, she noted that Iceland had been hoping for low tensions in the Arctic. That was very important, but the tension was definitely going up. As much as she welcomed Sweden and Finland into NATO – and that was highly important in her view –, that also changed the dynamics in the Arctic Council where they had now all-NATO nations on the one hand and Russia on the other. In the BSPC, they had suspended Russia from the organisa-

tion – and she underlined her agreement with that decision. She wondered, though, if **Mr Eliasson** saw a future in the Arctic Council and how that future could be possible, whether there would ever be the opportunity to work again with Russia.

Mr Eliasson conceded that he was not quite familiar with the different moves, but he believed it important that the Arctic should not be left without international observation, so to speak. At this point, no work was being done in the Arctic Council, as far as he knew. He did not question the wisdom of those who had made this decision. However, one should consider the importance of setting international rules and principles at work for the region. If one left it to individual nations' actions – in this case a nation with a large frontier to the whole Baltic area and with a tremendous potential – to further their own national interests, then something might be lost in the end, he cautioned. Therefore, he advised a rather active approach by the other members of the Arctic Council. Here, he was speaking very much to the Nordic countries where he had played a role himself over the years, to make sure that they were regaining countries – not literally – but rather taking back the agenda. Environmental responsibility had to go back on the agenda as well as avoiding militarisation and taking care of rural resources in a wise and long-term manner. Therefore, he advised them to take advantage of this moment which was driven by the sad facts of the Ukraine war. Still, one could seek to take the positive side from this, to channel the energy in a positive direction.

Vice-President **Johannes Schraps** also thanked **Mr Eliasson** for the very impressive overview of the challenges all of them were facing during these difficult times and also challenges that had been discussed at the Standing Committee meetings and would be discussed again during the Conference. He wished to add to the excellent remarks of their Icelandic colleague about multilateralism. Aside from strengthening multilateralism in their own institutions as in the BSPC, **Mr Schraps** asked **Mr Eliasson** whether he believed that speechlessness could be overcome in the long term. He considered it dangerous, aside from having clear signs in such situations as war, not to speak with certain actors that denied being actors in a multilateral framework. He conceded that this was a difficult question but hoped the speaker would have some thoughts on this topic.

Mr Eliasson noted that he had been deputy secretary general of the UN. There, they had the principle of universality. Sometimes, though, he even felt a personal loss of pride when there were nations working in the Human Rights Council which had very little respect for human rights. He said he would not interfere in any of the BSPC's

work, but there had to be a very strong reactions to a move of extraordinary aggressive character. It was for all organisations to consider how to establish context to improve conditions in the end. In the UN, they had had no choice. He was having meetings with Saddam Hussein, he had been mediating with Ghaddafi, with lots of shady figures, and that had been because they had been the ones deciding the futures of these countries and the wars that they were involved in. So, it was necessary to strike a balance between two aspects: On the one hand, one had to show that the values uniting them were so important that one was not able to continue discussions within the family if the other side was violating these values and principles; on the other hand, there were stark realities to consider on some days. Accordingly, these two sides meant there had to be changes that perhaps would, in the long run, serve their own nation and the hope that democracy and human rights would prevail even in those countries. He conceded that this was a very vague answer to a rather complex question, but he believed all of them had to keep in the back of their minds how they would reach the people in the end. This also applied to “We, the peoples” of the UN, considering the welfare and quality of life for the people concerned. He himself had been raised with a global outlook, that one should see things in the international context. Again, though, it was a very sensitive balance to strike.

Mr Kai Mykkänen of Finland thanked **Mr Eliasson** for his excellent remarks and historical outlook. He was expecting – now that Finland and Sweden were joining NATO in the near future – that their military cooperation with the Baltic States would change quite heavily. Sweden and Finland would also have a responsibility towards the defence architecture of the Baltic States. He wondered how **Mr Eliasson** thought about this after knowing the climate of the Baltic Sea for many decades from many positions. **Mr Mykkänen** asked if this could affect the larger picture of foreign security from Stockholm and Helsinki. He noted that his homeland was starting to feel like a true member of the family, also together with the Baltic States. Furthermore, he spoke about the Nordic and the Baltic State which were together in this forum, i.e., the BSPC, as well as other organisations. Still, there was no full unity in the complete sense. Now, though, defence questions were gaining more importance, and Finland and Sweden would be taking a more powerful role together with the Baltic States in that aspect as well. He wondered how much this could mean for the broader cooperation as well.

Prof Jānis Vucāns of Latvia thanked **Mr Eliasson** for his great speech and also for such great answers to previous questions. His own question was somewhat similar to preceding ones. **Mr Eliasson** had

mentioned “together”, this very important word, but “together” during peacetime and “together” during wartime were a little bit different in his mind. The title of the BSPC Conference mentioned strong democracy, peace, sustainable development and some other words. During peacetime, “together”, they were speaking about sustainable development, and it was very easy to go in a common way. But during wartime, when some states and territories were more vulnerable than other ones, sometimes, this “together” had another meaning: Together, they needed protection for everything in their area. Related to that, he wondered if **Mr Eliasson** had any recommendations for the BSPC how to protect “together” the Baltic States, the Nordic countries and the whole region around the Baltic Sea as well as Europe altogether during wartime.

Mr Kacper Płażyński offered more of a comment rather than a question. Perhaps **Mr Eliasson** would agree. Regarding the topic of “together”, **Mr Płażyński** was sure that Europe – if not 100 % united – would be too weak to do anything on different matters. However, under current circumstances – namely the Russian attack on Ukraine -, he saw them as halfway towards that goal. It was necessary to remember all these policy and security architectures, also including the Arctic, won't be manageable in a way that the West would understand until the end of this new era of a Cold War. This Cold War would end after the defeat of Russia. If there should be some kind of treaty, if they would start to bargain with Ukraine's territory, the conflict would just go on and on. It would cost the West not just the high values of European countries but also a lot of money. Inflation would last. The lack of security would be very much in the heart of their people, especially on the eastern borders of NATO. So, **Mr Płażyński** saw it as necessary to do more. He also saw that as obvious. If they were to stay at the place they were right now, this homeopathic transfer of heavy weapons to Ukraine, this Cold War would just last. The inflation would be very high. Any building of sustainable architecture in the future would just not be possible. When talking about being together, he said that one could call them being together, but he really viewed the European countries only as halfway united. He said one should think about transferring to Ukraine big, heavy weapons for those people to be able to not only defend themselves but also defeat the Russians because if they did not, the Cold War would just last and last for many, many years in the future. He added that Putin had the support of the Russian people, so that it was not Putin's war. Even if there would be a change in the cabinet of the Kremlin, he cautioned that it might not change anything in the end. Therefore, he asked yet again for heavy weapons to be sent to Ukraine. Without that, the war would just last for many, many years in the future.

Mr Eliasson first conveyed to his Finnish friend his – and Sweden's – great appreciation of the statement by President Niinistö the day before when he had said that Finland would only join NATO together with Sweden. He likened the two countries to two Siamese twins entering NATO. It had been quite a relief in the debate that had dominated Sweden recently. That was very statesman-like and a statement in style for the president that **Mr Eliasson** very much appreciated. He did not view it as such a drastic step in supporting the Baltic States militarily. Even during Sweden's policy of neutrality and staying out of alliances, he as then deputy foreign minister and cabinet secretary had been taking decisions on sending military surplus to the newly independent Baltic States. Unfortunately, they had drawn down a bit too much of the Swedish defence in the 1990s, in contrast to Finland. But they had donated a lot of this matériel and had also trained a lot of personnel in the Baltic Countries, in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This had been quite a bit of military cooperation with the Baltic States. The most memories he had which were related to this was how they had fought very strongly for European Union membership for all three Baltic States at once. It had not been evident. There had been those who had suggested that one could start with one country, and then the others would follow. There had been warnings against that. **Mr Eliasson** remembered himself arguing with European Union countries about this, that all three should come in at the same time. They would have equal positions then. Furthermore, he had argued that the EU was taking risks by having Russian influence exercised on the other two which had not yet entered. Coming back to the point at hand, the speaker underlined that there had been a strong security component in Sweden's relationship with the Baltic States. Now, with the step taken by Finland and Sweden, it was evident that they would be accepting Article Five of the NATO charter and that they would do whatever they could in their capacities. These, he noted, varied between the two countries. Finland had a greater conventional component and more manpower. Sweden, on the other hand, had some technology that they could contribute. The whole intention was for them to show the Baltic countries that the former were at the latter's side. The statements made by the Baltic governments and parliaments to Sweden and Finland were important as the Baltic States had been the first to ratify the accession candidates. The latter had been the strongest ever in supporting the Swedish and Finnish moves. Summarising this, he called the present development a new quality dimension but not new in general. There had been this relationship from the beginning, and they had done so from the very start of the independence of the three Baltic States. Moreover, though, it was a great addition for them on the Baltic stage to have Poland and Germany – and by the way also the local parliaments –

present here today, showing the popular support. He pointed to Germany and its role in the European Union which he expected to continue to be very strong in the future, and the same applied to NATO with its enhanced capacity. Baltic cooperation like this one – the BSPC – created more and more strength. When he analysed their situation from his perspective – retired from politics and diplomacy –, he saw that the BSPC held a tremendous potential and that that could be used in this moment when they were a bit depressed by the realities from Ukraine.

Mr Eliasson proceeded to the second question. It was obvious that there was a difference between the notion of being together in peace and in wartime. However, he pointed out that he belonged to a diplomatic school which took words seriously. Put another way, what one said during peacetime must be translated into what one meant during a time of crisis. That was really a test not only of diplomacy and credibility of governance, but it was also a matter of supporting the strength of democracy. They should stick to what they said in peacetime. The principles had to be weighed carefully, and the words had to be weighed carefully because they had to be kept. They were living in a world where the borderline between lies and truth was unfortunately very fuzzy and not clear. There was even talk about facts and alternative facts, and there was this polarisation where language was losing its meaning. That was very dangerous, he stressed. Therefore, one had to be very clear that what you did in the most relaxed circumstances must stand the test of the time of crisis. He hoped that they would not be coming to this stage. But when war broke out, they had to remember what they had said during peacetime.

He moved on to say that the philosophical reflections of **Mr Płażyński** were correct. The very introduction of his statement had been to remember to stick to the resistance and resilience that was necessary now. He agreed that this situation could prove a very long haul and a very long test. They were already faced by dilemmas: If the Russian aggression was not met with credible reactions of a military nature, then Russia's goal would be met. On the other hand, if one entered the field, the escalation mechanisms would start to work. **Mr Eliasson** noted that he had worked with six wars in mediation himself. When the escalation started, then there was a mutual process where each was increasing the stakes. That led to the risk of further expansion of the conflict outside its current borders. That was a dilemma one had to face. **Mr Eliasson** underlined that he was in the business of diplomacy. His whole life had been concerned with mediating and working with peaceful settlements. Of course, when there was a negotiation, there was often the question of com-

promises. But when it came to compromises in this case, they concerned the existential situation for a nation or a nation faced with giving out parts of their own territory. And then, it would become clear that this meant a complete violation of international law because another nation had been able to bite off a piece of your territory. Accordingly, there was a big dilemma: The matter was about how to make sure that a peaceful settlement was one that corresponded to international law. That was in this situation extremely complicated due to the goals defined by both the Russians and – understandably – the Ukrainian people and government. This dilemma came back to the points made by **Mr Płazyński** and by **Mr Eliasson**, that this could be a long war and crisis, requiring a lot of resistance and resilience but also resources, even in economic terms. Basically, it was also a moral issue, **Mr Eliasson** said. They were right in the midst of it, and he voiced his hope that these forces that reacted against this horrible aggression – both forces internationally and even, in the end, inside Russia – would grow in importance and erode and take away the aggressive nature of the present stage. Otherwise, they were in for a long haul and a long test of their strength and resistance against this aggression.

President **Niemi** thanked **Mr Eliasson** for his impressive speech and analysis, remarks, comments. The BSPC was very proud to have welcomed him to their Conference. They were very happy that **Mr Eliasson** had been able to take some time off for them. It was impressive. His career had been successful for so many years, and he had also written a book. **Mr Niemi** asked him for the title of his newest book.

Mr Eliasson responded that it was called “The Words and Actions” in Swedish.

Mr Niemi pointed out that the former Swedish prime minister, **Mr Stefan Löfven**, had attended the Baltic Sea Youth Forum the preceding Saturday, at which occasion he had said that they had to talk peace, think peace and act for peace. Given **Mr Löfven**’s connections to **Mr Eliasson**, **Mr Niemi** suspected with a smile that the former had probably taken them from the latter. The president appreciated **Mr Löfven**’s contribution, noting that they had had the former prime minister at the Youth Forum, and now the former minister of foreign affairs and deputy secretary general of the UN here on this occasion. **Mr Niemi** thanked **Mr Eliasson** again.

President **Niemi** noted that he would be handing the chair of the meeting over to Vice-President **Johannes Schraps** shortly. First, though, he offered the reminder that the Standing Committee

would hold a short meeting in the afternoon, concerning the changes to paragraphs 10 and 11 in the Rules of Procedure. With that, he passed on the chair.

Mr Schraps thanked **Mr Niemi** and offered a warm welcome from his side to the Conference attendees. Picking up from the impressive speech and discussion by and with **Mr Eliasson**, he added that this session would focus on the BSPC work in general as well as their values and the current fundamental challenges. He was excited about the speeches they would listen to and hoped that there would be an intense discussion after them as well. As mentioned before, there would now be two video messages. The first was from **Ms Anniken Huitfeldt**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway and representing the Norwegian presidency of the CBSS from 2021 to 2022. The following message was from **Ms Annalena Baerbock**, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs in Germany, for the upcoming presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Both ministers could not manage to attend on this day; nevertheless, it had been very important for them to address the BSPC. Therefore, he was very grateful that they had received these video messages from these two foreign ministers. Afterwards, there would be time for further comments and remarks on the speeches they would hear. If there were any questions, particularly concerning the CBSS and the Norwegian presidency – outgoing until the end of June 2022 – or regarding the CBSS Ministerial Session in Kristiansand that had just taken place a few days earlier – including the Kristiansand Declaration announced there –, **Mr Schraps** invited the audience to bring forward these questions. The current chairman of the CBSS Senior Officials from the Norwegian presidency, **Mr Olav Berstad**, who had already briefed the BSPC Standing Committee in Warsaw, was in attendance and available to answer any questions. Vice-President Schraps used this opportunity to welcome not just **Mr Berstad** but also the Deputy Director General of the CBSS Secretariat, **Mr Bernd Hemingway**, and the whole team of the CBSS. **Mr Schraps** thanked them for joining the BSPC, opining that it was a good tradition for the BSPC to have close connections to the CBSS.

Speech by Ms Anniken Huitfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Ms Huitfeldt thanked the Baltic Sea parliamentarians for inviting her to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine had changed the map of Europe and would have long-lasting effects on European security and economy as well as the well-being of the European population. Ukraine would need their constant and intensive support in the time to come. Seeing that they were hoping to welcome Finland and Sweden as members of NATO, that would further strengthen Europe's common security. The war came in the middle of Norway's presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. On 3 March, the members had decided to suspend Russia from the Council. Russia had now withdrawn its membership. By doing so, they had rejected the post-Cold War to both lateral and regional cooperation. Minister **Huitfeldt** welcomed the BSPC's own suspension of the Russian member assemblies. They were standing together, parliamentarians and governments. Their opposition to Russia's illegal aggression had become even stronger. Suspending Russia had allowed the rest of them to move forward. They valued the work of the Parliamentary Conference. The BSPC was tackling issues affecting the daily lives of the Baltic citizens. Both governments and parliamentarians would continue to cooperate and develop the region.



Anniken Huitfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

The minister noted that she had had the pleasure to host the Council Meeting in Kristiansand in May. The Kristiansand Declaration stated that Russia bore full responsibility for the war. The foreign ministers had acknowledged Ukraine's enormous suffering and sacrifice in defence of their sovereignty and freedom. Ukraine was an

observer state to the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The regional networks against trafficking in human beings, for the protection of vulnerable children and the civil protection network were active in their support of the Ukrainian refugees. **Ms Huitfeldt** hoped that Ukraine could join these and other networks when conditions would permit. The ministers had promised to continue to stand with Ukraine. Europe had risen from ashes before. They would help Ukraine rise again.

Even as a war was raging in Ukraine, Minister **Huitfeldt** said, they had to continue to address other critical issues. The Baltic Sea region had to remain globally competitive and had to remain a good place to live for its citizens. As they were putting the COVID-19 pandemic behind them, Europe had to be prepared to tackle new challenges to public health and well-being. But even so, they had to ensure that facts and reason prevailed. Increased global tensions, high energy and food prices, perhaps even food shortages – Russia was trying to pin the blame on Europe. That was a fiction. But the concerns were real. The countries in the Baltic Sea region and Europe as a whole had to engage globally to lessen the impact finally.

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference had marked its 30th anniversary in the preceding year, the minister pointed out. This year the Council of the Baltic Sea States also turned 30. They should be proud of their achievements in the region. Integration, cooperation had accelerated the region's rapid development. The green and digital transformation represented the next step. As stated in the Kristiansand Declaration, the European Green Deal and REPower EU would provide speed and direction. Norway would soon pass the baton to the incoming German presidency. **Ms Huitfeldt** wished her colleague, **Ms Annalena Baerbock**, every success in her task.

*Speech by Ms Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister
for Foreign Affairs, Germany*

Ms Baerbock began by recalling the time she had been in Kristiansand in the previous month. Back then, some people on Twitter and Facebook had asked what the German Foreign Minister was doing in Norway and what the Council of the Baltic Sea States was in the first place. They had been wondering why she was in Norway while a war was raging in Ukraine. In all honesty, she had also asked herself what the Council of the Baltic Sea States was in the first place. For a long time, it had not been well known and served as more of a soft power instrument. But in these times, nine years since its Foreign Ministers had last met in person, it was in fact more important than ever, **Ms Baerbock** asserted. The reason for



Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany

that was that common security was at stake in the Baltic Sea region, too. For a long time, people here had relied on cooperation with Russia. But Russia's war of aggression marked a watershed for the region.

She pointed out that Sweden and Finland were on a path to NATO membership – and that Germany was doing their utmost to support them in this. Within the Council of the Baltic Sea States, meanwhile, the memberships of Russia and Belarus had been suspended. **Minister Baerbock** asked what this new reality meant for regional cooperation – and for the future of the Council. It was her firm belief that all democratic Baltic Sea states had to stand together now more than ever – and therefore, they needed the Council of the Baltic Sea States now more than ever. Thus, the minister was delighted that the Federal Republic of Germany would be taking over the Presidency of the Council from 1 July.

For many Germans, and, so she believed, for many others living there, the Baltic Sea was first and foremost a holiday destination: strolls along the beach on Rügen and Öland, city breaks in Helsinki and Riga. But at the same time, it was clear that this region was strategically important – and held enormous potential, for example in terms of our energy supply.

The German federal government had therefore set three priorities for their presidency: Firstly, they wanted to massively expand offshore wind power in the Baltic Sea. What worked in the North Sea would also work in the Baltic. Together with Denmark, Germany would organise a Baltic Offshore Forum with stakeholders from the public and private sectors to initiate concrete wind power projects.

Minister Baerbock underlined that Russia's aggression had shown that climate policy and the energy transition were also issues of security policy – and wind power from the Baltic Sea could help all the democratic countries around its shores to live without fossil energy from Russia in the future.

Secondly, the German presidency expand the Council's youth work. Because young people had to have a seat at the table when it came to their future in our region. Therefore, the Baltic Sea Youth Platform would be turned into a permanent institution, so that it could continue to support youth parliaments and discussion and exchange between young people. In the coming year, the CBSS would hold a Youth Ministerial Meeting with young delegates in the run-up to the Ministerial Session of the Council, so that they could draw up ideas on the future of the Baltic Sea region: on digitalisation, on the climate crisis and the green transition.

At the same time, the minister explained that Germany also wanted to invest in very concrete terms in the security of everyone who lived and worked in the Baltic Sea region. And that brought her to the third priority of our presidency: There was a ticking time bomb at the bottom of the Baltic Sea, which they wanted to defuse: munitions from past wars. The seabed was strewn with up to 400,000 tonnes of conventional explosives and around 40,000 tonnes of chemical weapons. **Ms Baerbock** noted that this was roughly equivalent to the total load of 11,000 articulated lorries – representing a deadly threat to the environment and life in the sea. During the German presidency, they would therefore look for ways to accelerate the recovery of these munitions, bringing together relevant experts as a first step.

The bombs, mines and sunken warships at the bottom of the Baltic Sea showed that wars and their consequences would often reverberate for decades afterwards. It was clear that this would be true of Russia's war against Ukraine, too. It would mark Europe for a generation. That was what made it so important for all democratic states to now stand together in a region like the Baltic. This, in turn, was why the Council of the Baltic Sea States was necessary – and it was what the German presidency stood for this year.

She thanked the Conference very much and voiced her hope they would enjoy productive discussions.

Vice-President Schrapps offered many thanks to both ministers for these very strong statements, from the outgoing Norwegian and the incoming German presidency of the CBSS. He opened the floor for comments, statements or questions.

As none were proffered, **Mr Schraps** wished to address **Mr Berstad** as he was present and could inform the Conference about the Kristiansand Declaration. This was also in view of the discussions of the previous day in the Standing Committee about one of the priorities of the incoming German presidency. Apart from the announcement of the Federal Foreign Minister, **Ms Annalena Baerbock**, that one of the priorities of the German CBSS presidency would be the sea-dumped ammunitions – which had also been a very important topic in the BSPC's discussions in the last years –, **Mr Schraps** asked **Mr Berstad** if that issue had already been deepened during the CBSS Ministerial Meeting in Kristiansand. Perhaps **Mr Berstad** could provide some insights on this topic.

Short Address by Mr Olav Berstad, Chairman of the CBSS Senior Officials

Mr Olav Berstad, chairman of the CBSS Senior Officials, began by thanking the BSPC for inviting him as well to the Conference. Together with many of his colleagues in attendance, he had been present at the Kristiansand meeting. As **Minister Baerbock** had mentioned, this had been the first ministerial meeting in the Council for nine years. These meetings had basically been suspended – although they had not used that word – since Russia's first violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in 2014. As was recognised now, the war against Ukraine had not started on 24 February 2022 or even with the declaration of Russia's support for the independence of the so-called breakaway republics on 21 February. Instead, it had begun in 2014. Therefore, this meeting had been historic. As mentioned before, Russia had been suspended from the CBSS on 3 March 2022. In the declaration by the other members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the conditions for resumption of relations had also been clearly stated. Subsequently, Russia had withdrawn of its own volition on 17 May 2022. As Minister **Huitfeldt** had said, it was difficult or impossible to interpret this otherwise than Russia having removed itself from observing and adhering to the rules of international, regional and multilateral cooperation which had been at the core of their relations since the end of the Cold War. The Kristiansand Declaration pointed to these facts, putting all the responsibility for what had happened and the catastrophic effects of the war in Ukraine on Russia. At the same time, blame was also cast on Belarus in its enabling role. **Mr Berstad** also wished to highlight what was said in the Declaration regarding accountability, namely, that a violation of international law of this type meant there could not be any impunity for war crimes. He considered this one of the stronger parts of the Declaration.



Mr Olav Berstad, Chairman of the CBSS Senior Officials

In addition, there was the recognition of the 30th anniversary of the CBSS and the amazing progress the region had experienced since 1992. In the Kristiansand Declaration, there was also a strong reference to the main product of the Lithuanian presidency – preceding Norway's –, namely the Vilnius II Declaration. Here, **Mr Berstad** referred to **Mr Jan Eliasson**'s earlier comment that the words that one had committed to had to really mean something. The Vilnius II Declaration, **Mr Berstad** explained, was a vision for the development of the Baltic Sea region until 2030. All of them – including Russia which had subscribed to this Declaration – had committed to upholding the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and human freedoms. In his view, everyone who had worked on this Declaration – both on the political level and on the level of officials – had realised that Russia had not fulfilled those aims or the vision at the time of the Declaration's adoption in the year before. They had not done so for a long time, but the hope had been that this represented a vision for the future and maybe Russia would recognise and develop its policies in these important fields. However, beyond that, the Kristiansand Declaration also included a strong emphasis on the safe and secure priority of the Council. This was very meaningful for ordinary citizens, as was the fight against trafficking, organised crime, although not directly an area of responsibility of the CBSS. Nevertheless, that area was very closely associated with the Council. Children at risk, civil protection network were other fields of great importance. The Declaration further strongly referenced climate change and decarbonisation as well as climate neutrality and such issues. The ministers had also mentioned moving away from fossil fuels.

Mr Berstad noted that he could go through all the details but believed that the Declaration represented a very strong message of unity. This had also been expressed or recognised by the ministers in Kristiansand, standing together while recognising that if they did not stand together, then all of them would face real problems. Furthermore, one had to be aware that this situation had been created by Russia for reasons that were very difficult to understand and certainly impossible to accept. Yet the situation might last for a very long time and be very costly, also in economic terms for countries like those in the Baltic Sea region. Concerning sea-dumped ammunitions, **Mr Berstad** said that it had not been directly addressed by the Norwegian presidency. He pointed out that there were 100,000 – 200,000 tonnes of dumped ammunitions in the waters adjacent to their nations. The problems and issues were known to the Council, and Norway was actively participating in EU-sponsored networks. The task of the Norwegian presidency had been to look at both sides of the straits, as there were similar concerns in the North Sea as well as in the scope of the Baltic Sea states – the geographic catchment area, so to say. The seriousness of this issue was something that they were looking into, together with HELCOM and other structures.

Mr Schraps thanked **Mr Berstad** for his insights, adding that it was good to hear that important steps were being taken to bring words into action. This was not just something the BSPC was requesting from their governments but had also been asked for on Saturday during the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum. Nice words were not enough, actions should be taken. **Mr Schraps** was glad that the first steps had already been taken.

Since there were no more requests to take the floor at the moment, the vice-president moved ahead to the addresses by representatives of other parliamentary assemblies and BSPC observer organisations. This was a good tradition at the BSPC Conferences. In that vein, it was very much appreciated that the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, **Mr Gennaro Migliore**, was attending this year. In the previous year, **Mr Pedro Roque**, the vice-president and president emeritus of the PAM had addressed the Conference. **Mr Schraps** pointed out that the BSPC and the PAM had signed a memorandum of understanding that would further intensify their mutual cooperation.

Address by Mr Gennaro Migliore, Vice-President and President Emeritus of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

Mr Migliore said it was a pleasure for him to contribute to the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference as president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. He thanked President **Niemi** and Secretary General Bahr for inviting the PAM to this important event. The PAM and the BSPC shared a long-standing friendship. As mentioned before, they had approved a memorandum of understanding in Rome in the previous November. Before starting his intervention, he thanked the authorities who had delivered the opening of this event for their excellent contributions and courage in leading their countries through the ramifications of the Russian aggression in Ukraine: **Dr Norlén**, speaker of the Swedish parliament; President **Niemi**; **Ms Linde**, foreign minister of Sweden. The aggression had made everybody reconsider what was the most secure environment for their countries and their people after the UN Charter and its principles had been so bluntly crushed by a member of the Security Council. Further, he thanked **Ms Annika Huitfeldt**, minister of foreign affairs of Norway, and **Ms Annalena Baerbock**, federal minister of foreign affairs of Germany, for their meaningful interventions and strong support for the efforts of the international community in Ukraine.



Mr Gennaro Migliore, Vice-President and President Emeritus of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

The title of this year's meeting involved all of them: the answer to Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. The Russian military aggression had been a turning point in the history of Europe and the entire world. It

was very likely that the world would never return to what people had known before, **Mr Migliore** cautioned. On 24 February 2022, on the very same day that Russia had invaded Ukraine, the PAM had published a strong statement condemning the Russian unilateral decision and offering its support to the efforts of international world leaders in obtaining an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of the Russian army to avoid suffering of millions of innocent victims. Over the past week, they had seen with their own eyes the repercussions of this brutal invasion. First of all, the international law was being broken, and Vladimir Putin had tried to change the world order by force. Around 15,000 suspected war crimes had been reported in Ukraine since the war had begun, with 200 – 300 reported daily. These included atrocities, mass executions and violence against women, children and the elderly. In addition, war crimes in Ukraine included the forcible deportation of people to different parts of Russia, to what might be called the real intent of Russia, namely, to cancel Ukraine as a political and national identity and Russify its inhabitants. Killing many, deporting others and the so-called Russian re-education of the survivors – this was a cultural genocide. Burning Ukrainian books remind the world of what had happened in Germany before World War II. The International Criminal Court had described Ukraine as a crime scene.

In the preceding April, **Mr Migliore** had led the PAM high-level tour to Romania, one of the PAM's most active member countries. Like many members of the BSPC, Romania was also playing a key role in providing assistance to the refugees coming from Ukraine and in channelling aid into Ukraine. As the PAM, they had worked with local authorities and many NGOs from Israel to the USA in order to establish in Tulcea in south-eastern Romania a very effective logistics hub to forward humanitarian aid to the Odessa region, in particular supplies of food and medicine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine had also had a major impact on food security in the PAM's Mediterranean region. Before the war, grain and corn exports from Ukraine had gone to minor countries. According to the UN, the food prices of April had been 34 % higher than they had been one year before. **Mr Migliore** quoted the Executive Director of the World Food Programme who had been speaking about the situation in many other regions, saying, "We have got now 45 million people in 38 countries that are knocking on famine's door. We know very well that the current food crisis will lead to new social instability within the countries of the Mediterranean region and Africa, leading new threats also to our countries." That was not to mention the stolen farming equipment and thousands of tonnes of grain taken from the Ukrainian farmers in areas occupied by Russian soldiers and now being smuggled into Syria so as to hide their origin.

Mr Migliore strongly believed that their interparliamentary work on this day would contribute to secure the necessary policy commitments to address these challenges, reinforce their partnership and pave the way towards future action. All of them were standing with the Ukrainian people for their freedom and future but also for the future of the rest of the world. He quoted, Slava ukraini, in finishing his address.

Chairperson Schraps thanked **Mr Migliore** very much for his strong statement, reminding the audience of the importance to continue to deepen the collaboration between their parliamentary conferences.

The next speaker was **Ms Cecilia Widegren**, Vice-President of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU). The BSPC appreciated very much that the IPU was addressing the Conference, especially since this was a very important topic discussed in the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity, and climate change had also taken centre stage at the IPU's 44th assembly. Moreover, the IPU had given their answer to the Russian invasion in Ukraine.

Address by Ms Cecilia Widegren, Vice-President of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU)

Ms Widegren was happy to address the Conference in this house as it was her parliament since she had been an MP for 20 years, representing the voters of West Sweden. Today, she also had the honour to also represent the Interparliamentary Union as the organisation's vice-president. Moreover, she was also the representative of the attendees because all of their national parliaments were very engaged in the IPU. So, she was also representing all the parliamentary gatherings in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. As vice-president, she stood for 44 countries out of the 178 parliaments engaged in the IPU. The Baltic Sea Conference and the Interparliamentary Union shared the work and the same aim and missions: stability, peace and security, democracy, freedom, sustainability and prosperity for their citizens. **Ms Widegren** welcomed the attendees to this event, to the Swedish Riksdag but also to Sweden and Stockholm, in one of the countries around the Baltic Sea.

The Interparliamentary Union had begun only with the aim of stability, peace and security 133 years earlier. It had been members of parliament from Germany, France and Denmark – to mention a few of the parliamentarians who had started cooperation to get peace and security. That had actually been the starting point of the nations uniting and then becoming what was today known as the



Ms Cecilia Widegren, Vice-President of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU)

United Nations. In the words of the Secretary General, **Mr Guterres**, this was the parliamentary dimension of the UN. He could say that because **Mr Guterres** was a former member of parliament, **Ms Widegren** noted. Peace and security were the essence of the BSPPC's cooperation and conference as well as the IPU's cooperation. They held the world record in peace and security. That was something for them as members of parliament to live up to, for all of them as members of the IPU. They were the only recipient of a total of eight Nobel Peace Prizes during the years. As parliamentarians, they were working on the ninth currently. To support their members and friends in the Ukrainian parliament which is also a distinguished member of the IPU. The advance work was very important for all of them, and they did play a role.

Ms Widegren wished to expand on the important role of parliamentarians. The IPU had a very clear ambition, not only to work with democracy, freedom, human rights and general equality, sustainability but also of course peace and security. This was one of their strategic goals. By saying so, they had been trying to start the process towards the United Nations high-level meeting in the year 2025 which would reinforce and renew their peace processes. Members of parliament all around the world had already begun this process in their resolution work within the IPU. Together with experts, such as **Mr Eliasson**, the former president and chair of CIPRI, a world-recognised peace institute, the IPU was working to find new ways to look into peace processes. Of course, the awful aggression Russia was waging against Ukraine had put this further high on the task list. Yet **Ms Widegren** reminded her audience that there were

more than 70 conflicts right at this point around the globe. It was even more than there had been after World War II. So, as members of parliament, they did have a task to fulfil, she underlined. The speaker conceded that governments played a role and so did civil society, but that applied to members of parliament as well. Therefore, they would work with a tool kit for members of parliament to conduct and try to have this as one of the bases of their work.

She called on her audience to look at the power of invitation that each of the attendees as an MP had. They could invite both sides of the conflict. The IPU had done so. South and North Korea around the same table, Israel and Palestine around a table, Ukraine and Russia – hopefully soon around a table. **Ms Widegren** insisted that the IPU were helping their colleagues in Ukraine to conduct the dialogue her side believed most important to actually come forward with some peace talks, with dialogue. They were the ones to do that. So could the attendees as parliamentarians, and the IPU could help them for the future. She further challenged the audience to take the opportunity at this Conference to discuss how they could help their colleagues around the world to use these specific tools that they as MPs had: dialogue and invitational power to invite everybody that was important around a table.

Ms Widegren wished the audience best of luck in their Conference and that they would have some great days in the Swedish Riksdag.

Vice-President Schrapls thanked **Ms Widegren**, especially for this strong statement because it underlined the importance of cooperation between parliaments. That was very important. The BSPC very much appreciated the cooperation with the IPU and were closely following the latter's work.

Moving on, he introduced the next speaker, **Ms Josefin Carlring**, the secretary general of the Baltic Sea NGO Network. In bilateral contacts, the BSPC had had an intensive exchange with **Mr Anders Bergström** who had conveyed ideas for further deepened cooperation to the BSPC Standing Committee in November 2021.

Address by Ms Josefin Carlring, Secretary General of the Baltic Sea NGO Network

Ms Carlring opened by stating that in the present uncertain times, after a pandemic and during an illegal war in Ukraine, it was clear that a closer and deeper cooperation between sectors of society was a necessity to secure future peace, welfare and democracy here in the Baltic Sea region. Therefore, she was very pleased to be at this Con-



Ms Josefin Carling, Secretary General of the Baltic Sea NGO Network

ference to speak with the attendees as a representative of the civil society organisations here in this region.

The war in Ukraine had put the civil society to its ultimate test and once again proven how NGOs were playing a pivotal role in challenging times. Tirelessly, the civil society had worked fast and effectively to fulfil the needs of women and children fleeing from their lives where nation states often had been absent. Not only did civil society play a role in the acute situations on the ground, they were also playing an equally important role with their long-term efforts to build a strong civil defence both within and across national borders. People-to-people cooperation was the key to building trust and a sense of belonging among people. It was built when people met and cooperated, just like everyone was doing at this Conference.

The theme of this Conference was the future of the Baltic Sea region. **Ms Widegren** argued that this future was already a reality in their lives today. This future had already shown that they could not rely on old merits and wins when it came to people-to-people cooperation. The pandemic had shown that people were vulnerable and that trust and the sense of togetherness, even between neighbours, could not be taken for granted. There was no doubt that this future would continue to challenge this part of the world. It would challenge their ability to handle a planet in transformation. To meet this future, a strong and vital people-to-people cooperation was an absolute necessity.

She thanked **Mr Eliasson** for reminding all of them that “We, the peoples” were all responsible for shaping the future they wanted to live in. This would not be done by them stating beautiful visions for

the future. That required urgent actions, among and between people, civil society, business, academia and politics. Shaping their common future lay in the everyday actions that were carried out together. A strong and vital civil society was the foundation for strong democracies, the protection of human rights and sustainable development. Just as everything else, this could not be taken for granted. It had to be involved, invited and prioritised in decision-making. It had to be stimulated and supported with long-term and effective funding as well as with political will and leadership.

In conclusion, **Ms Widegren** said that to meet their challenges, they had to innovate and cooperate together. They had to all contribute and share solutions and competencies across borders. The civil society was ready to drive and facilitate this development towards a more integrated Baltic Sea region. To do this, they needed investments in the infrastructure for this integrated approach – an infrastructure that gathered stakeholders from across sectors, across borders and on all levels of society to jointly develop solutions to their common challenges. The civil society organisations wanted to invite the parliamentarians to sign these platforms for cooperation and were looking forward to furthering their cooperation with the BSPC in the future.

Chairman Schraps agreed that the BSPC was looking forward to that as well. He thanked **Ms Widegren** for her contribution. As was always done when exchanging views with the NGO Network, the BSPC would also consider the recommendations from the latter for the BSPC's future region.

He next mentioned the region Skåne whose regional assembly had been official BSPC observers for the past ten years. They had always given the BSPC valuable input for their work, particularly concerning migration and integration as part of the BSPC's last working group. Therefore, **Mr Schraps** was very glad that Annika Annerby Jansson, the president of Skåne's Regional Assembly, would address the Conference on this day.

Speech by Ms Annika Annerby Jansson, President of the Regional Assembly, Region Skåne

Ms Jansson thanked the BSPC for inviting her as a representative of one of the observer organisations to share their view on this important topic. The Russian aggression against Ukraine was much more than an attack on a sovereign country, it was – as had been said and had to be said again and again – an attack on shared values such as democracy, peace and cooperation. It showed the world that



Ms Annika Annerby Jansson, President of the Regional Assembly, Region Skåne

these values were fragile and had to be protected; moreover, it also showed them the strength and willpower of coming together in cooperation. Many of the efforts had rightfully been focused on crisis management so far, coming together to impose sanctions and importantly caring for those fleeing violence in Ukraine. Today, one could see incredible actions by NGOs, cities, regions and their national and European associations in Europe and beyond, providing shelter for refugees and emergency support for their Ukrainian neighbours. She pointed out that the Ukrainian municipalities were playing a crucial role in the country's resilience and in securing the basic needs of its citizens. This proved the importance of multi-level-governance and the crucial role of local and regional authorities and civil society.

While these actions and emergency aid would continue, it was necessary to also think about the next step. They had to begin to think about how to go forward in supporting the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. If this crisis was to teach anything, it might just be the importance of cooperation – cooperation between actors but also the cooperation across national borders, with each other's neighbours (and within the Baltic Sea region). The Regional Assembly had therefore been very glad to hear from their member organization CPMR of the upcoming launch of the initiative European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine. The background was – as announced on 18 May – that the European Commission (DG NEAR) was setting up the Ukraine reconstruction platform (URP). This was meant to be an international coordination platform, co-led by the European Commission and the Ukrainian government. Reconstruction in Ukraine would need to build on Ukraine's ownership and close cooperation and coordi-

nation with the EU and supporting countries. Mobilising and involving resources at the local and regional level would be key, **Ms Jansson** underlined. The initiative of a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine was to be given a role within the reconstruction platform, acting to facilitate peer-to-peer cooperation and twinning partnerships between cities and regions within the EU with counterparts in Ukraine.

The Alliance had the potential of providing a platform for how to go forward. This would help to channel EU local and regional authorities' efforts and Ukrainian needs in a coordinated way at the European level. This would enable an easy engagement mechanism allowing EU cities/regions/associations to collaborate with their Ukrainian counterparts in the reconstruction efforts. Importantly, it would at the same time serve as a formal platform backed by EU institutions, providing local and regional authorities with a more secure framework to minimise the risks that they could expose themselves to by undertaking individual initiatives with Ukraine in an ongoing context of conflict. **Ms Jansson** explained that the Alliance was currently being set up under the coordination of the CoR in liaison with the EC and the main European associations of local and regional authorities; the Council of Europe had also come on board. The official launch was planned at the next CoR plenary at the end of June.

Therefore – in conclusion – she asked the attendees to remember that multi-level governance was important even – or rather even more – in times of crisis. That had been evident in the migration crisis 2015 when regions and municipalities had carried out the consequences and responsibilities of this unprecedented flow of refugees both in admittance and final destinations regions. It was evident today in Ukraine. **Ms Jansson** expressed her hope and firm belief that it would be just as important in the future of Ukraine.

Vice-President Schraps thanked **Ms Annerby Jansson** for her speech. As in their discussions at dinner the night before, it was very nice to hear her words and statement on this day.

As for the last speaker in this session, he welcomed **Ms Lilian Busse**, the chair of HELCOM, for her statement. That had been planned for this afternoon's panel discussion about climate change and biodiversity. Since it was not clear **Ms Busse** would be able to attend that panel and the BSPC was very interested to hear about her contribution to the Conference, she was given the floor at this opportunity.

Speech by Ms Lilian Busse, Chairperson of HELCOM

Ms Busse was thankful for being invited and able to speak at this point. Everyone now had to practice travelling again as airports were full and flights were being cancelled; that was the reason why she was speaking now rather than in the afternoon. This would be more of a technical speech on biodiversity and climate change.

She explained that she was the HELCOM chair, leading the German presidency of the organisation. As a matter of fact, **Ms Busse** was the outgoing chair and would be turning over the duties to Latvia in June. It had been quite a challenging German chairmanship over the last two years, starting with corona when all the negotiations had been done online. There had not been a single in-person meeting over the last two years. Obviously, it was ending with a difficult geopolitical situation in the war in Ukraine, which truly impacted HELCOM as well. She would speak in more detail about that later. However, HELCOM had been able to adopt the new Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) in the previous October. That had been the only meeting with people present. The new Baltic Sea Action Plan featured 199 actions and measures which should be implemented until 2030. **Ms Busse** drew the audience's attention to several other documents that were also adopted at the same time. There was a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, a Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise and a HELCOM Science Agenda among other documents adopted at that October meeting.

Coming back to the outline of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, she explained that it featured four segments: biodiversity, eutrophication, hazardous substances and litter as well as sea-based activities. In addition, there were the horizontal actions – or cross-cutting issues – of which there were seven: monitoring, marine-spatial planning, economic and social aspects, knowledge exchange and raising awareness, hotspots, financing and then obviously climate change. In the next few minutes, she would outline how HELCOM was working with biodiversity and climate change. Clearly, the Baltic Sea Action Plan was a strategic programme and had a set of tools that needed to be implemented in order to reach the good environmental status of the Baltic Sea.

As climate change was such an overarching issue and the resilience of the Baltic Sea was at stake, all these 199 Baltic Sea Action Plan actions and measures were part of the solution. In that respect, she cited three paragraphs of the BSAP. Measures within all segments were designed to strengthen the overall resilience of the Baltic Sea, consequently improving its ability to respond to the effects of cli-



Ms Lilian Busse, Chairperson of HELCOM

mate change. With regard to climate change, the ultimate aim of HELCOM was to increase the resilience of the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea to its impact. All measures leading to a stronger Baltic marine ecosystem resilience should therefore also be regarded as climate-adaptation measures. One paragraph on biodiversity stated that biodiversity in the Baltic Sea was deteriorating, as the result of pressures from various human activities, the effects of which were further exacerbated by climate change. Most species of fish, birds and marine mammals as well as benthic and pelagic habitats in the Baltic Sea were currently not in a healthy state. **Ms Busse** assumed that her listeners already knew these details, but she wanted to rattle off all the effects through which climate change was affecting biodiversity: sea level, waves, air temperature, sea temperature, solar radiation, sea ice, salinity and seawater inflow, stratification and ocean water circulation, river run-off, oxygen, carbonate chemistry and river nutrient loads. These were a considerable number of impacts affecting biodiversity. With a look at the Baltic Sea Action Plan and its 199 measures and actions, several of the latter were dealing with climate change. Of these, there were five specifically addressing climate change: One was about implementing the science agenda, i.e., to improve the access for policymakers to the scientific information on climate change. Another one dealt with closing the knowledge gap on blue carbon. Under the German chairmanship, there had been a two-day workshop on what the current gaps were. In the measure on implementing blue carbon, they developed a strategic approach on ocean acidification but also developing work under HELCOM to limit the greenhouse gas emissions. Under the sea-based activities, there were several actions connected to climate change, such as their work on sustainable shipping as well as contributing to and following the discussions of the IMO on greenhouse gases.

After talking about the Baltic Sea Action Plan, she moved on to another document from HELCOM and Baltic Earth: the Climate Change Fact Sheet. It was a summary for policymakers on the latest scientific knowledge on how climate change was currently affecting the Baltic Sea. The fact sheet outlined for several different indicators what was happening, what was expected, what the knowledge gaps were and what the political relevance of those indicators was. To sum up, they now had a good and ambitious Baltic Sea Action Plan that had to be implemented, and that had to be done at an ambitious level. Moreover, the Climate Change Fact Sheet also had to be used to fill out all the knowledge gaps detailed in there.

Ms Busse conceded that the present geopolitical situation made this difficult. Since 24 February 2022, HELCOM had postponed all formal meetings. They were in a strategic pause until the end of June when the German chairmanship would hand over to the chairmanship of Latvia. Currently, they were in discussions how to move forward in these difficult times with HELCOM.

Vice-President Schraps thanked **Ms Busse** very much for these important contributions. Many of the issues she had mentioned – especially concerning climate change and biodiversity – were also part of the BSPC resolution. They sought to include these issues in their statements as well. That further showed the importance of a close cooperation between the BSPC and HELCOM.

With the first session coming to an end, **Mr Schraps** expressed his gratitude to all speakers and participants of this very fruitful session and was sure that the cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and beyond with the BSPC's partners was vital and strong. That provided hope to all of them that they would master the current challenges all of them were facing. With that, he concluded the session.

SECOND SESSION

Democracy and freedom of expression – how do we secure free media in the Baltic Sea Region?



Ms Bryndis Haraldsdóttir and Mr Wille Valve

Chairwoman **Bryndís Haraldsdóttir** introduced herself as a member of the Icelandic parliament, having been a member since 2016. She was quite new to the BSPC, and it was wonderful to be in the Riksdag with everybody. However, she was also present as head of the Icelandic delegation to the Nordic Council which was the connection from her island to the Baltic Sea.

Her co-chair introduced himself as **Mr Wille Valve**, an MP of the Åland islands parliament, former minister, head of the delegation from Åland to the BSPC.

Ms Haraldsdóttir noted that they were going to discuss very interesting material at this situation: “Democracy and freedom of expression – how do we secure free media in the Baltic Sea Region?” It was known now that media were also part of the war, so this was a very important issue to discuss. It always was for democracy but especially at this point in time. They had great guests with them today, and she invited the first speaker to take the stand, **Mr Michael Jarlner**. He had been asked to cover the issue from a journalistic point of view, given his long experience as a journalist and also his experience with Russia. He was a foreign reporter and former Russian correspondent for the Danish daily Politiken.

Speech by Mr Michael Jarlner, journalist, former Russian correspondent for the Danish daily Politiken

Mr Jarlner thanked the BSPC for inviting him. He had been asked to talk about democracy and freedom of expression and how to secure free media in the Baltic Sea region. Jokingly, he noted that he had about ten minutes to save the press in the entire Baltic Sea region. So, he did not know what he should spend the last eight minutes on. Seriously, he said that he would not talk so much about the press but rather about understanding the task – understanding what the role of the press was. Thomas Jefferson had said, “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspaper or newspapers without a government, I would certainly decide for the latter.” **Mr Jarlner** asked the politicians to think about this quote. Another founding father – the one of CBS Evening News –, **Mr Walter Cronkite**, had said, “Freedom of the press is not just important for the democracy – it is democracy.”



Mr Michael Jarlner

Accordingly, **Mr Jarlner's** presentation was about understanding the task, understanding the role of the press. Since they were now in a Baltic Sea region meeting, they should also understand the task of the region and that they were actually prisoners of their own geography. In an aside, he noted that Prisoners of Geography by Tim Marshall was his favourite book and urged his listeners to read that book if they had not done so before. The very positive thing about it – which he had been reminded about on their excursion to a museum the day before – was that it was fascinating to see the Baltic Sea area. Ninety million people, more than the entirety of Germany, so many resources, so many resourceful human beings. There was a lot to like, but there was also something more negative.

As much as they were intertwined with the waters and the people, they were also intertwined with autocracy and war – for the time being. The week before, **Mr Jarlner** had been in Lithuania. In the country, he had met with Ingrida Šimonytė, the prime minister. They had been talking about the vulnerabilities of the EU and NATO, about the Suwałki Gap. He had not thought much about that corridor for a long time, this small border stretch between Poland and Lithuania, only 65 kilometres wide. Now, though, it was surrounded on the one side by Kaliningrad, controlled by a warring and aggressive Russia, and on the other side by Belarus. So, this is what was around them. It showed two things: One was the vulnerability of the Baltic Sea region but also the coherence. It was not only about the Baltic Sea states but also about countries such as Belarus and Russia.

When speaking about the press in this area, there were two major challenges: One challenge was that it was very difficult to go to Belarus. **Mr Jarlner's** newspaper, Politiken, had not been allowed to go in for a long time. Another challenge was posed by the new media law in Russia which made many journalists refrain from going to the country. The reporter pointed out that he had lived in that country a long time ago, but he had wanted to go back there under certain circumstances. Yet he did not feel safe about doing so. So, the question was what to do. First of all, there was a very big task in the media when talking about the war in Ukraine. That is that people had a very short attention span. This applied not only to media but also to politicians. Sometimes, the speaker was afraid that politicians were not actually preparing their populations for the war in Ukraine, that they would also have to pay for it. Moreover, politicians had to tell people that they were at war, although with different means. That did not mean it could be a war of convenience where they did not feel the pain of having a war. Instead, the people and countries would indeed feel the pain of war. While they were not losing lives like in Ukraine, losing buildings like in Ukraine, but they would have to pay something. Higher prices, maybe an economic crisis. There was a food crisis evolving. That was something that should be solved, but all of them would feel that. The same went for the media – they, too, had to be constantly aware that this was an ongoing, a long-term war, that they should not repeat what they had done in 2014 and after. The media had forgotten that Russia had already been waging a shadow war in the eastern part of Ukraine. They had gotten tired of it. When Russia invaded in February, many readers had been surprised because they had forgotten about the situation there. This was something to be avoided.

Mr Jarlner had spoken with his co-panellists, saying that he would be practical in his address. So far, he saw himself as being practical by quoting Thomas Jefferson and Walter Cronkite, but what had been done at his newspaper, Politiken in Denmark, was that they had tried to counteract this attention span by constantly sinking in new dimensions of their journalism and their opinion-making. They had invited President Zelenskyy to talk in Copenhagen a month earlier. The Ukrainian president had spoken to more than ten thousand people just in Copenhagen and was also transmitted to the next-largest city. Just a few days before, his newspaper had Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in Copenhagen. She had been talking about the relation between Russia, Belarus and the security of Ukraine as well as the security of NATO countries and the EU, not least the Baltic countries. Another thing that his newspaper had been doing was that they were trying to identify colleagues in what he called “the other Russia” or “the other Belarus”. The reason for that was that they should constantly be reminded that there were also progressive, liberal powers in both Russia and Belarus. They were suppressed, it was difficult to reach them, many of them were now exiled, but they were there. The attempt should be made to support them. **Mr Jarlner** raised the question of how to do so. Recently, he had found – as an example – a reportage by Elena Kostyuchenko, a very famous journalist with the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta. Everyone knew that Novaya Gazeta had been forced to shut down its operations. **Ms Kostyuchenko** had been writing an article from Mykolaiv in Ukraine. **Mr Jarlner** has asked whether Politiken could print this article, and she had agreed under one condition: The text had to be translated into Russian in the uncensored version and then spread it. That was what Politiken had done. At this point, the newspaper was talking to Medusa on how to support their journalism as good colleagues.

But they could not just leave it to their suppressed colleagues in Russia and Belarus to take on this task: Instead, Western journalists had to do something themselves. **Mr Jarlner** believed in a true Baltic spirit – or at least a Nordic spirit. Together with the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter, the Finnish Helsinki Sanomat and the Norwegian Aftenposten, Politiken from Denmark had established a Russian-language site. On it, they were taking their journalism from these newspapers and translated it into Russian so that people could see an uncensored version of what was going on. He asked rhetorically whether it was a success. **Mr Jarlner** pointed out that they had received an award of honour from Moscow: They were censored by Roskomnadzor on 16 March 2022. In other words, the scheme was working. The publication was irritating the Russian side, and that was continuing.

That brought him to a recommendation he wished to present to the politicians assembled here. **Mr Jarlner** noted that he was not a supporter of state media but rather heavily against them. However, politicians could consider how to support actions like what he had described: translations of the free press articles and dissemination to Russia and Belarus and wherever they were needed. He could not stop without adding a small warning. There had been a film in the 1960s called *Don't Look Back*, about Bob Dylan. Looking at the audience, he could tell that some had heard the name before. But maybe, sometimes, one should look back. Sometimes, it was necessary to do as **Mr Eliasson** had said, to remember in war what one had said in peace. They should not forget – even though they were at war in one way or another – that there were internal struggles as well. Internal problems regarding democracy. Reporters Without Borders had been criticising Poland, for example, about increased state control of the media. The speaker's own country and also Finland had been having cases against journalists who were covering intelligence matters in their countries concerning widespread surveillance. This should be taken very seriously. **Mr Jarlner** moved on to his final quote, from Voltaire, his favourite. Voltaire had said, "If you want to know who controls you, look at who you are not allowed to criticise." Russia reminded the West of what they did not want to be. The USA in the previous year had warned them how easy it was to lose what was a guarantee against that.

Co-chair **Valve** thanked **Mr Jarlner** for his thoughtful words. He opened the floor for questions.

Mr Kacper Płażyński from Poland believed there was another subject that was very much correlated to that of free media. It was free science. Very often, he wanted to point out the countries where that seemed to happen, but that also happened in the Baltic States – not Estonia or Lithuania but some of them. When the scientists decided to analyse some kind of topics that might not be so much politically correct at the moment, then they sometimes faced criminal charges, even though they were really respected professors at national universities with good reputations. Some topics, though, were taboo and should not be mentioned. Sometimes, even after a wave of criticism, that kind of scientist – who had decided to step out from the crowd – was kicked out from the university or put in this chapter with the people one did not talk to anymore, even though they were preparing serious and real scientific theses. He thought that this was a wider problem, not only about media. From his political perspective, he saw in general in Europe that the media was more and more under the influence not only of politicians and governments but the pressure of money – the pressure from those who were able to pay

for some kind of sponsored articles, very often under the table, just to make some point of view more acceptable. He gave the example of nuclear energy which from a scientific point of view was as good an energy source as renewable energy. It was a strategic component of the energy mix and without it, countries could not have a competitive economy with zero emissions. But because of some kind of influence – surely also from Russia – coming to Europe, it was very often defeated in the media and scientific matters. He asked his audience to look up this subject more widely. He urged that one could not only speak of political pressure on the media; it should also be seen as a point that international organisations, companies were using them under the same rule, and it did not matter if it was state or private media.

Mr Jarlner responded that he could spend the entire day responding to the points the Polish MP had raised. Basically, he understood **Mr Płażyński's** question to be whether there was enough scope for diverging points of views. He hoped so. That was absolutely the idea for his newspaper. He could not answer to Polish newspapers. He knew quite a few of them and believed they were very good. However, that was a problem – where to draw the line. In Denmark, there was a heavy debate at the moment: Some scientists had been asked to meet flat earthers – people claiming that the earth was still flat. To his mind, that was a limit. At this point, you were raising a point of opinion and making it equal to that of science. That should not be done, he underlined. As far as the question on nuclear energy and so on, **Mr Jarlner** was very much for it. All the arguments for it should be presented. They should never end up at a point when they would be talking about the war in Ukraine and the media ending up going to war as well. That was something they should abstain from and try to clear out. He thinks **Mr Płażyński** had pointed to something that was sometimes difficult. They should be able to solve it. He hoped his answer was at least partly satisfying.

Mr Ola Elvestuen from Norway wondered if **Mr Jarlner** could reflect a little bit more. One thing the journalist had been talking about was the influence and how politicians could support free media in Russia, with reference to Medusa and others. **Mr Elvestuen** asked if **Mr Jarlner** was aware of the reach these media could have, how accessible they were and how large a share of the Russian population could actually get access to it. In addition, the parliamentarian was interested in how **Mr Jarlner** viewed media's role in the opposite direction: Russia and China and other authoritarians were also trying to spread their story and their false news in Western society. He wondered how people could have control and determine what was the real discussion to attend to.

Mr Jarlner first spoke about how to secure access to their news. He agreed that in Russia, one could not just browse politiken.dk.co or aftenposten.no, so their material had to be disseminated on platforms where one knew the readers were. His own newspaper was disseminating articles via Telegram, for example. The journalist was more and more aware of other opportunities that would be available – and that already had to have been used. Censorship kept moving in, and so they had to find new ways all the time. But that was something they were absolutely aware of, **Mr Jarlner** assured his listeners. When it came to misinformation, he knew that another panellist would be talking about that topic, so he only wanted to briefly address it. The greatest problem to his mind at the moment was that they were not in Russia. They did not have the sense of what was going on. What journalists did was trying to look at Russian television channels. He pointed out that it was necessary to separate misinformation from opinion pieces. One had to be aware of what was being discussed in Russia all the time. Whether one liked it or not, that was reality, that was what they were doing. Then, something would come in as misinformation, and that would have to be checked. Moreover, it would have to be checked on your own side as well. That was very important for **Mr Jarlner** to say that they must not end up in another Iraq War situation where the West had not seen what had gone wrong on their side, what their forces had done wrong and could be a problem in their own warfare. It was difficult to cover Russia while one was effectively not allowed to be there, because of the hard censorship laws there. He would be happy to return to the topic of misinformation after hearing the other presentation.

Mr Valve offered a warm thank you to **Mr Jarlner** for his presentation.

Ms Haraldsdóttir went on to introduce the next expert speaker. **Ms Valentyna Shapovalova** was a Danish/Ukraine PhD fellow in media studies. She had conducted several studies on Russian disinformation and had closely followed Russian media during the war. **Ms Haraldsdóttir** was very much looking forward to the speech.

Speech by Ms Valentyna Shapovalova, Ukraine PhD fellow in media studies

Ms Shapovalova hoped her audience was ready for a lightning talk on Russian disinformation and propaganda, along with the current strategies and narratives. As she had around ten minutes to speak about these matters, that was very little time, so she hoped that they could discuss the topic after her presentation, not only in this room but also outside of it.



Ms Valentyna Shapovalova, Ukraine PhD fellow in media studies

To set the scene, she invited her listeners to a visit to the current domestic reality of Russia. Just a few days prior to 4 April 2022, the western world had been shaken by the horrific images from Bucha, a small town in the Kyiv region liberated from a month-long occupation by Russian forces. Corpses of local civilians were spread on the streets of the city, with some having been tortured and others having had their hands tied behind their backs. Turning on the Russian state-aligned television on 4 April 2022, one was met with a very different coverage of the events in Bucha. Instead of portraying the story as a tragedy, as an example of Russian war crimes, it had been shown as a staged event created by the Ukrainian troops, as a provocation to Russia. She presented a screenshot taken from a very popular political debate show in Russia, 60 Minutes, on the second-largest nation-wide television channel. Here, the host had been explaining how the bodies spread out in the streets of Bucha were in fact not real bodies but actors. This same interpretation, this opposition to events, to reality, could be seen, heard and read on other state-aligned media in Russia. It was exemplary of the mass media coverage of the war in Ukraine, with fake fact-checking being one of the main strategies in turning reality on its head to fit the Kremlin narratives.

Information and media control were one of the main pillars of authoritarian rule, not just in Russia but in other places of the world as well. Disinformation and propaganda had been used by the Russian state, both domestically and abroad, as tools of information warfare and control. That had been the case not just since 24 February 2022 but for years. That had been seen extensively during the invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea and the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014. This was not an acci-

dental spread of misleading narratives, nor was it a new occurrence. It was an ecosystem of malicious information practices, built and maintained strategically by the Kremlin for years. She showed an illustration that was a partly simplified image of this ecosystem of disinformation and propaganda, containing social and traditional media in Russia and abroad, controlled in a nuanced and multi-layered way, top down from the Kremlin. She could talk for hours about how this control was exercised, for which she did not have time. Yet the dotted line should illustrate that the control is not always explicit. In fact, most often, it was implicit and – again – extremely nuanced.

Ms Shapovalova circled back to this ecosystem – the spread and use of disinformation of propaganda – not being a new occurrence. The way in which it had changed since 24 February 2022 was the magnitude – the magnitude of lies, of manipulated facts as well as the attempt to monopolise the information domestically in Russia. In an Orwellian manner forbidding certain words, such as war, calling it a special military operation, and **Ms Shapovalova** confirmed explicitly that the Russian state and state media were still calling what they were doing in Ukraine a “special military operation”. Before 24 February, the Russian media space had not been free. In fact, Russia had occupied 150th place on the Press Freedom Index in 2021. But the strategic narratives of the state, the disinformation and propaganda had been challenged by a few independent outlets that had actually reached quite wide. These independent outlets – she presented a few examples on a slide – had been strangled in Russia since 24 February. A few of them were still operating from outside Russia; they were accessible via VPN, and here she reflected back to the previous question about how widespread they were. The correct answer was that nobody knew. None of the outlets were freely accessible in Russia. One needed to have a VPN or to know which Telegram channels to use. She added that Telegram was a messaging service in Russia. Accordingly, access to independent news was incredibly difficult in Russia these days, with this wall of censorship and manipulation and monopolisation of information by the state.

The speaker mentioned that she had been monitoring the Russian media quite closely since 24 February 2022 and also prior to that, due to her research interests. She had identified – together with other analysts – a few narratives in the Russian disinformation and propaganda sphere. This raised the question why it was interesting or necessary to know the narratives. In order to fight or to contradict this malicious information practice, one had to know what it was about. **Ms Shapovalova** noted that this would be a lightning

round because she knew she was running out of time. The first narrative was that Russia was not conducting a war but a special military operation in Ukraine, solely targeting strategic military points. Russia was still claiming that they had not been and were not targeting civilians in Ukraine. Instead, it was supposedly NATO that was waging a war on Russia, doing so on Ukrainian territory with Ukraine being a puppet state. The operation had been a necessity and unavoidable as NATO, spearheaded by the US, had been threatening Russia with expansion. For those in her audience who did not know what a narrative was, the speaker explained that it was an umbrella term, collecting many different stories that related to these headlines. According to the narrative, Ukraine was a Nazi state and had been conducting genocide in Donbas. This narrative had been very prevalent at the beginning whereas presently, the Russian media were veering a little bit away from that and moving more and more towards claims that NATO was waging a war on Russia on Ukrainian territory. Russia was said to have the right to claim territory which historically had belonged to them, in annexing regions such as Kherson. Sanctions on Russia were supposedly hitting the West harder than Russia. She had seen a lot of stories claiming that Russia was quite self-sufficient and with all the sanctions, the West was playing a game on themselves. There was a lot of ridicule towards the Western leaders, the Western institutions, the Western liberal values and democracy. Last but not least, there were also accusations of the Western media being Russophobic and spreading disinformation about Russia, just as in the very first example she had presented.

To wrap up, she spoke about what the different goals of these disinformation and propaganda practices were. There were many goals, but she had chosen three of the central ones. Firstly, it was to undermine the existence of factually verifiable information, muddying the global information waters and creating a reality that was post-factual. To quote Peter Pomerantsev from 2014, “Nothing is true, and everything is possible.” It was also to undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions in the West, undermining what **Mr Eliasson** had called its unity. Lastly, it was to promote the Kremlin’s political and geopolitical as well as military interests, fostering public support and justifying Putin’s actions. It was so crucial that the leaders of the Baltic Sea region and the leaders in the West in general understood that this was incredibly deeply rooted and widespread. **Ms Shapovalova** stressed that Russian disinformation and propaganda had to be taken very seriously.

Chairwoman Haraldsdóttir thanked her for her report. She opened the floor two or three short questions. Later on, the debate would be opened.

Ms Anne Shepley from the parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a member of the Greens party, thanked the presenters for all the information provided. She had never seen it that comprised. What she had been wondering in the last weeks was where all of this was leading, whether the Russian propaganda machine would just keep on going or if the public would have any chance of breaking out of this. Somebody had said the previous night that it was becoming harder and harder to use e.g., VPN networks to get the gateway to free media, to European media. As such, she asked where **Ms Shapovalova** saw the development goal from here and whether she foresaw a growing spiral of misinformation and propaganda and Russia and perhaps to some extent beyond that country.

Ms Shapovalova approved of the question. Unfortunately, she was quite pessimistic in this regard. The reason was that it was indeed becoming more and more difficult to get information through to Russia. As **Ms Shepley** had mentioned, some VPN tools had already been blocked by the Russian state. Although it was a great idea – and she agreed that the Western media should continue translating their stories and getting them through to Russians –, they were only targeting the opposition, in other words the people who were already in the bubble of critique. It was incredibly difficult – if not to say impossible – to get through to the large core of people who watch Russian television. It was incredible. The things that were said, the claims that were made on Russian television and were not presented as opinion pieces. Oftentimes, they were presented as fact. Even **Ms Shapovalova** herself, as a researcher and moreover a person from Ukraine, could not watch Russian television for more than an hour at a time because it was messing with your head. One started questioning what reality was. So, it was quite dangerous. To get back to **Ms Shepley**'s question, the speaker believed this effect of propaganda and disinformation would keep on amplifying, although it was difficult to see how it could get even more expansive than it already was. She thought it would get more and more difficult to gain access to any independent information while Putin was still in power and while Russia was a non-democratic state.

Mr Krzysztof Walczak from Hamburg, a member of the AfD party, asked **Ms Shapovalova** what he considered a basic question. During her very enlightening lecture, she had used the term disinformation and propaganda synonymously. He wondered if she drew a distinction between the two terms. From the perspective of a legislator, he asked where **Ms Shapovalova** drew the line between what she had done – taking a narrative and countering it by providing an alternative view – and where something had to be banned. To his understanding, that was quite difficult. To counter a narrative, one had to be able to study it in its original form.

Ms Shapovalova agreed that this was another very good question. As a matter of fact, in her very first PowerPoint presentation, she had had a slide distinguishing between propaganda and disinformation. She had removed it because her speech had already been too long. As such, she was happy that she had been asked about this. Disinformation as broadly defined in the literature of disinformation studies – mainly from information and media studies – was malicious and/or factually unverifiable – basically false – information which was false on purpose. That was the difference between disinformation and misinformation. The latter was false or misleading information that was not on purpose false, misleading or malicious. For instance, if somebody's grandmother saw something on Facebook that was disinformation and shared that, her act of sharing it would be defined as misinformation whereas the person who had created the shared photo or text had provided disinformation. When talking about propaganda, things got muddier because propaganda did not necessarily have to be false or misleading. Propaganda could be information. Here, she explained she was using the term information in the broadest sense so it could be text, speech, images or videos. But propaganda was information that was manipulated or framed to influence the public. Propaganda would often present the world in very black and white terms; it was often quite polemic, playing on feelings. Sometimes, these could be positive feelings, but a lot of the time, it would be negative feelings. Moreover, propaganda was always strategic or ideologically created. There was always a strategic or ideological idea behind it. Apart from that, propaganda could be disinformative but did not have to be. **Ms Shapovalova** noted that in her own projects, she distinguished between propaganda and disinformation, but in this case, she was using both of them simultaneously. Moving back to the question about when to ban things, she conceded that this issue was incredibly difficult. Looking at herself as an example, she underlined that it was dangerous to just let media manipulated by authoritarian states to fit their goals – in this case the Russian media – run freely. The reason was that people did not always know or understand what was disinformation or propaganda and what was not. The media literacy in the European part of the world was really good, but it was not perfect. **Ms Shapovalova** cautioned that these media influenced one's mind and views. One started questioning things. The very simple answer to **Mr Walczak's** question would be that the speaker did not know. From an academic point of view – from that of media studies, a researcher looking into Russian disinformation and propaganda –, she was not that opposed to blocking websites such as RT or Sputnik which were not media news sites in the Western democratic understanding of the term but were in fact propaganda or disinformation instruments.

Mr Gennaro Migliore thanked **Ms Shapovalova** for her excellent presentation. He wished to share with them a consideration as well as ask a question. In Italy – and presumably all over the world –, the problem was not exactly the false or malicious news but rather the spread of these news. That was why they were in the middle of a cyber war. For example, in Italy, they were worrying about the Telegram channels of anti-vaxxers having turned into Putin propaganda. That was likely also the case in other countries. His question was how national legislators such as the parliamentarians could have the possibility to interact better with the owners of media companies, such as the owner of Facebook and Instagram. He also started to mention Telegram before remembering that the owner of that site was on the opposing side. **Mr Migliore** specified the owners of the social media allowing Putin to put this propaganda into place. It had taken one year to have the terrorist ISIS propaganda blocked on social media. It was necessary to act right away not only on legislative measures but also on the providers that owned these mechanisms.

Ms Shapovalova agreed that this was an excellent point. The platforms also had a responsibility for countering these disinformation and propaganda waves. Some of them had taken more responsibility than others. Some did so more on paper than in reality. However, she very much agreed that legislators should try to influence platform owners more to combat this issue. **Mr Migliore** had said that the problem was not false news but the spread of it. She underlined that the two could not be detached from each other. The problem was both the existence of these false news but also their spread. By the way, Italy had quite a big problem with the spread of Russian propaganda as **Ms Shapovalova** had unfortunately seen. She was sorry for that.

Chairwoman Haraldsdóttir thanked **Ms Shapovalova** for her speech and her good answers. She reminded the participants to sign up for the debate at the end of the session, encouraging in particular the representatives of the Youth Forum to speak.

Co-chair **Wille Valve** noted that the Åland Islands were just having the centenary of their autonomy and peaceful existence. In June, the celebrations had been more of a festival; in October, they would have more of an academic character as that would also mark a hundred years of the Åland Convention. In this spirit of academic celebration, he went on to introduce the third speaker: **Ms Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark** had been Director of the Åland Islands Peace Institute since 2007. She was a lawyer, juris doctor and associate professor of international law at Uppsala University. She would approach this session's topic from an international law perspective.

*Speech by Ms Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Director
of the Åland Islands Peace Institute*

Ms Åkermark said it felt tough and obliging to be at this point because this was the parliament of Sweden. What she would speak about had a lot to do with the history of parliamentary work in Sweden and thus also Finland. She would use quite a practical point of view. As the Russian representatives were not present at the Conference, **Ms Åkermark** felt free to speak about what was happening in their own Western democracies.

The span of time she was looking at was only 260 years. That would not take too long, though, she advised her audience and only mention two names: Peter Forsskål and Anders Chydenius. They were the two priests, thinkers and philosophers who defended the freedom of expression in the later 18th century, and both of them had come from Finland. That was no coincidence. Both of them had seen disadvantaged groups that did not have the possibility to speak in the system of estates that had been in place at the time in Sweden. Because they had been inspired – several years before the French revolution – to adopt in 1766 the Freedom of Press Act in Sweden, one of the most progressive of the time. Anders Chydenius had said that the rights of defenceless people – which was how he had referred to the peasants – must therefore be nurtured with double considerations. He had also tried to strike the balance between equality and necessary differentiation, thus being a precursor of modern minority rights and systems. She asked the rhetorical question why she was bothering the Conference with these historical recollections of priests and thinkers of the 18th century. She did so because she believed that today, they were also seeing tendencies of securitisation of minorities in a way which was not appropriate or conducive to democratic states. She would not speak of what was happening in the Russian Federation, but she could assure her audience that she had had strong confrontations with the Russian authorities before 2014, for all the securitisation and marginalisation and stereotyping they had been implementing on their own authorities.

On 31 May 2022, two weeks earlier, the public broadcaster Yle in Finland had published the results of a survey concerning the view among the Russian-speaking minority in the country about a possible NATO accession. The reporting in the media indicates that the majority of them held a negative opinion. However, they did not consider NATO membership a threat to Russian security. Interestingly, the same report had also revealed that most of this minority group had felt highly uncomfortable responding to such polls and

interviews. The report had ended with the following sentence which **Ms Åkermark** translated as, “A remarkably varied range of nationalities is included among respondents, including Russians, Estonians, Belarusians and Ukrainians.” In a similar vein, it had been reported that such surveys had been conducted among Russian speakers in the Baltic States – a report from 20 May 2022 –, in which it had been learned that 60 % of the Latvian Russian-speaking minority had abstained from voting in such polls.

Ms Åkermark noted that one did not have to be a Russian speaker to be the object of othering and being described as a problem and a threat these days. On 30 November 2021, three months before the war, the Ålanders had been described as a group of unruly, history-less people, a common problem for Finland and Sweden, who should be put under pressure by Sweden. These were pronouncements by a person employed in a highly, well-known and well-observed think tank in Finland. In another article, the Ålanders had been described by a very excellent journalists as free riders, thus confirming the common idea of minorities as privileged.

The speaker turned to theory because it was said there was nothing more practical than a very good theory. The Danes had developed such a theory, the so-called Copenhagen School of Securitisation. Securitisation was a response to a situation presented as an existential threat by taking measures going beyond what was considered normal. The response was then transferred from the sphere of normal politics to the security realm. According to these experts of securitisation, this concept often encompassed situations in which emergency measures were not actually adopted, but a presumption was created that such measures could be adopted at any minute. This was why **Ms Åkermark** was worried by these few examples which she saw as the top of the iceberg; there were many other such examples. They showed that minorities also in their part of the world were presented as stupid, illoyal, problematic and dangerous. She believed that António Guterres had been right when he had spoken during the pandemic about a tsunami of hate. The speaker went on to refer to the Tallinn Guidelines for National Minorities adopted by the High Commissioner on National Minorities. Here, she highlighted the preceding discussion about propaganda and disinformation. The Guidelines noted inflammatory discourse, not only when such discourse had an aim but also was likely to result in hostility between particular groups. The Tallinn Guidelines did not only require what was necessary when criminal sanctions were possible but also asked politicians and the state to take a stand and distance themselves from such inflammatory discourses. Thus, she was bringing with her a lot of questions. There was no answer. They had

not been here before and needed to think what was possible and how could they counter these tendencies when they were not going so far as using hate speech sanctions and criminal legislation.

As there were no questions to **Ms Åkermark**, Co-Chair Valve moved on to the open debate part of the session after thanking the speaker.

Mr Himanshu Gulati from Norway noted that this was a very serious concept that they were discussing. However, before that, he wished to start on a lighter note. Thanking the Swedish presidency for hosting the BSPC in the beautiful Swedish parliament and in the spirit of good neighbourliness, he had promised himself not to bring up that Norway had beaten Sweden in football the day before. He further congratulated **Mr Valve** and the Åland delegation on one hundred years of autonomy. There had been a wonderful celebration on the islands the Thursday before which he had the pleasure of joining before. Regarding the subject of the session, he thanked the speakers for their very interesting speeches. This subject would become more and more crucial in the years to come for all of their democracies as well as for international cooperation in general. Free media was something that had been thought about for many years. Nevertheless, what it actually meant now was changing in his view. Free press was about the bravery of the press to do their work, especially in regions of war. Unfortunately, in Ukraine, Afghanistan and even the Palestinian territories, journalists had died doing their work. Of course, this was extremely unfortunate and bad. Yet free media was also about an independent press. He posited whether it was quality or quantity, in other words whether as many as possible would be able to report or whether it was about the people reporting doing so independently. **Mr Gulati** referred to the Nobel Peace Prize committee's decision of the preceding year, awarding the prize to two brave journalists who had been reporting independently in an atmosphere where it was very hard to do so due to state pressure. Considering disinformation, the subject became quite different. The question was whether free media was about allowing as many as possible to report, even if what they were reporting were fake news – put bluntly, lies. Therefore, this question was very important, and it meant change. One did not have to look at Russia but at their own free democracies. Right at this time, in the United States, the hearings about the storming of the Capitol building had started. Even in such a free and open democracy – which many looked to for inspiration –, there were many people who were living in completely different, separate realities. Some people truly believed the election were stolen, others said it was not. The latter seemed to be the obvious fact, he noted. Despite having access to free media and

free information, the parallel realities were mind-blowing, in a negative sense. He thought this was what the future held. They had to grasp what it meant for people living in the same society, with access to the same free information to believe in completely different realities based on the news and media they wished to watch as well as the echo chamber of voices they chose to listen to. Sharing a reality was what kept people together as a society, whether within countries or across borders, and that was falling apart to some degree. Moreover, as **Dr Shapovalova** had touched upon, there were those creating disinformation and those spreading it. Social media was a great tool for empowering people, but it was also used as perhaps the biggest tool to spread incorrect information. To make the dilemma even more paradox, a lot of the people spreading propaganda and misinformation did not even know what they were reading, believing and distributing was indeed not true. **Mr Gulati** conceded that he did not have any answers to this question. His point was that one should not take this topic of disinformation lightly. If people could not even agree on fundamental facts, they could not address the challenges of these times in a good way. Protecting the free media, protecting the free press also had to include combating disinformation and lies. If people lived in different realities, they could not work towards the same goals.

Mr Simon Pāvāls from Åland focused on something that **Mr Michael Jarlner** had said in his presentation. **Mr Pāvāls** wished to stress the importance of supporting the other Russia and the other Belarus, the ordinary people that would like to have a different kind of future than what was presented to them. Moreover, he wished to underscore the importance of supporting liberal democratic powers that existed in Russia today. The mistakes made during the war on terrorism should not be repeated, in which ordinary people from the mass in the middle had turned to extremism and violence because of measures affecting ordinary people's lives. The most important part of this was to remember that the subject of the sanctions currently in place was Putin and the current Russian regime, not the Russian people. This might sound easy to understand, but the propaganda machine today in most countries was saying something else. There were easy ways to prove that. This mix-up between the existing regime and the ordinary people – the mass in the middle – was extremely dangerous, and history had shown that the consequences of such a mix-up were long and severe. Western ability in different ways to recognise those differences in the political and diplomatic conflict would be crucial for the outcome and the future for peaceful relations in the northern hemisphere. Finally, **Mr Pāvāls** tackled the question of raising future generations that would be able to do real thinking, especially future journalists who would be able

to do their work as journalists. That was not easy, he conceded. There were many ways one could make it easy on oneself as a journalist – to look at one people, one country as a whole. However, that was exactly why proper journalism was necessary.

Ms Hanna Katrín Friðriksson from the Nordic Council thanked the speakers for very interesting and important presentations. Everyone present agreed that free, independent media was one of the most important foundations that democracies relied on. The challenge they were facing in preserving the future with the free and independent media was an enormous one. All of them also knew the answers to why this was so important – what a free and independent press did for them. Simply put, there would not be much of a democracy without a free and independent press. Democracy's strength rested in the hands of the people, so they had to be knowledgeable, informed to make the right decisions when they formed the right opinions, when they supported something, when they protested something and when they voted. What was facing democracies now – and had done so for quite some time but was now coming in at full strength – was the fact that fake news, disinformation and propaganda was threatening the ideal of the free, independent press and thus, democracy. **Ms Friðriksson** noted that she certainly did not have the answers, only the strong belief that this had to become something that was at the very top of the list of priorities at the moment. It was something that had to be fully focused on in order to protect democratic values. Speaking about values, she went on to note that she was representing the Nordic Council and used the opportunity to mention the Nordic Journalistic Sector, a non-profit organisation that had been founded in 1957, with the goal to strengthen the development of the Nordic media and journalism. It had been working ever since on especially reinforcing the Nordic democratic values along with Nordic media and industry. She believed that it was important to expend that. Today, the perspective of the journalistic centre had included training in the Baltic States. She hoped that cooperation and the centre would continue and would become in the future one of the tools that were so desperately needed to fight the situation they were presently facing.

Mr Wille Valve of Åland pointed out that one of the speakers had talked about uncharted territory, that they had not been in this situation before. He countered that, in a way, they had been. This was profoundly a classic question, namely, what people were allowed to say and what not and when. This concerned where the boundaries of free speech lay. What they were facing now was massive propaganda, in particular in the Baltic States. Its purpose was to destabilise the countries as such, as much as possible. A couple of days ear-

lier, there had been news that the Lithuanian independence had actually been illegal and should be revoked, according to Russian lawmakers. The Western countries had to support the Baltic States and listen to them when they asked for support by limiting the information warfare directed at them. They should be supported because that was what friends did.

Mr Aron Emilsson from Sweden explained that some time earlier, he had had the honour of chairing a seminar in the Swedish parliament together with his colleague, **Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby**, regarding how to defend a free and independent press and media sector. It was an important issue on the agenda of the Conference. **Mr Emilsson** believed it was also about equal treatment of the politicians' clients – the people, the individuals. He stressed that there was a challenge in combining support of the digital revolution with the rule of a new media era as the new opinion square of these times. At the same time, there had to be a defence of the freedom of speech. The concern was how to handle internet giants that had their own economic muscles, agendas and ways to either promote or block views or opinions through digital or human algorithms. Moreover, these were not always transparent. Then there was the issue of how to handle social media giants with more power and influence than small states, instead of free and educated journalists that would contribute to the public debate. The digitalisation was a democratic revolution. However, it required regulation to control its rule and defend the need of freedom of speech. **Mr Emilsson** noted that he wished to put these questions forward for all of them to keep them in mind when combining these two elements in all the legislations they were making, both in the European Parliament and in their own parliaments in their countries as well as in all the cooperation between them. He thanked the speakers for their contributions and called on his colleagues to keep these crucial questions in mind.

Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby of Sweden underlined that they loved free and independent media. They hated disinformation, propaganda and fake news. At least, that was how it was in democratic countries. However, she wondered who was to define what was propaganda and disinformation. In Russia, that was very clear. Everybody outside Russia realises that this was fake news, disinformation, propaganda in order to get involved in the neighbouring countries. The definition of fake news, disinformation of propaganda, though, would always be made depending on where one stood. The definition would therefore be more or less subjective. What happened in Russia was extreme, and no-one outside Russia could say this was anything else but fake news and propaganda. She

posited the question though what would happen if governments decided that the free media was spreading disinformation when the news coverage had an angle the government did not agree with. They knew that the situation for the free press globally was not developing in a very positive direction. All of them agreed that they had to fight disinformation and propaganda, but she reiterated her question who had the right to define what was which and whether one should worry that the future of the free press was threatened. This was more or less a question to their eminent panel which **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** asked them to maybe develop a little further. After all, everybody in this hall agreed that they were on the right side of history. But she asked how this was going to look and sound when history was actually written.

Mr Johannes Schraps of the German Bundestag pointed out that a lot of very wise words had already been said in this discussion. Talking about disinformation and fake news on the one hand and freedom of speech and media on the other hand, he saw this truly as a two-fold issue. It was about those spreading propaganda and disinformation but also about those who were receptive and accessible for disinformation and fake news. He thought it was very important what **Mr Gulati** had mentioned at the beginning, that it was also about the ones who were accessible. Freedom of speech in a democratic system was constitutionally protected. He underlined that this was a good thing. Nevertheless, that also meant that disinformation was protected by the constitution as well, although it could present a very dangerous threat to free speech and to open discourse and maybe even to democracy itself. So, it was upon them as politicians to get this under control. In their democracies, there was a growing number of their population that believed in fake news and obviously false information, even if there is access to free media. That does not prevent them from seeing a lot of people believing in fake news when they hear them, despite this access to other information. Thus, **Mr Schraps** also saw a question about education, raising awareness of fake news and disinformation and to be able to adequately analyse available information.

Mr Michael Jarlner noted that he did not wish to give another presentation but rather offer a comment because of something that **Dr Shapovalova** had said. There had been a question of who could actually access the news Politiken was disseminating on their Russian website, specifically whether a VPN client was needed and the like. He very much agreed that it was not everyone who had a VPN client and who wanted one because very often it would be people opposing the system who would be using such means. Nonetheless, **Mr Jarlner** explained that he was an economist. What economists

always did was to assess the so-called zero alternative – doing nothing. He asked if that would be better, answering straight away that that would not be the case. It would not be better. By providing an alternative, a point of reference was put in place. Moreover, something else very important happened: They were showing that they had not forgotten the other Russia, the other Belarus. That was very important. He went on to look at another very important discussion that had come up in this session concerning censorship and disinformation. It was extremely difficult, he conceded. Some countries had forbidden Russia Today. Their argument ran that it was part of a state-operated manipulative propaganda machine which was detrimental to democracies. That was one side of it. The other side was that forbidding something seemed to be the same thing as was claimed of the others doing to Western countries. So, a balance had to be struck. **Mr Jarlner** noted that he often preferred putting a clear marker on an entity denoting it as a state media believed to be manipulative. That was something one could do. It was something in-between, but he found this a lighter process. As for who should decide what was disinformation and what was not, **Mr Jarlner** explained that for his newspaper Politiken and other journalistic media, there were responsibility laws in all kinds of forms – in Denmark, Norway, Germany and so on. But on social media platforms, very often there were no such rules, and one could say whatever one wished to. When that was done, it was very important to confront such views. Democratic people should not pretend that these views running counter to their own opinions did not exist. Sometimes, these should be confronted. Donald Trump was a very good example of this. He had had a lot of fake news. American media had responded by actually testing his statements. They had presented what **Mr Trump** had been claiming and what the truth was. This was a way of working around the matter. He conceded that he was not offering a clear-cut solution because there was no such thing.

Co-Chair Wille Valve thanked **Mr Jarlner** for this food for thought. This second session was coming to an end, he noted and offered many thanks to the speakers in this exciting session. With that, he closed the session.

THIRD SESSION

Mitigating Climate Change, Preserving Biodiversity and Adapting to Climate Change



Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby

Session Chair **Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby** welcomed the attendees to the third session of the Conference. As chair of the Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity, it was a great pleasure for her to address this session. Its theme was Mitigating Climate Change, Preserving Biodiversity and Adapting to Climate Change. That was one of the four priorities in the Swedish presidency. According to an extensive report from the World Meteorological Organisation, the number of disasters related to extreme weather had increased dramatically during the last 50 years. There was no doubt that climate change was a driving force behind this situation. More and more parts of the world were affected on a daily basis, and it was obvious that the efforts had to be speeded up if one was serious about reaching the sustainable development goals that had been agreed to. This was also well documented in the IPCC climate report that had been presented earlier this year.

She was therefore very glad to welcome **Mr Anders Grönvall**, State Secretary to Sweden's Minister for Environment and Climate. He would present some conclusions from the recent Stockholm +50 Conference which had gathered around 150 countries with the precise aim to find solutions that could contribute to a sustainable future.

Speech by Mr Anders Grönvall, State Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate, Sweden

Mr Grönvall thanked the BSPC for giving him the opportunity to speak here. He would talk about the Stockholm +50 Conference and also the Swedish government's priorities regarding the climate, biodiversity as well as the Baltic Sea region. The Stockholm +50 Conference had demonstrated a strong determination from the global community to work together to secure a better future and a healthy planet for all, through the power of multilateralism and inclusive joint action along with system-wide transformation. That was indeed in line with the Conference in Stockholm in 1972. What had happened in Sweden since 1972 had been building a credibility around the world from the Stockholm meeting all those 50 years ago until today. That was something they could and had used. However, that had not come by itself as it had been hard work by many people in Sweden – the civil society, the government and other organisations. The idea to have a new conference had come, as far as he knew, from the Swedish parliament and the parliamentarians here in the Riksdag. Since then, more than a couple of years of hard work had gone by to make that happen. The embassies around the world, the planning committee – many people had done astonishing achievements to make it happen. Especially the former minister of the environment, **Mr Per Bolund**: He and his staff had done the groundwork for this event before the present minister had taken over in December. The result was a big and positive surprise: The interest had been huge; **Mr Grönvall's** wildest dreams had been bringing together 100 countries, but 155 countries had been represented, most of them by their minister of the environment but also with presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers attending. Over 4,000 people had visited the conference. Moreover, the outcome of the conference had been a surprise, he underlined. The message had been clear from the member states and stakeholders alike: Urgent action was needed to bring about transformative change for the well-being of current and future generations, to solve the climate crisis, hold and reverse the biodiversity loss and stop pollution. The final recommendations from the meeting were much more than had been expected. The Swedish media, of course, was not interested in telling that story, he noted, yet all of that could be read online.

Mr Grönvall highlighted bullet point number 3 where it said, promoting the phase-out of fossil fuels. That was really important, that the meeting had resulted in that conclusion. The purpose of Stockholm +50 was to set the world on a credible path towards accelerating the implementation of previous agreed national and interna-



Mr Anders Grönvall, State Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate, Sweden

tional targets. They had to strengthen the multilateral system, enhancing ambition and collaboration and solidarity so as to build trust. That might be the most important aspect about Stockholm +50, building trust among the countries. They had to implement the phase-out of fossil fuels and build nature-positive and circular economies. This would be important in the coming years when they would have new, important meetings to come. The attendees of Stockholm +50 would carry with them the responsibility to stand up for the words spoken at that conference. The Swedish government was looking forward to following up on the Stockholm +50 legacy, not least at the Ocean Conference in Lisbon a couple of weeks later, the Climate COP in Egypt in November and the CBD COP in the fall of the present year. The location had not yet been set, but the event would take place. Moreover, there would be the Future Summit in 2023.

The recommendations from Stockholm +50 reflected a clear determination expressed by the government, civil society, youth society as well as public and private organisations and institutions. The meeting had also demonstrated a desire to assume an intergenerational responsibility. Youths had been included in both the planning process and the implementation of Stockholm +50. A green, inclusive, just and sustainable transition and a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic was the way forward, to ensure that everyone would enjoy the benefits of a healthy planet – women, men, girls, boys alike. It had also been clear that it was necessary to rethink and redefine how to measure economic success and growth. One of the key outcomes from the meeting had been to recognise intergenerational responsibility as a cornerstone in policymaking, including engaging with the Stockholm +50 youth task force.

He further spoke about the Swedish government's priorities in the Baltic Sea region when it came to climate change and mitigation measures. The effects of climate change on the Baltic Sea region were already severe. Climate change was a threat to the forests, the oceans and the seas. The Baltic Sea region and the Baltic Sea were especially sensitive to the changing of the climate. At the same time, the region offered great opportunities for mitigation initiatives. In the last few years, the Baltic forests had suffered greatly from heat, dryness, fires and bark beetle infestation. Sustainable biomass was an important pillar in the energy transition, and the forests should be made more resilient to a changing climate in order to contribute to this effort, even in the future. The Baltic Sea was a fragile environment. Since it was a semi-enclosed area, stress put on the Baltic Sea remained for a long time. It was one of the fastest-warming seas in the world. Increased temperatures had severe negative effects. One was that the water was holding less oxygen. Moreover, the Baltic Sea had been becoming more acidic. The significant impact it had on the ecosystem and also the human activities was negative, such as tourism, fishing and other aspects. At the same time, the Baltic Sea had great potential to contribute to the fight against climate change. Wind turbines, coastal restoration had a significant potential to contribute to reducing emissions. The Swedish government was making it possible to generate 20 – 30 terawatts of wind energy offshore, but a greater potential was available for further planning. Shipping, agriculture, fisheries should also be made sustainable in order to reduce both greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental pressures on the Baltic Sea and its ecosystems. To work in this area, European and international cooperation was essential, **Mr Grönvall** stressed.

Climate change was affecting species, ecosystems, biodiversity. Biodiversity, of course, played a role in reducing the negative effects of climate change. The greatest impact of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea was eutrophication. The vast area of oxygen-depleted seabeds was destructive for the ecosystem, and excessive algal blooms had a negative impact, not only on the ecosystem but on the well-being of millions of citizens around the Baltic Sea. Nutrient loads from land, where agriculture was a major source, therefore had to be reduced considerably. Various other pressures that were harmful to the Baltic Sea came from activities on land. These should also be addressed before reaching the sea. Some examples were pollution from litter, microplastics, pharmaceuticals and other hazardous substances. Fishing activities had a serious negative impact on the marine biodiversity. The absence of large predatory fish in combination with excess nutrient loads made eutrophication worse. The application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries in the Baltic Sea was therefore

important and could be strengthened. Sweden was working on the development of an ecosystem-based management of the ocean resources. The recently updated Baltic Sea Action Plan, the updated programme of measures for the EU Water Framework Directive and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive covered what needed to be done. The management of the action plans to protect and improve the biodiversity in the Baltic Sea was supported by research, data collection and monitoring and therefore confident that the expertise and knowledge needed to do all this was in place. In the spirit of the Stockholm +50 Conference, it was now due time to act according to the comprehensive plans and implement all the necessary measures.

Ms Tenfjord-Toftby thanked **Mr Grönvall** very much for his interesting and fruitful presentation. She opened the floor for questions. In particular, she had noticed that a member from the youth group wished to ask a question. Since they were only observers who usually did not have the right to speak, **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** asked, with the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum just preceding the present Conference, if the attendees would agree to allowing the members of the youth forum ask questions. Nobody was against that. As **Mr Gennaro Migliore** had put in a request to speak, the chair asked if that would be a question or a statement. **Mr Migliore** opted for the latter, so that **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** told him that should wait until after the panel discussion.

Mr Kacper Płazyński mentioned that he was aware he had already taken the floor twice, so he apologised. He wondered why he had not heard anything about the development of nuclear energy. He knew that it was a provocative question, he added.

Mr Kai Mykkänen from Finland was grateful for the interesting presentation from the state secretary. **Mr Mykkänen** noted that they had received a short briefing from the chair of the HELCOM delegation who was presently a German. Russia was going further away from different organisation. With the efforts in tackling environmental challenges in the region in a more general way, he asked what Sweden's plan for the protection of the Baltic Sea projects was if cooperation with Russia would be impossible within HELCOM for the next decade or so. **Mr Mykkänen** wondered how that could be done when cooperation in environmental aspects was necessary although there was not very much ground for working together.

Mr Simon Pāvāls of Åland had a short question about the big trawling ships that were currently fishing herring in the Baltic Sea and the Swedish government's decision to move out the border for

trawling ships. He would like to know if Sweden had any intentions to also try to change the trilateral agreement with Finland and Denmark about the trawling borders.

Mr Grönvall addressed the topic of nuclear power first. In Sweden, there was a lot of electricity. That was why industries were now planning for a green development to produce green steel and a lot of battery factories. So, there was a big change in Sweden with a lot of jobs coming in during this transition. So that was a possibility, but more energy was yet needed, more electric power. Hydro power made up around 30 – 35 % of energy generation. Nuclear power was also important and would remain important, he said. Nevertheless, it was necessary to get more energy fast, and building nuclear power plants took a lot of time. Therefore, Sweden had to focus on things that would go faster. That meant wind energy. But, he pointed out, it was not illegal to start building nuclear power plants in Sweden. If anybody would want to do so, that was within their choice. At the moment, industry was looking at solutions that would earn them more money. Time would change things, though. As energy prices were going up, that might change the prospect of nuclear energy as well. He reiterated that there was no legal prohibition stopping anyone in this respect.

As for HELCOM, he conceded that there was a big problem. **Mr Grönvall** was convinced that the European Union was a strong cooperation to lean on if there was a problem with the HELCOM cooperation. This would have to be discussed by the countries around the Baltic Sea how to move on. He agreed that **Mr Mykkänen** had raised a very important question, but **Mr Grönvall** unfortunately did not have a good answer yet. It was very much important, as was the ISIS Cooperation around the fisheries which needed to be continued.

The trawling ships were not his department, **Mr Grönvall** responded to **Mr Påvals'** inquiry. He tried to answer nonetheless. Expanding the borders was a way of trying to secure the herring in the area. Many things had to be taken into consideration. Moving out the border for trawling was one of many options things that had to be done.

Ms Tenfjord-Toftby thanked **Mr Grönvall** again for his contribution to their session. It was very valuable for them to hear from the Swedish government. She noted that he was free to stay and listen to the rest of the session as she expected him to receive a lot of good information and input from the members which he could take along to his very important work.

At this point, the chair moved on to the panel debate, a discussion on climate change and biodiversity, best practices and initiatives. She was very glad to welcome the panel, beginning with **Ms Inger Melander**. **Ms Melander** was an expert for Fisheries and Markets, representing WWF Sweden, an organisation that was a member of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum. Also with them was **Mr Dennis Hamro-Drotz**, senior programme manager at NEFCO. Furthermore, there were the representatives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, **Mr Andreas Schoop** and **Ms Simona Jakaitė**. **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** welcomed all of them to the podium with her.

The chair went on to remind the attendees that the youth forum had taken place the preceding Saturday. She hoped that, during these discussions, they would be given examples of best practices and concrete initiatives aiming to tackle the effects of climate change and to preserve biodiversity. **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** was also chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity, which had been launched in digital form in August 2020. When the working group had been established, it had been decided that they should focus on their efforts, on the environmental aspect of climate change and biodiversity as well as on innovation, technology and best practices. By acquiring knowledge from experts, learning from each other and by studying best practice examples of successful projects, **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** was convinced that the working group could contribute significantly to this most important task to mitigate and counteract the effects of climate change as well as to preserve biodiversity. The outcome of their work would consist of a number of political recommendations, directed immediately to the government. At this point, she was disappointed to notice that the government representatives had already left. Picking up from before, she said that the outcome would be presented to all the governments in the BSPC member states, and the working group would present its final report in 2023. Usually, that result should have already been presented in the current year, but because of the pandemic, they had not been able to travel to each other's countries and study actual best practices. The group had held one single physical meeting on the Åland Islands in May. That had been a very good one, and they would hold more of them. Before beginning the panel discussion, she offered the panellists the opportunity to give a short presentation of both their organisations as well as some examples of initiatives with the purpose to improve the environment in the sea and on land.

Ms Inger Melander explained that she represented WWF Sweden as well as the entire organisation of WWF, a global conversation organisation, founded in 1961. The Swedish chapter had been

launched in 1971. Across the globe, WWF had approximately 6,000 employees; in Sweden, there were 170. There were more than 5 million supporters. WWF Sweden was based in the Stockholm area. She had been asked to highlight some of the best practices they had in the Baltic ecosystem area. **Ms Melander** stressed that while she was representing the Swedish office, they also had a Baltic ecosystem programme that worked specifically with these questions and this region. They had WWF offices and associated offices that were working with these questions, both in terms of land and the ocean. One project concerned the harbour porpoises. WWF was working in the coastal areas, the archipelago areas; furthermore, they had won the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award for projects trying to limit the nutrient run-off. WWF was also collaborating with Seabirds, a gathering project but also for monitoring of the status of the Baltic Sea. That allowed them to monitor fish stocks, nutrient overloads as well as climate change. The bottom two were the fisheries and a fish that was tricolored, representing the sea food guide in the network. 28 offices had that, and in the Baltic Sea region, they also had the sea food guide. This worked as a consumer guide to help consumers make more sustainable sea food choices but was also important as a governance, advocacy and policy tool to help both the industry but also policymakers and elected officials to make more sustainable decisions when it came to fishery management and ocean management. The overarching aspect for WWF was to work with the most pressing issues at the intersection of nature, people and climate. They were aiming to tackle the threats that they were facing now in the climate crisis but also to restore and conserve wildlife, different habitats, the ecosystems and the ecosystem services that these habitats provided. It was also necessary to remember that they needed to reserve or reduce their global footprint so that they could only consume and produce within the planetary boundaries.

Chairwoman **Tenfjord-Toftby** gave the floor to **Mr Dennis Hamro-Drotz**, representing NEFCO, noting that it was very important to listen to him because discussions in the working group very often came to the topic of financing. **Mr Hamro-Drotz** could give answers on this very subject.

Mr Hamro-Drotz confirmed that he represented NEFCO which he described as the Nordic green bank. In a nutshell, he called himself a tree-hugging banker. He wished to start and finish with his main point. They had many problems to solve related to climate change, eutrophication and biodiversity. They also had many good plans, many good conferences. What was very often lacking afterwards was the financing of the implementation of these plans and

recommendations. NEFCO had been founded by the five Nordic countries in the early 1990s to address the environmental problems in the Baltic Sea. Over the years, they had financed many wastewater treatment plants around the Baltic Sea, a lot of them in the Baltic countries but also in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Their mandate had been expanded over the years. Today, they were financing projects of various sorts globally; all of these projects had a link to Nordic interests, to Nordic small and medium-sized enterprises, but everything that NEFCO financed had a positive effect one way or another on the environment. The Baltic Sea was still one of their focus areas, and NEFCO was doing everything from normal bank loans over equity investments to grant investments. For the past ten years, together with their sister organisation, the Nordic Investment Bank, NEFCO had been fund managers for the Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund. Here, this was a good example of what could be done in the Baltic Sea watershed and what could be done to a greater extent. These days, the fund received financing from the governments of Sweden and Finland. The state secretary had mentioned many topics – everything from eutrophication to microplastics, agriculture, forestry, cleaner fuel for ships etc. All of these topics had been covered in projects receiving financing from the Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund over the years. Every single euro spent that had been provided as a grant through this fund had actually resulted in seven more euros coming in from other sources during the course of implementation of these projects. Today, following the launch of the new Baltic Sea Action Plan by HELCOM, NEFCO was also working with the governments, trying to further strengthen this Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund so as to also be able to provide early stage financing in the future for various types of projects addressing one or several of the environmental problems in the Baltic Sea. **Mr Hamro-Drotz** provided a couple of examples, such as a number of energy efficiency projects, e.g., one related to housing in Ukraine. Coming closer to the Baltic Sea, there were the wastewater treatment plants. More innovative projects were looking into how to use residues from animal husbandry, not only biogas but how to reuse nutrients extant in the waste. He pointed out that the waste was of great value on land but detrimental when it ended up in the waters. One huge problem that still remained in the Baltic Sea was the issue of internal loads: all the nutrients in the sea floor bottom at the moment that were re-released into the water following oxygen depletion. The question was how to address this problem to a greater extent. Some projects financed by NEFCO were looking into this problem. One very concrete example was a project by a Finnish foundation; in most supermarkets in Finland, one could find fish patties made from very low-value fish – in fact, the Finnish term for that translated as “garbage fish” into English. Once fished, though, they had

a very positive effect on the nutrient balance of the Baltic Sea because nutrients had been removed from the sea. A follow-up project was looking at the Swedish market. That was a small but very concrete example. **Mr Hamro-Drotz** noted that he was looking forward to the panel and reiterated his first point, that there was a need to finance the various plans that were being developed. Only that way would they end up with concrete projects addressing all of the issues that had to be solved.

Ms Tenfjord-Toftby thanked him, moved on to – last but not least – the two representatives from the youth forum. She knew that they had been working very hard as the chairwoman had joined the forum on Saturday. However, she was also aware that the young people had been working all of Sunday to be able to present the recommendations that they had chosen to prioritise. The chairwoman gave the two of them the floor.

Mr Andreas Schoop introduced himself as coming from Potsdam in Brandenburg, Germany. **Ms Simona Jakaitė** said she was from Lithuania. **Mr Schoop** went on to explain that they had the honour of presenting the final recommendations they had collected in their two days of work. These would also be distributed as paper copies. **Ms Jakaitė** reiterated that for the past two days, Saturday and Sunday, sixty young people had had the opportunity to talk and discuss and agree together on what they wanted to be their core recommendations, what they were asking the BSPC to include and to be implemented in the foreseeable future. In two days, that had been a very hard task because climate change was a very broad topic. Putting that into four topics, with two recommendations per topic, was quite challenging. She hoped that they had narrowed everything down to be quite clear. **Mr Schoop** added that fifteen youth organisations all around the Baltic Sea had been represented; the attendees of the youth forum were Baltic Sea youth leaders. He said this was an important aspect to consider for any further discussion in the parliamentary forum. There had been four roundtable discussions with their most important topics at the moment.

Mr Schoop began with the first one, on forests, wetlands and biodiversity. For every topic, there were two recommendations. The first in this field was that the youths wanted the parliamentarians to commit to protecting biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration with common and national policy for conservation of forests, wetlands and natural rivers; forestry free from clear-cutting; and the restoration of forests and natural moors and natural floodplains. Moors were very important because they could help the climate a lot by capturing more carbon in order to slow down climate change.

Secondly, they recommended the development and adoption of regional strategies to deal with transboundary emergencies caused by climate change, such as forest fires and the spread of pathogens. The strategies should also include research into the causes of these emergencies. There should also be cooperation between rescue services and common monitoring programmes to indicate the risks. Moving on to the second field, innovation, the first recommendation asked the parliamentarians to fulfil the Paris Agreement by phasing out fossil fuels and investing more in renewable energy sources. He believed this was more urgent than ever, pointing to the preceding debate. The second recommendation was to support businesses in their transformation to a circular practice by harmonising national legislation based on scientific research.

Ms Jakaitė picked up the topic of life in resilient cities. They had spoken for a better, greener, cheaper and healthier system of transport which would be accessible not only in the city centre but all around the urban area. There should be more car-free zones and more space for bikes and pedestrians. At the same time, the youths were calling for diverse cities, with every group including the youths being represented in the future planning of the cities. Moving on to the sea and coastline resilience, the young people were calling for legally binding quotas for fishing, in particular such diversified by species and mentioning different methods for fishing, including what kinds of nets were permitted to be used. At the same time, the youths very much hoped for means of fighting against pollution by regulating and reducing single-use plastics, investing in greener shipping, removing munitions and military remains from the sea – as had already been mentioned on this day –, preventing agricultural waste before reaching the waters and perhaps even unifying the bottle deposit system in the Baltic Sea region. Finally, **Ms Jakaitė** said that the young people wanted to thank the BSPC for being able to take part in this panel. She repeated that agreeing on only eight recommendations had been very, very hard, and they had quite a lot more to say. She invited the parliamentarians to chat with the young representatives to obtain more views from the youth perspective.

Chairwoman **Tenfjord-Toftby** said that the parliamentarians were very impressed by the young people's hard work. Before opening the floor for questions, she invited **Mr Gennaro Migliore** to take the floor for his statement. She asked him to keep his presentation short, down to two minutes.

Mr Migliore thanked the chairwoman for this opportunity. It had been very interesting to see the commitment of the young people.

That was very important to him in particular. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean also had a youth platform that he hoped could collaborate with that of the Baltic Sea region. He wanted to stress some points: First of all, the Mediterranean region was the region most affected by climate change in the world. It was the real hotspot for these effects. For that reason, the PAM was so interested in developing the blue economy and to preserve the more than 70,000 marine species especially in the Mediterranean, of which 20 – 30 % were endemic, representing the highest rate of endemic species in the world. Secondly, the effects of the Russian aggression on climate change trends should also be taken into account. Specifically, this concerned the food supply and the people that needed energy. He imagined it was so important to embrace fully the UN Secretary General's recommendation and call for urgent climate action as delivered at the Stockholm +50 event. However, he wanted to finish with the proposal that his side had made in the last month: They had been working on establishing, in their parliaments, a new Mediterranean and Gulf Economic Community for Renewable Energy. A lot of countries were relying on fossil sources, but renewable energies were required. In order to both help their countries phase out Russian fossil fuels while contributing to the regional transition, the PAM would also organise the first ever Euro-Mediterranean Economic Forum to take place in Tangiers in early December 2022. **Mr Migliore** invited the parliamentarians to attend this forum that would be hosted by the parliament of Morocco. At the event, the environmental and energy issues would surely constitute a key element of debate. To conclude, **Mr Migliore** insisted that the world could simply not afford a further delay. They had to think globally and act locally, as someone had said, and they had to collaborate.

Chairwoman **Tenford-Toftby** opened the floor for questions.

Mr Kacper Płażyński wished to talk once again about energy sources. As **Mr Migliore** had said, of course, renewable energies were also something that Poland was investing in. For example, in the following year, they would be starting a great investment in wind farms on the Baltic shore. That would be huge, producing about 10 gigawatts of energy built in about one decade. He addressed his listeners, in particular the young people because he had not seen nuclear energy in what they had proposed. Yet he called on them to remember that for solar energy, the sun was not always shining. Sometimes, it was raining. Wind was not always blowing. That was unstable energy. The European Union needed an economy with a stable source of energy, and there were only two: coal and nuclear power stations. All of them knew that, he claimed.

More and more politicians – of which he was glad – were admitting that, he said, sometimes in the corridors or even officially, as the minister of the environment of the Swedish government admitted that nuclear power stations were needed because there was no other way to have a competitive economy and to have a zero-emission economy. That was the terrible or beautiful truth, and he believed all of them needed to make all the effort to build not only a competitive, zero-emission economy. If they wanted to help Ukraine, for example, they also needed an independent economy and independent energy sources. They were able to do that with nuclear power stations. He mentioned that some countries were planning to build, e.g., gas hubs in Europe. He told them to remember another way in which they did not need to sacrifice their European values by buying gas from Russia or at high prices from the United States of America or any other different direction. That was the extent of his speech, he said, only to add that during the group on biodiversity and climate change, they had all agreed to put in writing the words of “promoting development of zero-emission sources of energy” which included renewable energies and nuclear power stations.

Mr Kai Mykkänen thanked the representatives of the youth panel, noting that it had been interesting to see in what organised fashion they had been able to tackle the challenges arising from the propositions. He wanted to stress that from the Finnish perspective in particular, he could not talk too much about the eutrophication problem which could be seen very concretely in their very large archipelago area. There were thousands of islands between Åland and Finland. In Finland, there had been a renovation fund, CITRA, that had produced a report on the economic benefits of the circular economy. By far, the largest effects of the circular economy that could be found was that if they could manage to circulate the nutrients within the Finnish economy rather than waste it in the sea, that would create a great deal of tourism for the archipelagos and thus represent the greatest benefit of the circular economy. **Mr Mykkänen** noted that **Mr Hamro-Drotz** of NEFCO had been mentioning the financing opportunities with regard to the circular economy of nutrients. In that light, he asked if NEFCO was already looking at projects of this kind. He noted that there were a couple of start-up companies that were piloting some of the technologies required to retrieve some of these nutrients from the sea – not only by fishing but by collecting algal blooms through robotic vessels. In summer, a lot of algae were growing visibly on the water. These harvested algae could then be used in chemistry or the cosmetic industry and the like. On the other hand, looking to the land, the problem was basically quite limited geographically to certain wastes from the

chicken and pig industry near the Turku region. There would be the need to invest, **Mr Mykkänen** noted, in bio reactors which would then take care of this waste both as biogas and as fertilisers. As such, he asked if NEFCO was active in this field and whether they could together increase the efforts to make the circular nutrient economy functional at least within Finland. The largest problem was concerned with the archipelago and shallow waters for them, but he conceded that the challenge was faced by the entire Baltic Sea region.

Prof Jānis Vucāns of Latvia noted that he had the chance and honour the day before to chair one of the panels of the youth forum, specifically on the topic of resilient cities. To his mind, this topic needed to be on the table of the BSPPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity as well. It was very important and very interesting. That was the first item he wished to speak about. If they were looking at the most resilient cities, there were a lot of definitions. To his mind, the best was that resilient cities were those which aggressively and practically planned and designed strategies that would help them develop the necessary capacity to meet tomorrow's challenges, including shocks and stresses to their infrastructure systems. Those cities needed to look at ways to become more self-sufficient and energy-efficient. Central to urban planning was the ability to facilitate the development of greater capacity for futureproofing. Therefore, if they were speaking about such issues as sustainability, they always had to take into account efficiency as well as the aspect of what resources were available. In that regard, **Mr Vucāns** felt provoked by **Mr Płażyński** because the Polish MP had spoken about the stability of the energy supply. This was an issue that the Baltic Assembly was working on in their economy and energy committee. During the previous years, due to fossil energy deficit from Russia, they had begun looking into new possibilities, how to obtain a stable energy supply, both for heating and for electricity. On the basis of the Baltic Assembly's contacts with the Benelux parliament, they had come to the solution of hydrogen. The hydrogen solution as of this day was still very expensive. Year by year, though, it was developing and becoming cheaper and cheaper. Therefore, hydrogen meant possibilities to have a storage system for wind and solar energy. Prof Vucāns conceded that the wind was not always blowing, and the sun was not shining at night, so the main question was not just how to produce energy but rather how to store it. Accordingly, he believed that the Baltic-Nordic region needed to focus on this issue of storing energy. Hydrogen was one of the options but not the only one. This was a task for their cooperation and their future activities, in his mind.

Chairwoman **Tenfjord-Toftby** thanked the speakers for their contributions and turned to the panel. She wondered if the panellists wished to reflect on some of what they had heard.

Ms Jakaitė wished to respond to the statement about nuclear energy not being included in the recommendations. She believed the young people would need several years before they would agree. With their different viewpoints, it was impossible to agree on something like this in so short an amount of time, considering nuclear power was such a high-stakes matter.

Mr Schoop added that, in general, the young people were a little bit more sceptical towards nuclear power because there was a short-term use of electricity, but nuclear waste would last for millions of years. One had to think of the generations to come and what would happen with this waste. A solution had to be found for that. There were so many difficult questions in this regard. On top of that, storing nuclear waste was very expensive. So, it was not just a matter of saying “Make Nuclear Power Great Again”. There had been a lot of debate on this topic in politics. **Mr Schoop** stated that they had to be sceptical about this matter.

In addition to the question from **Mr Mykkänen** to **Mr Hamro-Drotz**, **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** asked the NEFCO representative about which best practices or best investments he could present to the Conference at this point. The working group was very interested in what **Mr Hamro-Drotz** considered crucial. As a follow-up, she noted that more people than just **Mr Mykkänen** wanted to get in touch with him, so **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** asked him to tell them the contact information to get investments for these very important climate and biodiversity investments.

Mr Hamro-Drotz thanked her for starting with the very easy question of getting in touch. He pointed out NEFCO’s website which listed his name and contact information. He was the fund manager for the Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund. Otherwise, he invited parliamentarians to speak to him in the further course of the day. He also asked **Mr Mykkänen** for his good and relevant question. Starting with the bigger picture, for the Baltic Sea, many of the problems were transboundary in nature. As they all knew about climate change, that made them more difficult to solve because most countries – including parliamentarians – were not necessarily that eager to give money to projects that would spend it outside their national borders. These problems, though, were indeed transboundary and needed to be solved internationally – or at least in cooperation with one’s neighbours. That was a challenge. There was indeed a reluc-

tance to finance projects with state funds that were used outside national borders.

Mr Hamro-Drotz moved towards the concrete question about the circular economy as well as circulating nutrients. His personal opinion was that there was very little need to import any more nutrients, such as chemical fertilisers, to other countries. Instead, one could and should better use what was already there. There was an excess of nutrients flowing out through their waters in all of their countries. There was no need to point the finger of blame at any one country. All nations had an excess of nutrients flowing out. Taking Finland as an example, within their archipelago, a large part of the problem was due to nutrients flowing out from their own fields and forests. The question then was how to better collect these nutrients – or even better, to keep them in the fields before ending up in the rivers. There were some novel technologies experimenting with this approach. A growing trend of regenerative agriculture was present, meaning a return to how land had been farmed previously – circulating crops, having larger buffer zones, trying to tie nutrients to the soil with a minimum amount of tilling, for example leaving the fields green throughout the year. Forestry was another target. He used Finland as an example again. Forests and peatlands were being transformed into fields, partly to make room for places where wastes from animal husbandry could be spread – creating a lot of excess nutrients heading for the watersheds. He liked the examples by **Mr Mykkänen**, such as collecting algae from the water. He had heard about some of these projects. For NEFCO's part, they did finance Nordic SMEs and start-ups but mainly projects that were of an international nature. So, they were situated outside the Nordic countries. Here, NEFCO was in discussion with their owners – the Nordic countries – to also start having more projects within the Nordic countries. For larger bio-refineries and the like, there was the Nordic Investment Bank that could provide that type of funding. The Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund that he had mentioned already allowed for very good opportunities for such early pilot projects. Here, they could finance projects in the Nordic countries as well as all of the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. This was a good example of the problem that he had raised in the beginning, that the challenges were of a transboundary nature and therefore required financing options such as the Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund that could finance these good projects, no matter where they were located. However, he noted that he had been speaking for a long time and would be happy to continue this discussion at a later point.

Chairwoman **Tenford-Toftby** addressed **Ms Inger Melander**, noting that she was representing not just herself but all NGOs. The chairwoman wondered what, from **Ms Melander's** point of view,

was the most urgent action that policymakers could make and prioritise. She knew how hard it was to prioritise, hoping for some good advice from the WWF representative on the way.

Ms Melander pointed out that she was working with fisheries and marine conservation, but the aspect wished to raise extended to all terrestrial fields. It was necessary to implement everything that had been written down in the legislation and the various conventions. The CBD had been mentioned as well as the SDGs – 14 for the oceans –, the Marine Framework Directive, the Habitat Directive – all of these documents were stating the same thing. It was known what had to be done, the scientific research underpinning it was already in place. None of this was novel, all of it had been known for ages. In order to get things done in the Baltic Sea region, they required an ecosystem-based management approach. They also needed to apply the precautionary approach rather than waiting for more research to appear. As she had just said, it was already known what was going on. The ecosystem-based approach was crucial both for fisheries management and ocean management.

Ms Tenfjord-Toftby thanked her, mentioning that it sounded so easy when **Ms Melander** was saying it. She mentioned the discussion that kept cropping up in the working group, namely, how to get the people to work with them. Many of the best practices that they had seen had been at the local level, in the local communities. In order to make environmental projects in the Baltic Sea region successful, the whole society needed to be a part of it, from governments down to the local areas and the local farmers and inhabitants. **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** wondered how one could succeed in that. She said she could ask this question of all of them but addressed her inquiry to **Ms Melander**, how to get people to work with them. If they did not, they would not succeed.

Ms Melander reiterated that one had to make sure the measures were implemented. It should not be made about individual citizens. This was something for which there were elected officials. That was what democracy was for. The people had elected officials to do these things and to make sure that legislation was implemented. She could do lots of things as a private citizen, such as being careful about what to consume – whether that was beef or sea food – or recycling. Once again, if there was no proper implementation or control, monitoring, then it did not really matter what the individual person wanted to do. It was all good having these best practices and projects, but if the policymakers and decisionmakers were not on board – who might only be there for a short period of time, so implementation might not be that important for them. She believed

that this matter was above the little people, it was up to the decisionmakers.

Mr Hamro-Drotz said that one key reflection or recommendation of his was based on his previous work on both climate change-related projects as well as Baltic Sea-related projects. That recommendation was that it seemed to be much more difficult to find financially viable projects related to the problems in the Baltic Sea. Banks and also private capital went to projects that were bankable, meaning that eventually, they would be able to stand on their own feet financially. That seemed to be much more difficult in a Baltic Sea perspective, related to climate change, when there already was a good business case with renewable energy and the like. His point was that there was a need for legislation to force the way in a certain direction, and there was a need for soft money – or grant financing or cheap loans – to get the ball rolling. Solving these problems in the Baltic Sea – including the new technologies that had been mentioned – would take quite a lot of money as well as time before these projects would become financially viable. Only at that point would they start attracting private capital. That was a greater problem from the Baltic Sea perspective rather than the climate change perspective.

Ms Tenfjord-Toftby addressed the representatives of the Youth Forum. One of the members of the forum had called himself an activist. In many ways, the youth representatives were in a way, and many of the attendees were hoping that they would be taking the step from being activists to being politicians. She wondered, from their point of view, how they could get everybody to realise what **Ms Melander** had said about legislation. Even with legislation, **Ms Tenfjord-Toftby** pointed out that people could still oppose such measures. An example was wind power. When people were opposed to something, it was very difficult to get the development to go in the right direction. The chairwoman asked the youths to take on the roles of activist and politician in saying what was the most urgent legislative step to pursue.

Mr Schoop noted that this was a tough question. In the end, he believed that now was the time to act, and they had big ideas. One should not look at the past but develop new ideas. He allowed that talking about matters was also important, noting that his colleague and he were both involved in the Baltic Sea Youth Platform of the CBSS. They were meeting regularly there every two weeks to discuss Baltic Sea policies. It was really important to talk and find ideas so as to go forward. For him, a crucial matter at the moment was the matter of dumped ammunitions. All the technologies had been

developed, all the necessary knowledge was in place, but the political will – as well as the budget – was now needed. He pointed out that the German presidency of the BSPC would also focus on this matter. That was very much a matter that would have to be done in the next period.

Ms Jakaitė added that involving everybody was tricky. Basically, that was a matter of marketing for climate change. And for that, target groups were needed. It was very hard to devise one campaign for all people. If talking about the younger generation, she believed it very important to speak about education. While their minds were growing, they were shaping the view of the world, and they could actually shape it the way it would be beneficial for future generations to come.

Chairwoman **Tenfjord-Toftby** opened the floor for questions.

An attendee assured her that he had very concrete questions for all of the participants. It was a kind of philosophical one, wondering whether young people were creators or destroyers of a green future.

Ms Melander replied that she had seen a quote in that regard, that they were actually the creators of their own demise. They had all this knowledge and all this technology, but they were not using it the correct way. Another quote applicable to the Baltic Sea region was that one could not negotiate the melting point of ice, and the same went for nature. They were beyond the negotiation period concerning nature. She was pessimistic and presently considered humanity to be the destroyers, yet they had the power and the possibility to be creators if they chose wisely.

Mr Hamro-Drotz was grateful for the thought-provoking question. It was his view that humanity was still the destroyer but doing so at a slower pace than previously. Using the Baltic Sea as an example, the actual flow of nutrients into the waters had been reduced drastically since the 1980s. He added the positive remark that they were going in the right direction but still heading downward at the moment, so they needed to turn the curve upwards and be bolder in making the right choices before being forced into them.

Ms Jakaitė said that the young people would be the creators of a green future.

Another attendee asked about biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, especially connected to fisheries. He agreed completely with **Ms Melander** that hands-on action was needed and that most of the prob-

lems were well known among the people living nearby. In particular, he was speaking about large-scale trawling on spawning spring herring in the Baltic Sea and the effects of that. It was well known that the Baltic herring had an important role in the function of the food chain and the habitats of the ocean, both as prey and predator. He would like to hear the panel's remarks on the future effects of this type of fishing in sensitive habitats and on biodiversity as well as the social and economic development of coastal societies.

Ms Tenfjord-Toftby noted the plethora of crises facing the world at the moment, such as the war in Ukraine in addition to the pandemic coming on top of climate change. As such, she wondered how to keep the focus on their goal of mitigating climate change and biodiversity in these times of unrest and conflicts and economic decline. Humorously, she added that this was a very small question to end this panel debate on.

Ms Melander replied to the question from the audience. Considering sustainability with regard to social issues and economics. Ecological sustainability was the foundation for both the social and the financial sustainability. With regards to the herring, that was a bigger issue than just monitoring the respective fish stocks. To begin with, an ecosystem-based approach was needed. Currently, the quote advice from ISIS was only given for the target species, so they were not looking at the different structures of the population, such as size and age. That had to be put in place as well. The Swedish government was looking into expanding the trawler ban out to twelve nautical miles in order to try to mitigate the effects on the herring stock and also thus improving the food chain, primarily for the cod. There was a huge imbalance in that respect in the Baltic Sea. There were the industrial fisheries, the large pelagic trawlers. She underlined that it did not really matter who was conducting the fishing, but it had to be made sure that anyone using the fish was conducting sustainable fishing practices. That could be the quotas or a tax, or one could look at where the fishing was taking place, whether more MPAs were needed, more integrated systems. Moreover, she underlined again the need for an ecosystem-based approach, not just looking at the species you were interested in but also how this fishery was affecting other habitats, the bottom and different other species.

As for the question by the chairwoman on how to keep focus on the mitigating efforts in these harsh times, **Ms Melander** said one should remain hopeful. She conceded that it was sometimes quite hard to keep working with these issues and stay hopeful and positive, thinking that it would all work out. However, she was always

like a broken record, saying that an ecosystem-based approach was needed for the fisheries and ocean management.

Mr Hamro-Drotz believed that humans were a bit flawed in the way they thought. They would have to change that. The war in Ukraine and the pandemic had shown that – once these had happened – people would find means as well as the financing to at least try to solve them. All of this would have been much cheaper if that had been prevented. Prevention was much cheaper than reaction, but it was much harder if not impossible to finance. This was his suggestion – to change the way that people thought and prevent these things from escalating before it was too late.

Chairwoman **Tenford-Toftby** noted that the last words for this session would come from the young people, asking them to give the Conference something positive to go home with.

Mr Schoop agreed on the financing. Waiting for a catastrophe to happen was a lot more expensive than acting right now. As a personal example, he mentioned that his parents had built a zero-emission house the year before, and now they were safe from the rising fuel and electricity prices. So, that approach also worked at the small scale. As for ending words, he said that he was hoping that all of the parliamentarians were eager to work with the young people, underlining the importance of talking about matters of importance. He further hoped that the parliamentarians would incorporate young people's ideas into their work but also reach out to the youths when the former were in the policymaking process. The young people were keen to help in that matter as well.

Ms Jakaitė agreed, noting that together, they could get a little more creative on the prevention measures to avoid the harshest costs.

Chairwoman **Tenford-Toftby** thanked the young people for the last words of this panel. She asked the audience to applaud the panellists. With that, she concluded the third session.

FOURTH SESSION

Demographic Challenges in Light of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine; Migration, Labour Market and the Social Welfare Model



Ms Carola Veit

Session Chair **Carola Veit** cordially welcomed everyone to the fourth session of the 31st BSPC and introduced her co-chair, **Mr Hans Wallmark**, adding that both of them were BSPC Rapporteurs on Migration and Integration. **Mr Wallmark** had been chair, **Ms Veit** co-chair of the respective BSPC working group in which they had intensively dealt with the migration issue from 2017 to 2019. She explained that the core issue – labour markets, migration and social welfare – was very much affecting all of them in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Given its dimension, this raised a number of questions and challenges to which answers had to be found even though many measures had already been taken very fast and in admirable manner on the EU level and in many countries. At its meeting in April, the BSPC Standing Committee had dealt intensively with the issue of migration from Ukraine to Poland, a process still unfolding, with many aspects yet unknown. **Professor Paweł Kaczmarczyk**, Director of the Centre of Migration Research, Poland, had presented the whole dimension of the issue, including its development so far. The BSPC had reported that in detail on our

website, **Ms Veit** noted, adding that it was very much worth reading it. The current situation had intensified challenges that the countries of the Baltic Sea had already been facing: first of all, housing, but also education, child and health care, the labour market and the attitudes towards newcomers. Systemic and massive interventions had been necessary. The EU and the individual member states, in their different ways, – as already mentioned – had reacted quickly and comprehensively.

Chairwoman Veit voiced her deep appreciation that **Ms Ylva Johansson**, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, would be speaking to the Conference today on this issue. This would be followed by **Ms Justina Jakštienė**, the Vice-Minister for Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. She would discuss the issue in more detail from the Lithuanian perspective and with regard to the measures taken there. The third speaker of this session would be **Professor Maciej Duszczyk** from the Centre for Migration Research, University of Warsaw. His presentation and speech would be an ideal complement to the one by **Professor Paweł Kaczmarczyk** in Warsaw, the chairwoman noted.

Ms Veit noted that the speeches would start with **Ms Ylva Johansson**, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs. The BSPC were very eager to learn more about the European response to those fleeing the war in Ukraine and the 10-Point Plan for stronger European coordination on welcoming those people.

Speech by Ms Ylva Johansson, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs

Ms Johansson was happy to address the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference but also to be in the Swedish parliament. She had been an elected member of this parliament for the first time in 1988, so this was a homecoming for her. For most Europeans, Russia's invasion of Ukraine had taken them by surprise. **Ms Johansson** pointed out that that had been less so in the Baltic region. They had lived in the shadow of a large and aggressive neighbour for many years, even though they had not really been prepared for this invasion and war. The lessons of oppression were still alive in this region. Europe's response was also a surprise to many, she believed. The European Union had responded quickly, with unity, with strong actions, with solidarity. That had surprised Putin. To be honest, she added, it had also surprised many politicians in the EU, seeing that they were able to actually act as they had done and as they were doing. They had agreed on comprehensive sanctions. They were welcoming refugees from Ukraine. This warm welcome of refugees from Ukraine, she



Ms Ylva Johansson, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs

added, made her proud to be a European. Only a few days after the war had started, **Ms Johansson** had been at the border in Romania, she had visited Slovakia, Poland and later Moldova. She had seen in practice how people were coming and how people were welcomed. There had been so many ordinary citizens that had worked as volunteers, so many NGOs, the local authorities, all the border guards that had been working extra time without pay. Everybody had really stepped up. The speaker remembered asking one of the volunteers in Romania why they were doing this, why they had decided to come here and support the refugees. The volunteer had answered that they were human beings after all. **Ms Johansson** opined that this was very true. This had been seen all over Europe. As just one example from Sweden, she mentioned a man called Rolf and his daughter who had welcomed a single father from Ukraine with five children. These were living in that home now. This father had been allowed to leave Ukraine because he was the sole carer of these children. **Ms Johansson** reiterated that this had been repeated in so many places. Ordinary citizens had opened up their homes to welcome a single person or a whole family to support them. And they had been doing that month after month. Of course, that came with a lot of challenges; she hoped that this issue could be discussed even further.

The Europeans had also acted in solidarity with the refugees as a union. The war had broken out on a Thursday morning. On Sunday, the EU had held an extraordinary Council session with the ministers of the interior. At the meeting, they had discussed the situation, and **Ms Johansson** had proposed they should activate the Temporary Protection Directive. After that, there had been another extraordinary Council session on Thursday, one week after the war

had broken out. There, all the ministers had agreed – unanimously – to activate the Temporary Protection Directive. The speaker underlined that this had been a unique situation. As her audience was aware, migration had been a divisive topic, especially in the Council. Furthermore, this directive had been in existence for more than 20 years. Yet, it had never ever been used because of political difficulties in the Council. Now, though, it had been activated, and that had meant that all the people fleeing from Ukraine had been welcome and had been given rights – the same in all the member states. They had the protection right, the right to stay, legally, but also the right for children to go to school, the right to healthcare, the right for support on housing and to find a job, the right to work, and they had also been granted the right for social support. The speaker saw this a historic decision that the EU had managed to activate this directive.

At the same time, this decision had brought about new challenges. She gave one of those as an example, noting that she had spoken to the Council the year before when the trafficking of human beings had been on the agenda. This had been one of the concerns from the very first day of the war. Everyone assembled in this hall knew that every time there were big flows of refugees moving, there would always be those criminals trying to take advantage of the situation and traffic people and use vulnerable people in a vulnerable situation. Even in the first week of the war, the EU had activated everything to protect refugees from trafficking. The EU anti-trafficking coordinator had started her network, all the anti-trafficking coordinators in all the member states had done the same, a special task force in Europol had been put together; now, the EU had also adopted a new extraordinary anti-trafficking action plan that was part of the 10-point plan to address the Ukrainian refugee situation. So far, there had been very few confirmed cases of trafficking, **Ms Johansson** pointed out. Of course, she was aware that there might be more that had not been discovered yet. But she also hoped that the quick and firm actions of the EU had prevented some of the people from becoming victims of trafficking. The speaker said that, especially around the Baltic Sea, there had been huge solidarity. The EU was keeping an index of all the member states where the Ukrainian refugees currently resided. That was compared with the size of the country or the population. She pointed out that Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania were among the top six countries in Europe receiving Ukrainian refugees. That was really impressive. **Ms Johansson** added that they very much needed to support this even more, noting that **Ms Justina Jakštienė** would be speaking about what this looked like in practice in a member state. What the European side was also doing was that they were launching an initiative

called Safe Homes to support and manage all those who were now opening their homes to refugees. These people needed help because there was a kind of fatigue setting in. It was important to step up and have a response on the part of the society to support these people. **Ms Johansson** would launch this Safe Homes initiative in the following week.

The EU was also stepping up letting children into the schools. So far, there had been around four hundred thousand Ukrainian children in the member states going to school. Almost two hundred thousand were already going to school every day in Poland; one hundred and thirty thousand were in German schools. She believed this to be of the utmost importance. This was part of having some normality for these children in a situation where nothing was normal for them. Of course, the children were also very worried about the situation. The EU was also helping in getting jobs for people. They had set up a special talent pool pilot scheme to match the refugees' skills with employers' needs at the European level as well. **Ms Johansson** went on to provide some figures on where they were at this point. Around 6.5 million refugees had entered the European Union since the war had broken out. She repeated that number for emphasis. Most of them had done so via Poland but also more than 1 million from Romania, Moldova as well as other parts. Around 2.5 million had gone back to Ukraine. That meant that approximately 4 million refugees still resided in the European Union. That represented the biggest refugee crisis since World War II. She added that at the borders at this point, there were more people going back to Ukraine than entering the European Union – perhaps, though, it was a little more equal. That was the current situation. Out of those approximately 4 million people in the EU, some 3.2 million had applied for temporary protection. The EU had now set up – in record time – a registration platform so that all of them could be registered on the same EU platform. That meant that the EU would know where people were but also avoid them being double-registered, thus also avoiding abuse of the system. She hoped they would soon have a more correct figure of how many people actually were in the EU. After all, the refugees also needed to apply for temporary protection to be able to stay. One of the big things they had achieved was having set up a solidarity platform. That had been launched in the first week of the war. This solidarity platform met twice a week, consisting of all the member states and the Commission and agencies. It moreover had different sub-groups. Thus, the EU was working the solidarity in practice on an every-day basis. Within this solidarity platform, they were dealing with issues such as a lot of children with disabilities – more than could be handled in some regions or countries, thus looking at whether other nations could step in to

offer support. There were also special challenges with raped women who needed special support; the same as before applied here, namely, looking if others could step in to help those regions that could not provide adequate support. These kinds of practical things were handled within the solidarity platform. In addition, the EU had also stepped up financially, having used the EU funds as flexibly as possible – and quite rapidly, she added. They had put forth one billion euros from the Care Package. Ten member states had already reprogrammed their cohesion funds to use these, including Germany and Poland. More would follow in her view. There were 3.5 billion euros in the pre-financing from the React EU, an additional four hundred million euros from funds and emergency systems. In addition, some flexibility had also been established in how to use this money, so that it could be used per head of refugees, rather than as set out in the normal programmes. Some of the funds were also using paper results rather than receipts. Thus, member states could show what they were doing with the money.

In conclusion, **Ms Johansson** said she was looking forward to hearing more practical things from Lithuania and how they were dealing with the challenges on the ground. Furthermore, in this situation of the biggest refugee crisis since World War II, she pointed out that she had presented a new Pact on Migration and Asylum for the European Union almost two years earlier. For that long, they had been negotiated that. The preceding Friday, they had actually managed to get an agreement on three important parts of this solidarity Pact on Migration and Asylum. That also showed that member states were now ready to really set up a true European system to deal with migration and asylum. That, she underscored, was very much needed. **Ms Johansson** cautioned her listeners that this was not over yet. Putin was fighting a war of attrition; Russian artillery was destroying Ukrainian cities house by house, street by street, school by school. It was necessary to turn into practical reality the rights and protection given to the Ukrainian refugees. They had the right to temporary protection, but now that had to be turned into schools and housing and jobs in the member states. Of course, it was a huge challenge to deal with that. It was necessary to work together and to share burdens together. Demanding of Europeans not only unity and solidarity but also persistence, endurance, perseverance, **Ms Johansson** was convinced they could rise to this challenge. They could build on strong foundations and a heartfelt solidarity with Ukraine. The EU was also currently setting up the reconstruction plan from Rebuild Ukraine to prepare for the time when they could actually start rebuilding Ukraine and to give all the support that was needed.

Chairwoman Veit thanked **Ms Johansson** for her presentation. She opened the floor for comments or questions.

Mr Kai Mykkänen very much appreciated **Ms Johansson's** work in the Commission and fondly remembered some conversations between them when he had briefly been Minister of the Interior of Finland. She had given him some good notes on how to deal with migration in those days. He was wondering whether the Commission already had some preliminary guesses how many people from Ukraine were about to stay for about five to ten years. He conceded that nobody knew how the war would end, but usually in this kind of conflict, it took a long time before reconstruction was ongoing. As such, he asked what kind of special measures there were to make sure the refugees would integrate well. Moreover, he asked for a short comment on a matter currently tackled in Finland. **Mr Mykkänen** had just spoken with his social-democratic colleague how they were dealing with the emergency legislation regarding the possible situation if Russia would do something similar to what they had done to Belarus in the preceding autumn. The question here was how to send a clear message – also legally – early enough not to be part of such an operation. He thought that it would be a poor choice to first give the impression that one can freely come but then renege on that, so that people would be stuck between the borders. It would be better to say clearly if there was an emergency situation, then things could be cut down for a while.

Mr Johannes Schraps thanked the Commissioner for her very important contribution to the BSPC Conference. He wanted to thank her for the words she had found. In particular, he underlined that it was very important to think beyond the borders of the European Union in their solidarity. In the BSPC, they were used to this, having members that were not members of the EU. But especially as the Rapporteur responsible for the eastern partnership countries and as chair of the German-Moldovan forum, **Mr Schraps** was very happy to hear that **Ms Johansson** had been to Moldova. He had been in the country in the previous week as well. Comparing the population of Moldova with those of other countries, that nation had the highest influx of people seeking shelter. The country needed support from the European Union as well. For that reason, he saw it as very necessary that their solidarity went beyond the EU borders.

Mr Kacper Płażyński said that Poland was in a dire situation, considering the number of four million refugees from Ukraine – he emphasised that they were real refugees. About half of them were staying in Poland. Poland was very hospitable. The nation had opened their homes and hearts, but that cost a lot. Approximately

until the end of the present year, in the Polish budget, there would be at least 20 billion zlotys or about 5 billion euros. He reiterated that this was a minimum expectation. On the other hand, the funds that the European Commission had granted to Poland was about 144 million euros, from the migration fund. The other amounts were from different chapters of the programmes that were actually granted to Poland earlier, to his best knowledge. On yet another hand, there was for example this crisis which had started seven years earlier. This concerned migrants – some of them were also refugees – coming from Africa especially and had stayed in large numbers, also in Turkey. The European Union was paying huge sums – billions of euros – to Turkey to create refugee camps on their territory and the like. When comparing the help that the European Union was giving to a country outside the EU to that given to Poland which was avant-garde in helping Ukrainian real refugees, his side felt a little bit disappointed. Voicing his hope in addressing the Commissioner, he asked **Ms Johansson** for some words of comfort saying that the amount of help would be much larger and that he could go back to Poland to say that **Ms Johansson** had confirmed there would be better money. He added that Poland would help Ukrainians as long as was necessary, but they would very much appreciate serious help from their friendship in the European Commission.

Ms Johansson first answered the question about how many people were going to stay in Europe. Nobody knew, of course. Usually, refugees wanted to go back, but usually, they didn't. That was the normal situation. The present one was a little bit different, as a matter of fact. The usual refugee situation was that a male came first, got asylum, and then, the women and children followed him. Now, things were going the opposite way around. Moreover, the arrivals had received their right to stay immediately, thanks to the temporary protection. Actually, they saw a lot of people in a circular movement. They were going back for a while to Ukraine, then they were returning to the European Union before travelling to Ukraine again. This was happening in some of the border regions quite frequently. The refugees went back, checked their houses and relatives. As such, the Commission had no idea how many people would stay. An important aspect would be when schools were starting up after the summer break. All those that had children would have to decide whether the children should start attending school in a member state or back in Ukraine. That would be a decisive moment for quite a number of people, affecting where they would like to be for the coming year at least. In addition, they would know quite a bit more with better registration in place. There was quite a difference between 4 million and 3.2 million, she pointed out. Thus, there might be less than 4 million refugees, perhaps closer to the 3.2 million figure of people actu-

ally in the EU. They would know after a while. People could stay for three months without visas, but after that, they had to register. As time went by, they would be seeing more accurate figures in this regard. Then, of course, things could change. The Commission was continuously making plans as for what would happen in the future. Of course, things could also get worse. But she said that it was important right now to also prepare to support those that would like to go back to Ukraine, to have a good possibility to do so. She added that she believed it was great what Finland was doing with the emergency plans, noting that the Finnish government had reached out to the Commission before preparing their new legislation, to make sure that it was in line with EU key points. This was really important, **Ms Johansson** underlined.

She further agreed with **Mr Schraps** that it was important to reach out to other countries, especially to Moldova. She was in close contact with the country; she had just been texting with her colleague, the Minister of the Interior of Moldova, **Ms Ana Revenco**, this morning. **Ms Johansson** explained that just before the war had broken out, the minister of the interior had called her and had asked for Frontex to be sent there because the country could no longer protect their borders. The Commissioner's first reaction had been to think about how usually, negotiating a status agreement took at least one year. So, this had looked like it was going to be difficult. But what happened was that they had finished the agreement in less than two weeks. When she had signed the agreement, a few hours later, the first Frontex officers had deployed to Moldova. **Ms Johansson** had been there, visiting them. Now they were working closely together with Moldova when it came to other security issues. They were helping with transiting out of Moldova. More than four hundred thousand people had entered the country; around eighty to ninety thousand people were still there. The EU Commission was helping with transport to Romania. Member states had said that they could take in at least twenty thousand in relocation measures from Moldova. As a matter of fact, though, it had been a bit difficult to find those refugees who would like to be relocated to EU member states. Less than two thousand had left so far. Nevertheless, the Commission was still working on this issue and were hoping it could continue. Therefore, she reiterated that she fully agreed with **Mr Schraps**.

Ms Johansson tackled the issue of Poland next, agreeing that Poland obviously needed a lot of money in this situation. She also wanted to make one thing clear: What the Commission could do was using the money that had already been in the budget. This budget had been decided by the co-legislators – the Parliament and

the Council. The Commission could not find any new money or re-do the budget without the co-legislators. But they were at the beginning of the period of the MFF. That meant that there was a lot of money to use, especially for Poland. There had just been a decision made: There were 63 billion euros for Poland in the resilience and recovery fund. These could also be used to deal with the refugee situation. There was one condition for Poland, that was to reinstall the judges and to have a new chamber of evaluation of the judges. This was not rocket science to deliver on that, and that was a lot of money. She noted that **Mr Płażyński** was smiling, but **Ms Johansson** insisted that she wished to be clear on money. It was not like the Commission had some secret money somewhere they could find; the only thing that was possible was to use the money that was in the budget. There was a lot of money there for Poland that could be used for this situation. They might come to a situation where there was a time to re-do the whole MFF. But that situation would not be the case before the money already accumulated was used. And there was a lot of money that had not been used yet. The migration funds were not really the ones to deal with the costs of housing and schooling and healthcare. There were other funds for that. The migration funds were only for the immediate need at the borders and the reception facility. So, the big money was in the other funds – in the cohesion funds, in the regional funds, in the social class funds and in the resilience and recovery funds. The Commission had made it possible to use this money for the refugee situation as well.

Ms Alske Freter from Hamburg thanked the Commissioner for her input. She agreed that there had been great solidarity and great unity. This was good of course regarding refugees from Ukraine. At the same time, though, there were still lots of refugees from Afghanistan, Syria who had also suffered from wars in their countries, and they were still stuck in many refugee camps along the European borders and without any perspective. She believed they did have a point when asking now why the Ukrainians rather than them. In the end, they were talking about human rights which should be equal for everybody. When the camp in Moria had burned down, many countries – including Germany – had said they did not have the capacity to evacuate all of the people. That had been 13,000 people, and now the state of Hamburg alone had received more than that in Ukrainian refugees. Another point was that people were drowning in the Mediterranean Sea every day. Ships rescuing these people did not find a port, and the rescuers ended up being sued. Her question was whether **Ms Johansson** thought that – due to the Ukrainian war and how the Ukrainian refugees were dealt with – there would be a change in the minds and hearts of the European countries on the topic of migration policy, so that it would be

based on human rights again. These, she reiterated, should be equal for everybody. The alternative would be living through a particular case because it was Ukraine and so close to the EU.

Ms Anne Shepley noted that she was from the Green party in Schwerin and her colleague from Hamburg had taken half of her question. She was going to ask in the same direction although slightly different. **Ms Shepley** was working a lot with migrant organisations – including the Ukrainians who had come to Germany in 2014/2015, with the movements of that time. They were also asking why paragraph 24 had not been applied to them at that time. Many were saying they had not even known about this tool in the European group. She wondered what **Ms Johansson** thought about this, whether there were discussions about this inequality at the European level. After all, people like **Ms Shepley** were asked this question frequently. She received phone calls every day at the moment from people asking what about them. The problem was not only a European problem, she conceded; it was a problem that every European member state – and every other country receiving refugees – had to respond to, so basically everybody. Migration was a big problem. Wars were a big problem. **Ms Shepley** wished to reinforce **Ms Freter**'s point that they were talking about human rights, about wars, and they could not say that the war in one country enabled more action than that in another country. At the end of the day, people were fleeing from destruction, from death and horrible things happening to them. Therefore, she would like to have an overview from **Ms Johansson** concerning what was being talked about and if this topic even had anything to do with her day-to-day business because **Ms Shepley** did not know whether that was being considered or was only seen at the regional level or perhaps in Berlin.

Mr Jarosław Wałęsa explained he was inspired to ask this question because they were now considering something very important. Because of Putin's aggression against Ukraine, the biggest exporter of grain had no opportunity to supply the countries of Northern Africa. So, famine could be expected in very real and very short time. In that respect, he asked if there were any contingency plans for the people who would be trying to escape this famine from places like Africa and heading towards European shores. This would put additional pressure on European migration policies.

Commissioner Johansson pointed out that there were differences between the refugees from Ukraine and those from Afghanistan and Syria while there are also several similarities. All of them were fleeing from war, they were fleeing from the same kind of violence and oppression, and they were all human beings seeking protection. The

difference was that those from Ukraine were giving the temporary protection. That was not the same as asylum. It came with some rights; in some member states, it was better, and in some member states, it was less than for those who had received asylum. It was temporary, she reiterated, lasting only for one year. It could be prolonged for another year but at most for three years. After that, protection would end. It could last no longer. If one applied for asylum, then one could stay for a longer period, perhaps extending to the whole life, and one had the right to be reunited with one's family in the place of asylum. So, there were different kinds of legislation. She did not wish to call one better and the other worse; they were different, acting in different ways. She heard that they were dealing with people differently, but she did not appreciate that as different kinds of legislation were being applied to different groups. Regarding the question of why the Temporary Protection Directive had not been used in 2014/2015, she agreed that that was a really good question. She had to be a politician in this matter as she had been one in Sweden at that time. She had been responsible for the overall situation dealing with migration, even though she had not been the migration minister. Her question then had been where Europe was when it was needed. That proved to be a lesson she had taken with her to Brussels and a part of why she had wanted this portfolio as Commissioner. She would like to show that Europe could do so much more together when they were working together facing a crisis like the refugee crisis. **Ms Johansson** added that they were indeed much better prepared at this point. Moreover, she had to say that there was a political will in place to use the Temporary Protection Directive. In her view, it was good that they were less ideological and more pragmatic when it came to dealing with huge refugee challenges. Regarding the search and rescue cases, she saw a good thing in the agreement the Council had reached – although it still needed agreement from parliament. The Council had reached an agreement the previous Friday specifying a specific search and rescue category in the registration. They had also agreed on relocation for people in need of protection that had come to the EU through, for example, search and rescue cases. That could be part of dealing with this issue. The Commission had also set up a special working group handling search and rescue cases between member states. The Commission did not have a formal role in this matter because that was in the member states' competence, but they were facilitating talks between them on how to deal with this situation.

Regarding the food and security issue in Africa, that certainly was already here, she had to state. This could lead to famine but also to much more security-related issues in Africa because food insecurity often led to the strengthening of terrorist or criminal groups and

could also worsen things very rapidly. Important in this regard was to reach out along the routes. That also concerned the difference between Ukrainian and other refugees was that Ukraine was a bordering country. Other refugees were heading to the EU along routes where they could be supported on their travel as well, rather than waiting for them to reach Europe's external borders. This was important. The most vital thing in preparing and continuing contingency plans for a worst-case situation in Africa was to reach out to the countries and support people directly there with food, with adequate measures that were needed and also to help them with security issues. They should not wait for stronger terrorist groups to form or different kinds of insecurity to emerge that could really lead people to flee and risk their lives in even larger numbers. But it was a real threat, she stressed, not especially for the refugee situation in Europe but rather for people's lives. This was very much something to take into account.

Co-chair **Hans Wallmark** thanked the Commissioner, acknowledging that she had an appointment coming up and would have to leave. He thanked her again for being present at the Conference which was very much appreciated.

The next speaker would be Justina Jakštienė from Lithuania. **Mr Wallmark** also saw the deputy head of the embassy of Lithuania here in Stockholm and welcomed him. The ambassador from Latvia had also been at the Conference the day before. The co-chair noted that their attendance was appreciated as well.

Speech by Ms Justina Jakštienė, Vice-Minister for Social Security and Labour, Republic of Lithuania

Ms Jakštienė was honoured to be at the Conference and sent the warmest regards from the Lithuanian Minister for Social Security and Labour, **Ms Monika Navickienė**. She had not been able to participate on this day, and **Ms Jakštienė** was here to present all the information on Lithuania. Of course, these times were quite tense for everyone, and everyone was deeply moved by the war in Ukraine. Lithuania expressed huge solidarity, not only by words but also by works, with the Ukrainian people. The Baltic country had suffered fifty years of occupation by Russia several decades earlier, and Lithuania had always been very sensitive to any Russian question which had been solved in the EU or other organisations. They had always been asked by other OECD countries why Lithuania had been so sensitive to Russian issues and why the country could not ever get into any dialogue with Russia. That might be because of the huge period of occupation, and after fifty years, they could still recognise



Ms Justina Jakštienė, Vice-Minister for Social Security and Labour, Republic of Lithuania

the propaganda and the human situations in Ukraine. As a matter of fact, Lithuania strongly valued the historical friendship and strategic partnership with Ukraine, having demonstrated that several years before. They supported Ukraine's new candidate status for the EU and making their own plans to rebuild the war-torn nation. She conceded that Lithuania was quite small, but they would like to add to the rebuilding efforts.

These days, in Lithuania, there were only 56,000 Ukrainians. Most of them were women and children. Per capita, though, compared to Lithuania's 2.8 million inhabitants, that made it the country with the third-largest number of Ukrainian migrants. Poland and the Czech Republic were fielding greater number. Most important were positive reception conditions for migrants. From the beginning of the war, Lithuania had amended national budgets and had allocated hundreds of millions of euros for humanitarian support and receptive conditions. That was a national budget as they had had to react quite quickly. From the very first days when Ukrainians had arrived in Lithuania, the nation had had to provide humanitarian support – meaning housing, food, medical care, psychological support. They had also opened their social, health services as well as education systems. Ukrainians could receive all social, health and educational services in the same conditions as Lithuanian citizens. It had to be said that 40 % of arriving Ukrainians were children. Housing for families was a true challenge in Lithuania. Only a small amount of social housing had been developed in the country, and that was not sufficient for the needs of the refugees. Nonetheless, much like in Poland, people had opened the doors of their own homes and accommodated refugees from Ukraine. In addition, Ukrainians had volunteered in massive numbers. Almost 10,000 volunteers from

Ukraine were providing humanitarian support and other needed help. The spirit of solidarity and empathy was as strong as never before in Lithuanian society. Lithuanians and Ukrainians both knew the price of independence. Perhaps, **Ms Jakštienė** suggested, that had been the reason for the solidarity. Recently, Lithuanians had raised funds to buy combat drones from Turkey for Ukraine, putting together more than five million euros in four days. That was again quite a rapid reaction.

Children were the special focus of the Lithuanian government's attention and priority. Any child had children's rights, she said, to warm and secure housing, to education and other services. There were almost 22,000 children from Ukraine in Lithuania of whom more than 1,200 were unaccompanied minors. Usually, some of them were simply relocated from the Ukrainian childcare system facilities. The last relocation had concerned severely disabled babies. That had been very complicated in terms of logistics to relocate these disabled children over a long distance for a long period of time. In April, Lithuania had signed an agreement in the field of protection of children with the ministry of social policy of Ukraine. The focus had been placed on the psychological status of the children. Lithuania was providing psychological assistance as well as much-needed educational support. All levels of education were fully open to children from Ukraine, from early childhood up to university. Even universities had special programmes for fee-free or unpaid studies. More than 1,800 Ukrainian teachers had arrived in Lithuania as well. Presently, the government was passing the teachers' qualification recognition process and would integrate them into the mainstream Lithuanian education system. Pupils from Ukraine could enrol in any Lithuanian school, both in the Lithuanian language but also in Russian at schools in the respective language. The Lithuanian minister of education was doing all that was possible to enable Ukrainian-language classes, so that children could learn the subject in that language. That was why it was very important to implore Ukrainian teachers who had arrived in Lithuania to continue teaching in that country. It was expected that Ukrainian children would require summer camps after the end of the school year as well as Sunday schools. These were planned to be held in the Ukrainian language as well. However, should families choose so, they could also be presented in the mainstream. All children who had arrived in the country were registered in the Lithuanian educational system. Some of them had chosen to study remotely, according to the programme offered by the minister of education and science of Ukraine. There was even a Google initiative, allowing children to learn remotely via this tool.

Moving on to the topic of employment, **Ms Jakštienė** underlined its importance. Ukrainians arriving in Lithuania were quite easily integrated into the local labour market. According to the latest data, 30 % of working-age refugees had already entered the labour market. That represented almost 12,000 Ukrainians, the majority of them women. Six out of ten Ukrainians were in medium-skilled jobs, and one percent was in high-skilled jobs. The government had passed the qualification recognition process, qualifying the diploma and doing so as soon as possible. The majority of Ukrainians were working as accountants, marketers, in manufacturing processes, social, healthcare assistance, sanitation specialists, chemical analyses, laboratory technicians and the like. The government was trying to provide the working place using the skillsets people already had. Lithuanian employment ads usually featured the Ukrainian flag near the announcement, showing that they were looking forward to employing Ukrainians. Governmental municipal sector employers did so as well. Even their ministry of social security of labour, the ministry of education and that of social health were already employing Ukrainians because the governments understood they needed people who could explain in Ukrainian to municipalities and refugees what was going on and what they would have to do. The Lithuanian labour exchange office also employed Ukrainians to provide services to other Ukrainians. Municipalities were vital partners. The government was discussing the potential need to relocate people with disabilities. They had already prepared 400 places for disabled people from Ukraine. In fact, these were starting to be filled at the moment. Ukrainian soldiers were looking forward to having their treatment and rehabilitation in Lithuania. Their minister of health had prepared places for rehabilitation and medical treatment for Ukrainians and was continuing to do so. They were already receiving soldiers from the war.

Ms Jakštienė went on to speak about the important role that NGOs were playing. In the various recent crises from COVID to the war, the Lithuanian government has partnered with NGOs such as the Red Cross Society, Caritas Lithuania, Order of Malta, Save the Children, Foodbank and others. With the help of these organisations, they were getting a lot of work done. Demographical challenges were also on the mind of government. It was important, but the speaker pointed out that it was determined by three factors: mortality, fertility and migration. War migration was quite complicated and hard to define or to foresee what would happen in the future. It had already been mentioned that some families were turning back, in some cases then going back to Lithuania again. During the week, Lithuania would receive about 1,000 migrants from Ukraine, and about half of them would return to their homeland.

Of course, she added, these were not the same families but rather the overall figures. The government provided logistical support, such as buses, for these people to go back to Ukraine.

Looking forward, housing could be the answer to more demographical changes in Lithuania. As in the majority of EU countries, Lithuania also had a low fertility and quite high avoidable mortality. At this point, it could not be said how many Ukrainians would be staying in Europe. That would mean a huge projection, and more studies were needed on this point. However, she believed that housing, integration, education and special social support could be measures to convince Ukrainians to stay in country until the war was over, and then other allocation or relocation measures could be applied.

Mr Wallmark thanked her for her speech and moved on to the presentation by **Mr Maciej Duszczyk** from the Centre for Migration Research of the University of Warsaw.

Speech by Professor Maciej Duszczyk, Centre for Migration Research, University of Warsaw

Prof Duszczyk said it was a great pleasure for him to speak not only on behalf of his university but also of Poland and Polish society. He picked up on what Commissioner Johansson had finished her speech on, saying that the war was not yet over. Every day, the Polish train or bus stations saw hundreds of people arriving from Ukraine. It was absolutely necessary to help them, to provide them with all of the social services. From their migration point of view, the war had not started in 2022 but in 2014 when Crimea had been annexed by Russia. He presented a slide showing the number of permits issued by Polish authorities since 2012. In the past four years, the number of Ukrainians had tripled. Poland was in a very unique situation, Prof Duszczyk explained, because before the outbreak of the war, 1.3 million of Ukrainians had lived in Poland. On the one hand, it was much easier for them to accommodate them because they had something called reunification of families. Poland had exact data only on border traffic. They did not know how many of the people coming across were Ukrainians because this number also included the students from Pakistan who had left Ukraine's universities as well as members of the more than 100 different countries who had stayed in Ukraine before the outbreak of the war. They tried to estimate how many Ukrainians were among these refugees. As per those numbers, there were around 3.5 million people who had fled war from Ukraine to cross the Polish war. Not all of them had decided to stay in Poland. Migration researchers had used three methodologies to estimate the exit numbers of Ukrainians



*Professor Maciej Duszczczyk, Centre for Migration Research,
University of Warsaw*

who were still staying in Poland: following the movement of people within Europe; mobile phone registration as well as how many calls were made every day to Ukraine; the third methodology was somewhat problematic as it concerned the usage of water, especially in large cities. If taking all of these three methodologies into account, one could say that there were now an additional 1.5 – 1.6 million Ukrainians in Poland. Added to that were the 1.3 million Ukrainians who had already lived in Poland before the war, that meant a Ukrainian minority of about 3 million people. The professor added that they also observed the people going back to Ukraine, but it was still very difficult to predict what would happen in Ukraine in the next few weeks or months. That meant the crucial question of how many of them would stay in Poland could only begin to be answered in September 2022 with the start of the new school year, as Commissioner Johansson had already said earlier.

Looking at the registration statistics and the other information, migration researchers had already reduced the estimate of 1.5 – 1.6 million Ukrainians down to a more probable 1.2 million people in their system. 45 % of them were children, in absolute numbers 600,000 individuals. 200,000 of them had been enrolled into Polish schools, following the Polish curriculum. Another 400,000 were still following the Ukrainian curriculum remotely, learning and teaching. The systematic approach of how to manage these challenges in the near future was now of concern. It was not so easy to speak of this as it had been of the last wave because a lot of different things had already been mentioned. Thus, he would focus on only a few issues. For his side, the pyramid started with education because they had to be prepared to enrol a minimum of 600,000 Ukrainian children in the Polish education system in the next three months. It

had been obvious that it would have been quite impossible to do so for all of them. It was not only impossible from the point of view of the Polish system but also because of the children themselves. Their trauma from the war must not be increased. It was absolutely necessary to take care of the Ukrainian children who had fled from the war. To explain, he told the story of Kola, a sixteen-year old boy who was exactly the same age as Prof Duszczuk's son. On 23 February, Kola had been in Kyiv and participated in the football school. He had spent four days in the tube station when Kyiv had been bombarded by the Russians. After that, he had spent three days on the way to the Polish border which he had crossed to join his family. Every Sunday, Kola and Prof Duszczuk's family played football. But if one spoke to these children, one had to understand that the Russian aggression would stay with them for the next months or years, not just for weeks. For that reason, one had to be very careful about what to offer to them. The professor added that Poland was doing an absolutely fantastic job, and he was very proud to be Polish. Still, one had to worry about the capacity for real help, aid and assistance. This was crucial, he underlined once more.

His side wished to start with education. He conceded that not all of the Ukrainian children would be enrolled in Polish schools. But they had to prepare the educational system for the next 400,000 children. In that, they should avoid the problems from the pandemic. Teaching and learning remotely was not a very good option. However, they had to find a solution between being enrolled in Polish schools but also to follow the Ukrainian curriculum in the Ukrainian schools in Poland. Thus, they had to be prepared to offer places for the children. Every child, every day, said good-bye his or her mother, left their apartment to go to school. Even if that was via computers. But it was vital to avoid the problems that were very well known from the pandemic. Housing posed huge problems. Still, 600,000 Ukrainians were staying in Polish families – in houses and apartments. More than 400,000 were sheltering among Ukrainian families who had come to Poland before the war. That meant this was a huge challenge, offering them accommodation. In health-care, they were now taking care of hundreds of wounded soldiers. In the autumn, the language problem would be exacerbated since there would be a need for Ukrainian-speaking doctors to interact with Ukrainian children who would fall ill. Labour markets were a problem of competencies, the professor said, adding that the Polish markets had been better prepared to receive men rather than women from the neighbouring country. Nevertheless, they were doing their best to find a solution. Prof Duszczuk referred to Commissioner Johansson's words about fatigue, pointing out that compassion fatigue was a part of psychology. People were tired to help. Thus, a

systematic approach from the government was needed. It was quite impossible to keep all of the responsibilities in the hands of the society – the grassroots initiatives and NGOs. Of course, they would do all their best to help and aid. But now, they very much needed this systematic approach, not only from the national governments but also from the European Commission.

The last issue was one that had been raised by German colleagues: They were facing now not only one but several migration crises. There was the second migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border. Every day, dozens of people were trying to cross illegally the Polish border, also fleeing war – not a war close to their borders but rather that being waged in Afghanistan, in Syria, in Pakistan and other countries. Every day, these people were trying to reach Europe. That raised the question if Europeans could help everyone. To Prof Duszczyk, the answer was no. He stressed that Europe was not prepared to help everyone, but they had to prepare to respond to this question – how they would like to react in the near future. In that, he referred to the Polish MP and head of the Polish delegation, **Mr Wałęsa**, had said about the possible influx of refugees from sub-Saharan Africa via the North African countries. The issue was how to keep that part of Africa stable because Europe was not prepared to welcome ten, maybe fifteen million immigrants. However, Europe had to have a solution prepared in the very near future. For scholars like himself, human rights were not only words but the human rights that should be at the top of their priorities, their policies and at the top of human beings' concerns.

Co-chair **Wallmark** thanked the professor and opened the floor for the questions, remarks and interventions.

Mr Maciej Koneczny mentioned three issues regarding refugees and helping Ukrainians. He agreed with Prof Duszczyk and earlier voices on the fatigue that was the case in countries and in particular families that were helping Ukrainians who had fled the war. For that reason, it was necessary to think about institutional solutions in the future. It was obvious that it was wonderful what people in Poland and other countries were doing at the moment. The reaction was great and encouraging, but institutional solutions were needed as well as clear rules. First, he wished to tell a story from before the full scale of the Russian aggression had become clear. As Prof Duszczyk had said, there had been an earlier huge migration from Ukraine, and there had been a strike in a factory producing electric buses in western Poland. It had been a successful strike. Over there, Polish and Ukrainian workers had held the same regular job contracts and were striking together just as they had been working

together. There had been no tensions among them. But there were some tensions between Ukrainians working on temporary conditions because they were not allowed to strike and could lose their jobs any second. That showed that in order to avoid tensions in the future, clear and equal rules for both refugees and native people were needed – in this case Ukrainians and Poles. Equal working conditions were needed, and those had to be actively secured. Otherwise, they would be doomed to have such tensions. It was the same with housing and healthcare. They had to have equal conditions – no preferential conditions, just equal. Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian people would live and work together, go to school together, go to the doctor together. Equal conditions were crucial. The second case was, hopefully, after defeating the enemy, Ukrainians would have to rebuild their country. For that, Europeans would have to provide help. Here, he mentioned that even before the war, Ukrainians had spent up to 15 % of their budget for their foreign debt. That was a few times more than they had spent on their military; that had been 4 % of the budget and 15 % on foreign debt. These were crazy and unacceptable proportions, **Mr Koneczny** insisted. Thus, help had to be provided in removing this burden from Ukraine. It was crucial for the European Union and the international community to cancel Ukrainian foreign debt, for example for EBC to take over the cost of the Ukrainian foreign debt. That way, they would help Ukraine rebuild their nation, and the people would be able to go back to their homes. The third and last topic he raised was avoiding the kind of conditionality in helping Ukraine that they had seen so many times before, the one that put the profits and interests of Western multinational companies over the interests and well-being of the Ukrainian people. That had to be avoided. This could not be done once again, telling Ukrainians that they had to privatise and de-regulate everything for the profits of multinationals. Europe had to give unconditional help that would assist Ukrainians rather than multinational corporations. Unfortunately, that was already happening with some programmes from the US.

Mr Kacper Płazyński commented that he no longer could see Commissioner Johansson all of a sudden, only to be informed that the Commissioner had left quite a while earlier. He hoped that his voice would get to her even though she was not present. Her advice had been really generous, the politician said sarcastically, to use the recovery funds intended to recover Poland's economy from the pandemic through innovation – in particular the energy transformation, considering Poland's power came to 60 % from coal plants. He said that all Europe should develop, and Poland might be asking for more money because this help was now quite insufficient, but they had heard that they could use the money from their recovery

fund. That was really generous advice, he reiterated with sarcasm. He asked the Lithuanian vice-minister whether she would follow that kind of advice, whether Lithuania would do that. He understood that they were working on a backlog of decades refugees and assured Lithuania that they could always count on Poland's help, not just military help but every other kind as well. He asked Minister **Jakštienė** what she thought of this kind of supposed generosity, coming from the Commissioner one hour earlier.

Mr Sayed Amin Sayedi of the Youth Forum thanked the BSPC for the opportunity to speak in front of the decision-makers of the Baltic Sea region. He did not have a question but wished to make a comment and address the question of the “not-real” refugees, as the Polish representative had described them. For that, he had to tell them his own story and experience. **Mr Sayedi** had fled his home about seven years earlier, from Afghanistan. After 45 days of walking through rain, snow and sun, he had finally arrived in Finland and had applied for asylum there. Unfortunately, after one and a half years – although he could speak the language and had integrated into the society -, he had received a negative answer, stating that they had denied his asylum application. Thus, he had had to leave the country and went to Germany. In other words, he had fled from one of the most anti-humanitarian countries – Afghanistan – and come to Germany, as a Dublin II case. There, he had gone to a church as an asylum case for about six months during which time he had been like a prisoner. He had been forced to stay in the church building for fear of the police; once he would leave the church, the police would have taken him and sent him back Finland and from there to Afghanistan. But after six months, he had been able to apply for asylum in Germany. That had not been the end of the story, though, since he had been rejected by the German authorities and had been given toleration papers – meaning that he would be tolerated in the country until he could be deported to Afghanistan. For about six years, he had been in Europe without any perspective of where to go. This was a very long time period for a young person like himself. When he had come to Europe, he had been twenty-one or twenty-two years old. Until he had turned twenty-eight years, he had not had any perspective in Europe and could not do anything – he had not been permitted to study or to work. The only thing that had been possible for him had been to leave his home. It was very sad that for some of the refugees, their situation was as bad as he had described while others were treated much better. Secondly, he wished to say that, like the brave people of Ukraine, the Afghans had also fought for democracy and Western values, hand in hand with the EU, the UN and the USA. At this point, though, the Afghan people who had fought together with EU and US troops

had been forgotten in Afghanistan, and nobody was helping them. Therefore, he wanted to bring to this platform that those people should not be forgotten and instead receive help.

Co-chair **Wallmark** referred back to the comment and question by **Mr Płażyński**, wondering if the Lithuanian vice-minister, **Ms Jakštienė**, wished to provide an answer.

Ms Jakštienė agreed that this had been an important question that her side had raised before, together with the minister and vice-minister of social security and labour of Poland, at the very beginning of the Ukraine crisis. That been in particular with regard to disabled people as medical services and the long-term care needed for disabled people – including babies and children – were quite expensive. Currently, they were planning to – and already implementing – treatment and rehabilitation procedures for soldiers which also put pressure on the Lithuanian budget. However, at the beginning, Lithuania had already amended their budget to allocate a respective sum which had not been used and formed a reserve. Regarding the EU investment funds, when they had heard the proposal of using these funds even though they were already allocated money. This period was already at the end of the financial period of 2014 and 2020 which would finish in 2023. The government had already allocated the funds and had over-contracted the projects, so they did not have any savings. Maybe there were common savings in other EU countries, and they were not rushing that many investments. Furthermore, there was no possibility of using the current financial period funds. The Lithuanians were programming and had already completed the 2021 – 2027 financial period, already including the Ukrainians as a target group in all the measures. Thus, some social services, some healthcare services and some infrastructure investments would be provided to Ukrainians from the next period's funding. Again, like all EU countries, they had an asylum, migration and integration fund. In Lithuania, it would increase by four times. They had had eleven million euros; now, that had ballooned to 40 million euros. Still, the sum was quite small and dedicated to helping Ukrainians. There were also other migrant groups which were in lesser numbers present in Lithuania, so that Ukrainians would benefit most from this endeavour. The government had focused on housing since social housing was not sufficient for migrants, including people from Ukraine. They could not even find anything to rent on the housing market, **Ms Jakštienė** commented. Education and health systems were also focus issues in seeking to find EU investment funds for this purpose. In the future, they might cover their budget expenditures with EU funding regarding the eligibility measures. Their strategic plan regarding the finances looked like she had just described.

General Debate

Prof Jānis Vucāns and **Mr Jarosław Wałęsa** were co-chairing the General Debate session. Prof Vucāns welcomed everybody to the present session which had had to be shortened to half an hour so that each contribution could only take two minutes. This session included a format that the BSPC had introduced in 2018. Four years earlier in Åland, they had dared to try out a new format in their Conference, a general debate without restricting the content, allowing everyone to contribute what was particularly close to their heart. They had further continued this format during the conference in Oslo in 2019. The response to this initiative had been excellent. Therefore, it had been decided to continue it here as well. The BSPC had invented this format to open up opportunities, permitting the members to contribute and share their perspectives on the issues that were particularly significant from their points of view or that of their delegation. That allowed the BSPC to better understand the spectrum of opinions and priorities within the Baltic Sea region at the parliamentary level. For that reason, the professor encouraged the attendees from the outset to make use of this opportunity and to get actively involved in the debate. He handed the chairmanship over to **Mr Wałęsa** to guide the next part of the session.

Mr Wałęsa explained that this year, there were many different topics that had been touched upon. He was very grateful that they had been able to look at the big picture – obviously, that was the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, in the context of the things that were crucial to the BSPC's work, things like peaceful and reliable neighbourhood policies, democracy and freedom of expression, climate change or biodiversity – these were the things that had come up in their discussions many times. This situation, though, put an additional spin on their discussions. He was very grateful that there had been many speakers in the past two days, but this was now the time for the parliamentarians to answer some questions such as how to deal with the current challenges, whether there were new lessons that had been learned or that should be learned because of what had happened in Ukraine. He hoped that there could be a summing up in the next contributions or that new issues could be addressed that had not been tackled before. He opened the floor for the debate.

Prof Vucāns noted that – taking into account their decision of the previous day by which Russia had been officially excluded from the BSPC – now they were in quite a new situation. To his mind, they could now start to talk about some issues that had been closed for

open discussions in the BSPC before. Those were – to some degree – economic questions, energy regards. The day before, there had been a Polish initiative in this debate. In his view, it was obvious that energy was very important to all of the Baltic Sea region. They had quite a similar climate situation, quite similar possibilities to get energy from nature – wind or solar –, but not to such an extent as was possible in the south of Europe. The BSPC now had the opportunity to speak about common tools of how to store energy produced through natural resources. Another topic concerned all the issues related to helping Ukraine. This was quite a new topic, and he believed it would not only be on the agenda for one or two years but rather for the long term. Therefore, they might have to intensify this topic, specifically what plans they could build together. This was very important. But there were a lot of those new possibilities in this somewhat narrow community to speak about topics which previously had been practically impossible. This also concerned the topics surrounding the security of the region. Before, there had been wars, and the issue had not been discussed at any of their conferences. Now they could talk about security as they understood it. Prof Vucāns asked for the next Standing Committee and also for all of next year that they should think about what these possibilities were and in which new fields they could work.

Mr Axel Eriksson of Sweden explained that he was one of two Swedish youth delegates on the topic of the climate. As such, he was speaking on behalf of the Swedish youth, not the parliamentary youth forum since they had not had time to discuss this before. He addressed the security issue as being an issue of the climate and biodiversity loss as well. If the fundamental roots of many of these problems were not tackled, they would not be able to solve them long-term. Water stress increased the risk of conflict. So did the spread of pathogens due to loss of biodiversity. By not treating these issues as security matters, they were undermining their chances of achieving long-term peace. Therefore, he pointed out that it was very important to treat the direct consequences of actions, but one also had to deal with these fundamental roots.

Mr Simon Pāvāls of Åland brought up the question of the empowerment of the local communities around the Baltic coast. Much of the knowledge when talking about biodiversity, the effects of climate change and environmental concerns lay with those affected by them and who saw them first-hand. There was a difference between first-hand knowledge and scientific proof. He stressed the fact that most of the scientific proof could start off in the qualitative interviews and contacts with people in the local communities. There were no unified solutions to the problem of finding the knowledge

and solutions of the loss of biodiversity or other effects of climate change and industrial fisheries and the like. This combination of the contact between institutes and with the people living among the effects was crucial to understand what the region would be facing in the future. These people were living among nature and from nature; they had seen these effects first-hand during the 1900s. Especially the last years, after the big fisheries had been fishing herring in the spring, there had been effects around the whole Baltic Sea that might not be direct in terms of loss of fish but were indirect and rather difficult to determine. There might be effects like the stickle-back fish the numbers of which had exploded along the coasts because their predator, the herring, had been in decline. Sticklebacks ate pike; they had a very important role in the bays. The whole food chain was changing right at this moment, before their very eyes, in the Baltic Sea, but there was no scientific proof yet because that had not yet reached the institutions. He was glad that Sweden had taken the decision to move out the trawling border to twelve nautical miles. **Mr Pāvāls** noted that Finland and Denmark had passed an agreement to move their trawling borders inward by four nautical miles. He hoped that they would accept the same challenge as Sweden had and cancel this contract. That way, their very endangered spring herring – one of the most important engines in the food chain in the Baltic Sea – could be protected. Finally, he addressed the hunters in the Baltic Sea and the people that were using nature as a food source but were also part of the solution. He acknowledged that the European work for biodiversity had not featured much of the local people and their perspective as part of the solution. Instead, they had more often been presented as part of the problem. He asked everyone to remember that people in the local communities were mainly part of the solution concerning biodiversity and the effects on the environment in the Baltic Sea.

Chairman Wałęsa commented that this topic was very close to his heart. He used to be vice-chair of the fisheries committee of the European Parliament, and he knew very well about the commercial trawling in the Baltic Sea. His suggestion would be to go back to the agreement for the Baltic Sea of the 1970s which had limited the sizes of the ships that could operate. He had mentioned that a number of times in his work but unfortunately, his proposal had landed on deaf ears. Definitely, though, it was necessary to go back to said agreement because the Baltic Sea was dying, and it was necessary to do everything possible to save it.

Ms Inese Voika from Latvia continued the intervention from that morning when they had heard and discussed support for Ukraine and the refugees. She hoped that they would see here at the Confer-

ence but also in the representatives' respective parliaments that Ukraine would not only be assisted through helping the refugees, stopping the war but also in the post-war construction – both physically but also the democratic country that Ukraine had been so vigorously although not always with great progress and success. Yet it had been building towards a good status over the past decade. These questions would come up once the war was over, and Ukraine would have won. The input of the European nations would be just as important then. Another aspect of the BSPC's work on restoring and helping the democracy around the Baltic Sea and in their neighbourhood was the way they were approaching this. That not only concerned Ukraine, but the issue of democracy also extended to Belarus and, not least, Russia. Both these countries were currently seen to be on one side of the war, due to the people presently in power there. **Ms Voika** insisted that the Belarusian democratic opposition – most of whom were in exile – was a group of people that required support from the BSPC parliaments, governments and people because it was not known how long that work would take. Nor was it known how long the exiles would need support to keep their ideas and readiness for a democratic Belarus alive. Latvia had just established a group to support the Belarusian opposition – the Belarusian Democratic Movement – in its parliament. **Ms Voika** knew that there was such a group in the parliament of Lithuania as well, and something similar had also been established in Sweden. She stressed her encouragement to all other parliaments to look into this matter. They should provide support to the growing democracy. She knew what she was talking about because her people in the Baltic States had first received support from the Nordic countries and others throughout the fifty years of occupation. Some people in governments and the population had believed that these countries could one day be independent and democratic. Once that had happened, the EU had also helped the Baltic States to build that *de facto*. **Ms Voika** underlined that democracy did not just consist of the election system but also the space and the way of discussing and living it. That, she underlined, was what the attendees were practicing here at this Baltic Sea Conference, and it was something that was part of their obligations to the Belarusian democratic movement. Working with Ukrainians and Belarusians, one should not forget that there were movements in Russia – they were small and visible, and many leaders of these movements were in prison at this time. Nevertheless, there were people who believed in democratic governance and democratic societies in Russia. The day before, she and others had been at a rally supporting Ukraine, and she had said this there as well. She had talked about Ukraine, Belarus and Russia and democratic movements. There were young Russians present who had come up to her and told her, "Thank you.

Thank you for not forgetting us. We are here. We want Putin to go away as much as you do, and we are so very ready to work with you.” **Ms Voika** called on the parliamentarians to keep their focus in their everyday work and at this Conference on democratic developments around the Baltic Sea and in their neighbourhood.

Ms Iveta Benhena-Bēkena, a youth representative from Latvia as well, began by quoting, “Si vis pacem, para bellum.” This was a Latin proverb that was translated as, “If you want peace, prepare for war.” The invasion of Russia in Ukraine could also be translated as the result of poor decisions made earlier. Now it was necessary to face their consequences and deal with them. That was why she asked the politicians to act from their hearts and towards making peace reality, where their shared values were understood and realised in everyday life. She knew that would be no joyride and tough, yet she was certain that the sacrifices which would have to be made would be worth the effort in order to sustain the values they shared as democracies. The Conference and its participants had shown that they could contribute for humanity and human rights as a whole. She called on everyone to do better than ever before. **Ms Benhena-Bēkena** thanked the politicians for their actions and challenged them to do even better.

Mr Kacper Płażyński wished to add something that had not appeared during their discussions and was very much of importance. Moreover, it had not been included in the Conference resolution. He was asking himself why he had not proposed that issue. In particular, he was thinking about reparations. Reparations for Ukraine, from Russia. All of them wanted peace, but they wanted a peace according to international law – a peace restoring national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They were all fighting for Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine. That might only happen years in the future, and it was likely a long-distance goal. He underlined that they also had to talk about reparations in their international disputes. If they were to force Ukrainians to pretend everything was just fine after Russian forces had withdrawn and business as usual with the Russians should resume, he saw that as very wrong thinking. That would create a precedence for other countries on this continent to completely destroy the economics of other countries. Once they had withdrawn their forces back into their homeland, that would then be just fine. He stressed that this should not be possible. Reparations would be necessary. He noted that not so many leaders of European countries were saying that reparations were also one of the pillars after which they could come back to business as usual with Russia. **Mr Płażyński** added a comment to the speaker from Latvia before him, agreeing with her 100

%, but it had to be remembered that it was even worse than she had said. They had to be ready to make the sacrifice, but if they would not make that sacrifice at this point, it would grow larger and larger; the costs would be much greater in the future if they did not pay today.

Chairman Wałęsa pointed out that **Mr Płażyński** had made an important point. Putin's strategy at this point was to destroy Ukraine so much that it would become a failed country. Europeans had to do everything in their power to make sure that after the war, Russia would pay for its crimes.

Mr Ola Elvestuen from Norway noted that this was his first BSPC meeting, but he believed they were sending a strong message of unity. That applied in particular to their support for Ukraine against the aggression from Russia. At the same time, it had to be acknowledged that the war in Ukraine at this point was not going well. It was Russian forces that were moving forward, and the West had to increase its support. They had to increase their support with heavy weapons, on ammunition and the whole military support. The attendees had to go back to their parliaments and send that message of urgency. Furthermore, sanctions had to be strengthened as well as the broader support for refugees and others. **Mr Elvestuen** believed it should also be acknowledged that they were in a much larger international struggle for freedom and democracy. They were facing a food crisis across the globe. Moreover, there were authoritarian regimes – Russia, China and others – that were challenging freedom and democracy all over the world. As democracies, they needed to be much more coordinated. They were showing their unity at this Conference, but there had to be far more coordination at the international level. As for the youth representative from Sweden, he said that the nature and climate crisis had to be faced. Of course, the use of fossil fuels had to be stopped. Biodiversity had to be safeguarded. Pollution had to be stopped. All of that had to be done at the same time as defending and expanding freedom and democracy. Those topics were totally interlinked, **Mr Elvestuen** underscored. They would not reach their goals to work against these crises in climate and nature if they did not have a strong enough force of democracy and freedom that could lead the way on those solutions. Therefore, they had to be implemented at the same time.

Mr Hans Wallmark of Sweden believed he had attended eight or ten different BSPC Conferences over the years. He had to admit that this was the first time when it was quite easy to breathe. It was not only because of the air in Stockholm but that they were without some of the delegations. Those delegations had previously made the

rest hesitant and not speak the truth – not speaking about some subjects at all. Therefore, when Prof Vucāns had noted this very obvious fact that they now had the opportunity to form their own Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference without any restraints, it was a great opportunity. He called on his colleagues to use this year from this Conference to the next one to go back to the drawing board and really think about what was the challenge, what were the problems and what they could achieve together around the Baltic Sea. He believed that the old challenges and problems remained – the ones that had been raised before, such as the climate change, the Baltic Sea water, the sea-dumped ammunitions as mentioned by the foreign minister from Germany. These were the old problems, but now they also had new challenges: the security environment, the threat from Russia towards the West and also the opportunities which lay in the fact that Sweden and Finland were now applying for NATO membership. So, they now had great opportunities to go to that drawing board and really try to find out what they – the free, independent countries and regions of the Baltic Sea region – really wanted to do together when they did not have those restraints from before. Therefore, as also the former minister from Sweden, **Mr Jan Eliasson**, had mentioned, they had now the time to shape their own Hanseatic League for all time. They were now coming together in the Baltic Sea region.

Ms Hanna Katrín Friðriksson of Iceland thanked her colleagues for the discussions here and strongly supported every remark on the important work that lay ahead in supporting Ukraine – while not forgetting the BSPC's responsibilities regarding climate issues. As a long-time journalist and now politician, she also had to mention the importance of a free and independent press in this whole situation that they were facing. Just as important was them fighting against the use of strategic propaganda, to combat fake news and find what other ways there were to continue to support a free and independent press. The latter was the lifeline to democracy and democratic values. She thanked the Conference for the session of the previous day about the free press and the participants. In particular, **Ms Friðriksson** mentioned the comment she believed **Ms Valentyna Shapovalova** had made. The researcher had said that one of the ways to fight the current war against the free press would be to support the translation of international news into Russian, to help the Russian people understand what was really going on. That would be one way, and **Ms Friðriksson** urged everyone to consider that.

Mr Wille Valve from Åland wished to speak on the European ban on seal products. That, to his understanding, had been introduced

for reasons of animal welfare. On the ground, in the local communities, for people living along the coastlines and also for local fishermen, this ban created a real awkward situation in everyday life. The reason was that one was allowed to hunt seals in the Baltic Sea for practical reasons. This was because the seal population was very large and destroying fish stocks and fisheries. Seals were not hunted with sticks, he pointed out, but with rifles, also reducing unnecessary suffering. Legally, one was allowed to hunt seals, but one was not allowed to do anything useful with the hunted seal, such as making some seal oil or a souvenir from the small quantity of hunted seals. Instead, the law required the hunter to bury the seal which made perfect sense if there was soil. But if there were only rocks everywhere and nowhere to bury, that created a both practical and legal problem. This was in the broader sense not a good situation because it eroded faith in legislation which always had to be guided by common sense. **Mr Valve** noted that there were indeed perfectly good arguments for strongly limiting the commercial sale of seal products. That was because there was the fear that this would create a larger market for seal products. However, he did believe there should be a strictly defined exception allowing artisanal, local use of seal products. Lastly, this might seem a very small question, he conceded, but it had a huge impact on the people living along the coast and also on the legitimacy of other legislation as such.

Chairman Wałęsa concluded the general debate session of the Conference.

CLOSING SESSION



BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** opened the closing session of the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. First up would be the reports of the BSPC Rapporteurs. **Ms Beate Schlupp** was the BSPC observer at HELCOM and wished to say something about the events of the preceding year.

Report by Ms Beate Schlupp, BSPC Observer at HELCOM

Ms Schlupp said that the unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine had not only violated the fundamental principles of international law and defied the values of their 30-year-long cooperation in the Baltic Sea region but had also disrupted the work of multiple regional cooperation institutions and forums. This institutional network had taken decades to build and had provided the political and legal field for joint practical efforts to address common challenges and problems. As an inter-governmental organisation and a regional sea convention comprised of Baltic Sea coastal states, HELCOM counted among those institutions that had been deeply affected by the war of aggression waged by one of its contracting parties in Europe on the very border of the European Union. In reaction to the war in Ukraine, the 43rd meeting of the Helsinki Commission – scheduled for 22 March 2022 – had been postponed, and all meetings of Helsinki body groups and projects with Russian involvement had been suspended through 30 June 2022. However, this horrible war had not put other global and regional problems, such as the pandemic, the climate and energy crisis, on hold. If anything, it had expedited the urgent need for solidarity and cooperation in defence of the shared

principles and goals. She therefore thanked **Dr Lilian Busse** for accepting the invitation the BSPC's 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and providing an update on HELCOM's work in these troubling and turbulent times. It was extremely important to continue their joint efforts towards the common goal of a safer and more sustainable Baltic Sea.

On this day, the Conference had consensually agreed on the revised Statutes and Rules of Procedure of the BSPC. They had now explicitly outlined the fundamentals, principles, mission and objectives of their parliamentary cooperation which had been self-explanatory, as everyone had presumably assumed. Accordingly, the BSPC's main aim and focus was contributing to security, prosperity and a sound and sustainable status of the environment in the Baltic Sea region. Indeed, joint efforts to support sustainable ecological development in the region had traditionally stood high on the agenda of the regional parliamentary forum. Their common commitment to a healthy and thriving Baltic Sea had prompted the BSPC's decision to apply for observer status at HELCOM which the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference had attained exactly 20 years before, in 2002. Since then, the BSPC and HELCOM had been closely working together, guided by this common vision. In this regard, she extended her gratitude to the outgoing HELCOM German chairmanship for its engaged work over the past two years. It had indeed been a difficult time, dominated by unprecedented crises and disruptions.



Ms Beate Schlupp, BSPC Observer at HELCOM

It was therefore all the more noteworthy, **Ms Schlupp** underlined, that despite the pandemic-related restrictions on operational activities, HELCOM had managed to finalise the ambitious and comprehensive update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan which had been adopted at the HELCOM

Ministerial Meeting in Lübeck on 20 October 2021. The road towards the updated BSAP which had started in 2018 had been long and not always smooth. In the end, the contracting parties had consensually agreed on an extensive list of long-term targets and concrete measures to achieve a good environmental status of the Baltic Sea by 2030. The updated plan included 199 measures to protect biodiversity, combat eutrophication and pollution and regulate maritime activities such as fishing, underwater noise and seabed disturbance. Cross-cutting issues such as monitoring, maritime spatial planning, social-economic analyses and, last but not least, climate change were included as horizontal topics to support the implementation of related measures. The plan was aligned with such global frameworks as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and would serve to help contracting parties in achieving the international environmental commitments. The adoption of the updated BSAP together with a comprehensive package of associated action documents at the highest decision-making level in HELCOM should send a strong signal for stepping up in the area of marine environmental protection, not only at the regional but also at the global level.

Ms Schlupp noted that other regional sea conventions closely followed and drew inspiration from HELCOM's dedicated science-based work. Thus, the HELCOM Regional Action Plan On Marine Litter and the Baltic Sea Nutrient Recycling Strategy represented unique and innovative tools for environmental protection in the Baltic Sea region. This was a clear political success, yet **Ms Schlupp** cautioned that the true success of the BSPC would depend on a national implementation of the agreed measures and actions. The BSPC had closely followed the BSAP update process and addressed it in numerous resolutions. This year's resolution also included a dedicated section on mitigation of climate change and preserving biodiversity in the Baltic Sea region. Now that the update process had been finalised and the new strategic plan had been adopted, parliamentarians were responsible for considering the adopted measures and targets in their decision making and for pushing their governments towards their timely implementation. Finally, **Ms Schlupp** wished the upcoming Latvian HELCOM chairmanship much success in the next two years and was looking forward to the presidency's priorities as well as the further cooperation between the BSPC and HELCOM.

Mr Niemi thanked **Ms Schlupp** for an interesting report and moved on to **Mr Philipp da Cunha**, also from the parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. He was filling the position of **Mr Jochen Schulte** as Co-Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy with **Mr Jörgen Pettersson**.

Report by Mr Philipp da Cunha, Co-Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy

Mr da Cunha said he was pleased to have been nominated as Rapporteur for Integrated Maritime Policy. Two months before, he had taken over this task from **Mr Schulte** for which reason he unfortunately could not yet provide a written report. Instead, he would give an overview in this presentation of how he would organise the text. First, he thanked his colleague, **Mr Jörgen Pettersson** from Åland, for his contributions and commitment to Integrated Maritime Policy. It was great to have him onboard. **Mr da Cunha** had just experienced that at the working group meeting in the previous month. In the report, he was planning to describe the impact of the war and the pandemic-related crises on the developments in the area of the Integrated Maritime Policy. For example, there had been significant disruptions to cruise tourism and the supply chain. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cruise tourism was still not fully predictable at this point. The cruise industry which had been expected to recover after COVID-19 had not done so in early 2022. Before the pandemic had erupted, Europe had had the second-largest cruise market after North America, both as the source of the passengers and as a destination for cruise journeys. Moreover, 95 % of all cruise ships worldwide had been built in the European Union shipyards. At this time, his federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was suffering considerably from this decline. As a result, the cruise sector might not return to its pre-crisis level of success.



Mr Philipp da Cunha, Co-Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy

According to the German shipowners' association, supply chains were expected to return to normal only after the pandemic. But that would probably not be the case. The war was having a severe impact

on this aspect as was China whose zero-COVID policy was continuing to cause numerous disruptions. If one looked at what was presently going on at sea, there was one thing above all: maritime traffic jams. Approximately 11 % of the cargo shipping worldwide was not reaching the customer. Freighters with containers and bulk cargo were stuck in traffic jams outside the ports so that businesses and consumers would have to adjust to missing or delayed shipments for some time to come. There were significant restrictions at individual ports that changed weekly, sometimes even daily, so that there was no certainty in many parts of the world that, for example, a crew change could be made. Ports also continued to be severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, shipping companies were jamming ships in front of the ports because, for instance, crew people were ill or going on strike to push through sustainable wage increases. In many places, hinterland traffic had also largely collapsed or was extremely delayed because truck drivers were to a great degree absent as well. As a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, goods sent in shipments to and from Russia were declining sharply, and transport routes from Eastern Europe were changing. Supply chains were partially interrupted. However, more volumes were reaching the ports while supply chains were transforming. This did not only concern grain imports from Ukraine but also from Russia.

Another set of issues that **Mr da Cunha** planned to focus on in this report were the legal developments around the green and digital transformation of the EU. For example, there was the blue economy, the RePower EU Action Plan and emission control. Because of the high concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, an EU Climate Emergency had been declared. The EU Climate Law had legally paved the way towards climate neutrality for the EU by 2050, providing for reductions in greenhouse gases up to 55 % compared to 1990. A key factor was the parallel occurrence of the energy supply crisis, the energy price crisis and the climate crisis. In the EU Fit for 55 package, the 800 billion euros in the next generation stimulus programme was designed to support the industries' plan for the green and digital transformation. Secure jobs, ocean clean-up as well as energy and raw material extraction were the focus of **Mr da Cunha's** new direction in the maritime sector. Parts of the blue arm of the environmental and digital transformation was bio-economics. An example was the sustainable economic use of the biological sources of the seas and the waters. The EU's Horizon Research programme targeted so-called European missions and aimed to present solutions by 2030 for, among other things, revitalising the ocean waters and adapting to climate change. In the end, economic growth is to be decoupled from resource use. But now they were living at a

time of extreme military and energy uncertainty. Food market expectations had been changed dramatically, affecting prices for all commodities. Through the diversification of energy sources, imports were already reducing dependence on Russian gas. The common European approach to more affordable, secure and sustainable energy was on the agenda through the interaction of energy saving, the diversification of the energy supply and the accelerated development of renewable energy. The Ukraine war had promoted the announcement of an increase in the German defence budget through a special 100-billion-euro fund. Finland and Sweden were seeking to join NATO. The pressing sustainable development goals 2030 had been on the agenda in the various forums across the Baltic Sea region for some time. Now, higher defence spending and spending to reduce social hardships directly caused by the war in Baltic Sea countries had become a major political task. There was a lot to look forward to. He asked the attendees to send in suggestions regarding additional topics to include in his report.

President **Niemi** thanked **Mr da Cunha** for an interesting report. Before handing over the gavel to the next BSPC president, **Mr Niemi** noted that they still had to adopt the revised resolution of the 31st annual Conference. He reminded everyone that they could only take decisions by unanimous consent. There was one administrative matter that had to be taken care of first. The Conference was invited to agree to another amendment of the Statutes and Rules of Procedure adopted the day before. The Standing Committee had agreed on a new version of paragraph 10. As they had not been able to do this on Sunday due to time constraints given the volume of decisions to be made this year, they had agreed on this change during the Conference. The Standing Committee considered this necessary to be adopted by this Conference in connection with the other amendments to the Rules of Procedure. The new text of paragraph 10 had been distributed. He asked for a show of hands from those who were in favour of the change and then for those against and abstaining.

The Conference adopted the amendment of paragraph 10 to the Rules of Procedure of the BSPC.

Mr Niemi turned to the resolution of the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. He thanked all delegations for their hard work, especially the members of the Drafting Committee. As always, it had not been an easy feat to come to an agreement, but in the end, it had been worth it. Everyone had been given a copy of the resolution of the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. It had found unanimous agreement by the members of the Drafting Committee,

and he reminded everyone that just like every year, the resolution had to find unanimous agreement by every BSPC member. He asked the Conference if all the members could agree to the resolution of the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. There was one abstention.

The Conference adopted the Resolution of the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

Departing BSPC President **Niemi** thanked everyone for their work during this Conference as well as during this past year. The resolution of the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference had now been adopted. He went on to say it had been a true honour for him to have been BSPC President, and he was now looking forward to following the good BSPC tradition of passing the baton over to the incoming BSPC President, their colleague **Johannes Schraps** from Germany.

He did so in handing over the baton.

After that, **Mr Niemi** said that the incoming BSPC President Schraps would address the Conference on the priorities of the German Bundestag presidency.

Concluding Speech by New BSPC President Mr Johannes Schraps, German Bundestag

Mr Schraps said it was an honour to speak to the Conference attendees as their new President of the BSPC. To start off, he once more thanked his predecessor **Pärry Niemi** for his outstanding work during the last 2 years as well as **Mr Bodo Bahr**, the BSPC Secretary General, who was literally working day and night to prepare the BSPC's meetings and their annual conference. He furthermore voiced his gratitude to the staff, to the secretary level, as they were truly part of the BSPC secretariat, because it was the close and reliable cooperation between the BSPC Secretary General and the secretariats in our member parliaments and organisations that made sure that the work as the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference was possible.

He went on to note that these were difficult times to live in. Thus, it was even more important to send signals of togetherness instead of signals of division or fragmentation, as the Conference had heard the day before from **Jan Eliasson**. With the unanimous adoption of a far-reaching resolution based on ever trustful and very productive negotiations, with the 31st Annual Conference, the BSPC had sent



Mr Niemi and Mr Schraps

such a strong signal. As the German Bundestag, the delegation was taking over the presidency during times of great change and upheaval. The world had been taken aback by the full-scale military attack and war of aggression carried out by the Russian Federation against the sovereignty, independence and against the people of Ukraine. This war of aggression was a threat to democratic values as a whole, the new president stressed. With the threats to democratic security and in addition to that, with the COVID-19 pandemic but also with the rapidly ongoing climate change, the people of the Baltic Sea region were facing tremendous challenges in the coming years. Close cooperation, partnership and reliability were even more important in these times. “Strengthening democratic resilience and promoting peace” would therefore be the headline of the Bundestag presidency in light of the circumstances.

During the presidency of the German Bundestag 2022-2023, they would focus on boosting democratic resilience against adverse influences in order to be able to cope better and together with current challenges and to withstand future threats. President Schraps explained that his side considered it vital to promote good neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence and respecting the sovereign integrity and equality of all states. Drawing on the main theme of the Swedish presidency 2020-2022 and the adopted resolution of this day, they also endeavoured to utilise synergy effects with the presidency of the German government in the CBSS – especially in the support and strengthening of democratic institutions. The pandemic, cyber attacks and the threats by disinformation campaigns, fake news - as had been intensively discussed during the Conference – had exposed the vulnerability of democratic societies to conspiracy theories. He underlined that in order for democracies to prevail,

it was imperative to make democratic processes more transparent, and it was vital to encourage a strong and diverse civil society. While embracing the benefits of digitalisation, fake news and hate speech had to be combated. Not just the young generation needed to be guided and taught the appropriate way to use social media: As had again been learned from the previous day's presentations, it was a challenge for the whole democratic society.

At the same time – underlined by the strong and impressive words of the delegates of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum – the climate crisis remained one of the greatest challenges of this time. In view of the final year of the BSPC's current Working Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change, the German Bundestag put the protection and preservation of the marine environment and strengthening the resilience of maritime ecosystems at the forefront of their presidency. This included cooperation in the energy sector, wind energy and intensifying the efforts to monitor and treat the problem of sea-dumped munitions. Having in mind the once more excellent contributions of the Baltic Sea Youth Forum, there would hopefully be another youth forum in the margins of the 32nd BSPC Annual Conference in Berlin in the following year.

On the Conference's first day here in the former Second Chamber of the Riksdag, departing BSPC President **Niemi** had told **Mr Schraps** about the famous former Swedish prime minister **Olof Palme** whose seat had been right here on the left side of the plenary. At a time when Finland and Sweden were applying together to become NATO members, it had come to his mind that he had recently read Olof Palme's biography, particularly concerning the tough discussions in Sweden about the nation's position of neutrality when **Mr Palme** had been in office. For that reason, he concluded his speech with two quotations. The first was a famous sentence said by a close friend of Olof Palme, the former German chancellor Willy Brandt: He had stated that every era had its own answers. And the other quote was from Palme himself, saying that Politics meant wanting something. Both really suited the BSPC very well. They tried to find answers for the solutions that they needed, and they wanted something – finding solutions together. Having said that, President Schraps explained that the delegation of the German Bundestag was looking forward to hosting the members of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in the coming year from 27 to 29 August in Berlin.

Vice-President **Niemi** thanked the president for an excellent speech and wished him good luck in the upcoming year. At the very end of the Conference, he thanked everyone who had participated in the

organisation of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. First of all, he voiced his gratitude to all the parliamentarians, experts, government representatives and guests for their active involvement. He also thanked the staff of the Swedish parliament for their support and assistance in efficiently organising this Conference, particularly – as had already been said the previous evening – **Ms Johanna Ingvarsson**, **Mr Dan Alvarsson** and the rest of the Riksdag international office. **Mr Niemi** went on to thank the Secretary General for his valuable output and input. Finally, he gave a special thank you to the interpreters for their amazing job that had greatly simplified the work of the past couple of days.

Mr Niemi declared the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference closed.

Pre-Session on administrative matters

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** welcomed the attendees to a special session devoted to approving the decisions made in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In light of the unwarranted Russian aggression, the BSPC Standing Committee had decided to suspend the memberships of the Russian parliaments in the BSPC and to change the BSPC Rules of Procedure to reflect the historical importance of the moment and to allow for the suspension or expulsion of members violating the fundamental principles of the BSPC. President **Niemi** noted that the ongoing efforts to track a new course for the BSPC without Russia had proceeded at a fast pace. That also concerned that the Russian parliaments had withdrawn from the BSPC. Therefore, the Conference approved the suspension of the Russian parliaments from the BSPC.

The amendments to the Rules of Procedure mainly concern fundamental additions. These are also expressed in the new name ‘Statutes and Rules of Procedure’. These include the fundamentals and core principles to which the BSPC has unanimously committed itself in a series of resolutions as defined foundations of its cooperation. Furthermore, now the procedure is regulated if a Member State blatantly violates the foundations and core principles by the flagrant violation of the rules of international law. Further regulations result from the suspension and withdrawal of the Russian parliaments. Additionally, administrative adjustments to the decisions on the BSPC strategies and work programmes have been made on this occasion.

BSPC Vice-President **Johannes Schraps** underlined that it was crucial for the BSPC to express the reasons behind their decisions to the public in a declaration.

BSPC Secretary-General **Bodo Bahr** read out a draft declaration to explain the changes and the historical context in which the amendments were made.

Prof **Jānis Vucāns** and Ms **Bryndís Haraldsdóttir** contributed to the debate.

The Conference adopted the new Statutes and Rules of Procedure which were supplemented the next day by an adaptation of a further rule on administrative matters and agreed to publish the mentioned declaration in conjunction with the publication of the new **Statutes and Rules of Procedure**.

List of Participants

Kingdom of Sweden

1. **Dr Andreas Norlén**, *Speaker of the Riksdag*
2. **Ann Linde**, *Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden*

Member Parliaments and Parliamentary Organizations

Åland Parliament

3. **Wille Valve**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
4. **Liz Mattsson**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
5. **Simon Pāvāls**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
6. **Sten Eriksson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Åland Parliament*

Baltic Assembly

7. **Jānis Vucāns**, *President of the Baltic Assembly, Latvia*
8. **Andrius Kupčinskas**, *Vice President of the Baltic Assembly, Lithuania*
9. **Aadu Must**, *Vice President of the Baltic Assembly, Estonia*
10. **Sven Sester**, *Member of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, Estonia*
11. **Inese Voika**, *Member of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly, Latvia*
12. **Agnija Antanoviča**, *Secretary General, Baltic Assembly Secretariat*
13. **Merilin Reepalu**, *Secretary of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly, Estonia*

Bremen

14. **Sülmez Dogan**, *Vice President of the State Parliament of Bremen*
15. **Antje Grotheer**, *Vice President of the State Parliament of Bremen*

Denmark

16. **Christian Juhl**, *Member of Parliament of Denmark*
17. **Morten Schiøttz**, *Secretary of the Delegation
European Parliament*
18. **Stasys Jakeliūnas**, *Member of the European Parliament*
19. **Adam Isaacs**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the European
Parliament*

Finland

20. **Sakari Puisto**, *Member of the Parliament of Finland*
21. **Kai Mykkänen**, *Member of the Parliament of Finland*
22. **Mika Laaksonen**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the
Parliament of Finland*

Germany

23. **Johannes Schrapf**, *Vice President of the BSPC, Member of the
German Bundestag*
24. **Claudia Müller**, *Member of the German Bundestag*
25. **Gereon Bollmann**, *Member of the German Bundestag*
26. **Petra Nicolaisen**, *Member of the German Bundestag*
27. **Katalin Zádor**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German
Bundestag*
28. **Dr Birgit Von Pflug**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the
German Bundestag*
29. **Ana-Sofia May**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German
Bundestag*
30. **Pia-Sophie Brandenburg**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the
German Bundestag*
31. **Malte Klüver**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German
Bundestag*

Hamburg

32. **Carola Veit**, *President of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
33. **Danial Ilkhanipour**, *Member of the State Parliament of
Hamburg*
34. **Alske Freter**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
35. **David Erkalp**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
36. **Metin Kaya**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
37. **Krzysztof Walczak**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
38. **Johannes Düwel**, *Director of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
39. **Friederike Lünzmann**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the State
Parliament of Hamburg*

Iceland

- 40. **Bryndís Haraldsdóttir**, *Member of the Parliament of Iceland*
- 41. **Helgi Thorsteinsson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of Parliament of Iceland*

Latvia

- 42. **Iveta Benhena-Bēkena**, *Member of the Parliament of Latvia*
- 43. **Ingrīda Sticenko**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Parliament of Latvia*

Lithuania

- 44. **Orinta Leiputė**, *Member of the Parliament, Lithuania*
- 45. **Renata Godfrey**, *Adviser of the International Relations Unit, Office of the Seimas, Lithuania*
- 46. **Beate Schlupp**, *Vice President of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 47. **Philipp da Cunha**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 48. **Christian Albrecht**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 49. **Sabine Enseleit**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 50. **Katy Hoffmeister**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 51. **Nikolaus Kramer**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 52. **Thomas Krüger**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 53. **Anne Shepley**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 54. **Georg Strätker**, *Secretary to the Delegation of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 55. **Evgeniya Bakalova**, *Secretary to the Delegation of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*

Nordic Council

- 56. **Jorodd Asphjell**, *Member of the Parliament of Norway and the Nordic Council*

- 57. **Hanna Katrín Friðriksson**, *Member of the Parliament of Iceland and the Nordic Council*
- 58. **Arne Fogt Bergby**, *International Senior Adviser of the Nordic Council*

Norway

- 59. **Himanshu Gulati**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament*
- 60. **Ola Elvestuen**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament*
- 61. **Kathy Lie**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament*
- 62. **Truls Vasvik**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament*
- 63. **Lene Westgaard-Halle**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament*
- 64. **Thomas Fraser**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Norwegian Parliament*

Poland

- 65. **Jarosław Wałęsa**, *Member of the Sejm Parliament of Poland*
- 66. **Maciej Koneczny**, *Member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*
- 67. **Jerzy Materna**, *Member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*
- 68. **Grzegorz Matusiak**, *Member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*
- 69. **Kacper Płażyński**, *Member of the Sejm Parliament of Poland*
- 70. **Rafał Ślusarz**, *Member of the Senate of the Republic of Poland*
- 71. **Piotr Koperski**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*

Schleswig-Holstein

- 72. **Kai Dolgner**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 73. **Peter Lehnert**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 74. **Christopher Vogt**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 75. **Eka von Kalben**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 76. **Jette Waldinger-Thiering**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 77. **Mareike Watolla**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*

Sweden

- 78. **Pyry Niemi**, *President of the BSPC, Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 79. **Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 80. **Janine Alm Ericsson**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 81. **Hans Wallmark**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 82. **Aron Emilsson**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 83. **Ingvar Mattsson**, *Secretary General of the Swedish Parliament*
- 84. **Anna-Karin Hedström**, *Head of the International Department*
- 85. **Johanna Ingvarsson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Swedish Parliament*
- 86. **Dan Alvarsson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Swedish Parliament*
- 87. **Melinda Nilsson**, *International Adviser*

*BSPC and Observers**Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference*

- 88. **Bodo Bahr**, *Secretary General of the BSPC*

Baltic Sea NGO Network

- 89. **Josefin Carling**, *Secretary General of the Norden Association Sweden*
- 90. **Anders Bergström**, *Norden Association Sweden*
- 91. **Merle Andraschko**, *Co-Policy Area Coordinator EDU EUSBSR*

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum

92. *Johannes-Emmanuel Allas, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Estonia*
93. **Violetta Borovskikh** (*Massala*), *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Åland Islands*
94. **Sandra Butoyí**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Norway*
95. **Emma Louisa Döhler**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Germany*
96. **Axel Eriksson**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Sweden*
97. **Simona Jakaitė**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Lithuania*
98. **Julius Janulevičius**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Lithuania*
99. **Nikola Kleinberga**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Latvia*
100. **Maciej Kudra-Bartkowiak**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Poland*
101. **Katri Leppälaakso**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Finland*
102. **Draumeý Ósk**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Iceland*
103. **Sayed Amin Sayedi**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Germany*
104. **Andreas Schoop**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Germany*
105. **Antonio Gade Wilhelmsen Serri**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Norway*
106. **Karolina Siekierka**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Poland*
107. **Vilhelmiina Vierjoki**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022, Finland*
108. **Manvydas Džiaugys**, *Youth Coordinator Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022*

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

109. **Grzegorz Poznański**, *Director General of the CBSS Secretariat*
110. **Bernd Hemingway**, *Deputy Director General of the CBSS Secretariat*
111. **Thorvaldur Kristjansson**, *Senior Adviser Regional Identity and Communications*
112. **Dominik Littfass**, *Adviser and Team Leader for Communications and Media Relations*
113. **Aline Mayr**, *Project Coordinator for Regional Identity*
114. **Vendela Gebbie**, *Assistant of Regional Identity and Communications*
115. **Therese Ekfeldt**, *Core team assistant*

CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

116. **Lucille Ehrhart**, *Executive Secretary*

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

117. **Cecilia Widegren**, *Vice President*

Nefco

118. **Dennis Hamro-Drotz**, *Senior Programme Manager*

Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being Secretariat

119. **Ülla-Karin Nurm**, *Director*
120. **Silvija Geistarte**, *Senior Adviser*
121. **Zane Vinilte**, *Communications Assistant*

Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

122. **Gennaro Migliore**, *President*

Skåne Regional County Council

123. **Annika Annerby Jansson**, *President*
124. **Johanna Haward**, *Development Strategist*

*Executive**European Commission*

125. **Ylva Johansson**, *European Commissioner for Home Affairs*
126. **Anna Helsen**, *Advisor Strategic Communication*

*Ministries**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany*

127. **Annalena Baerbock**, *Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs*
(online participation)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

128. **Anniken Huitfeldt**, *Minister of Foreign Affairs, CBSS*
Presidency (online participation)
129. **Olav Berstad**, *Chair of the CBSS Committee of Senior*
Officials

Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

130. **Eva Ekmehag**, *Swedish Delegate to the CBSS Committee of*
Senior Officials
131. **Sami Mashial**, *Political Adviser*

Ministry for Environment and Climate, Sweden

132. **Anders Grönvall**, *State Secretary to the Minister for*
Environment and Climate, Sweden
133. **Annsophie Aronsson**, *Desk officer, International Affairs*
Secretariat

German Environment Agency, Germany

134. **Dr Lilian Busse**, *Chair of HELCOM, Vice president of the*
German Environment Agency

Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania

135. **Justina Jakštienė**, *Vice Minister, Ministry of Social Security*
and Labour

Embassies to the Kingdom of Sweden in Stockholm

Embassy of Latvia

136. **H. E. Margus Kolga**, *Ambassador of Estonia to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Embassy of Latvia

137. **H. E. Ilze Rūse**, *Ambassador of Latvia to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Embassy of Lithuania

138. **H. E. Giedrius Čekuolis**, *Ambassador of Lithuania to the Kingdom of Sweden*
139. **Donatas Butkus**, *Deputy Ambassador of Lithuania to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Embassy of Poland

140. **Joanna Hofman**, *Ambassador of Poland to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Experts

141. **Professor Maciej Duszczyk**, *the Center for Migration Research, University of Warsaw*
142. **Jan Eliasson**, *Former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Former*

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

143. **Michael Jarlner**, *Journalist and international editor at Politiken*
144. **Inger Melander**, *Expert Fisheries and Market, WWF Sweden, Representative of the*

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145. **Valentyna Shapovalova**, *PhD fellow at Copenhagen University*
146. **Stefanie Wodrig**, *Head of Baltic Affairs Desk, Senate Chancellery*
147. **Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark**, *Associate Professor, LL.D., Director at the Åland Islands Peace Institute*

*Other Participants**Interpreters*

- 148. Catherine Johnson
- 149. Matthias Jansen
- 150. Gyda Thurow
- 151. Maria Hemph Moran
- 152. Jakob Roel
- 153. Piotr Krasnowolski
- 154. Aleksander Jakimovicz
- 155. Gerd Elisabeth Mattson

Swedish Secretarial Support

- 156. Marit Baker
- 157. Lena Hemlin
- 158. Malte Moberg
- 159. Elias Wergelius

BSPC Secretariat Support

- 160. Jördis Palme
- 161. Marc Hertel
- 162. Ralf Roletschek
- 163. Daria Rulevska

Speakers

- **Dr Andreas Norlén**, *Speaker of the Riksdag*
- **Ann Linde**, *Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden*
- **Pyrri Niemi**, *MP of Sweden, President of the BSPC*
- **Jan Eliasson**, *Former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden*
- **Anniken Huitfeldt**, *Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway*
- **Annalena Baerbock**, *Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs*
- **Gennaro Migliore**, *President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean*
- **Cecilia Widegren**, *Vice President, Inter-Parliamentary Union*
- **Josefin Carling**, *Baltic Sea NGO Network, Secretary General the Nordic Association in Sweden*
- **Annika Annerby Jansson**, *President of the Regional Assembly, Region Skåne*
- **Michael Jarlner**, *Journalist and international editor at Politiken*
- **Valentyna Shapovalova**, *PhD fellow at Copenhagen University*
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- **Dr Lilian Busse**, *HELCOM Chair*
- **Inger Melander**, *Expert Fisheries and Market, WWF Sweden, Representative of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum*
- **Dennis Hamro-Drotz**, *Senior Programme Manager*
- *Representative of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2022*
- **Ylva Johansson**, *European Commissioner for Home Affairs*
- **Justina Jakštienė**, *Vice Minister, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania*
- **Prof Maciej Duszczyk**, *Center for Migration Research, University of Warsaw*
- **Beate Schlupp**, *HELCOM rapporteur*
- **Philipp da Cunha**, *Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy*

PHOTOS











