

The 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

Sustainable democracy – how to face a changing world

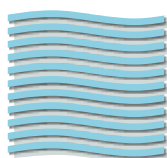
30 August 2021

The 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

Sustainable democracy –
how to face a changing world

30 August 2021

30
YEARS
BSPC
BALTIC SEA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



The 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
Sustainable democracy – how to face a changing world

Text: Marc Hertel and Bodo Bahr

Layout: Produktionsbüro TINUS

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
 Bodo Bahr
 Secretary General
 +49 171 5512557
 bodo.bahr@bspcmail.net
 www.bspc.net

BSPC Secretariat
 Schlossgartenallee 15
 19061 Schwerin
 Germany

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.

BSPC gathers parliamentarians from 11 national parliaments, 11 regional parliaments and 5 parliamentary organizations around the Baltic Sea. The BSPC thus constitutes a unique parliamentary bridge between all the EU- and non-EU countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

BSPC external interfaces include parliamentary, governmental, sub-regional and other organizations 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 Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC) and the Baltic Development Forum.

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 Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU, and disseminated to other relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and its neighbourhood.

Contents

THE OPENING	5
FIRST SESSION	
Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region	15
SECOND SESSION	
Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape	24
GENERAL DEBATE	
Re-starting after the COVID-19 pandemic	45
THIRD SESSION	
Climate Change and Biodiversity	58
CEREMONIAL SESSION	
in Honour of the 30th BSPC	85
FOURTH SESSION	
Addresses and Reports	105
CLOSING SESSION	129
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	133
PHOTOS	145



THE OPENING



Chair: Mr Pyry Niemi, President of the BSPC

Introduction

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** opened the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 30 August 2021. They were happy to see all of them attending. He promised it would be a great day, noting that he was looking forward to listening to all of the sessions and interesting remarks, interventions and comments as well as speeches, discussions, debates and contributions. A great day, he added, even though they had to do with digital once again. Next year, though, he was sure they would be able to meet physically in Stockholm in Sweden again. He yielded the floor to the speaker of the Swedish parliament – the Riksdag –, Dr Andreas Norlén.

Speech by Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag

Dr **Andreas Norlén** thanked the president, the members of parliament, government representatives and other attendees. He was delighted to have this opportunity to meet them. This was the third time the Riksdag had hosted the BSPC, and of course, they had been looking forward to welcoming them to Stockholm. Not only had the pandemic changed their plans, but it had also changed societies in many ways.



Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag

He was happy to note that there were around 190 people participating in the conference, members of both national and regional parliaments from all of the Baltic Sea countries and beyond. They might not be in the same room, but they could nevertheless talk and exchange views. This was as important as ever, he underlined, or even more so due to the very special circumstances they were experiencing. Indeed, they were living through interesting and very challenging times. It was fair to say that the last 30 years had brought considerable change to the Baltic Sea region. The Fall of the Iron Curtain had shaped a new geopolitical landscape as had the process of EU integration when several of the countries of the Baltic Sea region had become members of the European Union. The last 30 years had brought economic growth but also financial crises. Democracies had matured but in more recent years, they had also seen democratic backsliding and an undermining of the rule of law. Digitisation had provided them with new tools while at the same time presenting them with new challenges.

Despite the fact that the region had undergone major changes over the past three decades, much also remained the same. The first Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, held in 1991, had been created as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians in the region, with the aim of strengthening cooperation and raising awareness of issues of common concern, promoting cross-border regional collaboration and working together to achieve common goals. These continued to be as important today as they had been 30 years earlier. Sharing best practices, promoting parliamentary cooperation and cooperating in order to deal with common challenges, such as climate change or Baltic Sea environmental issues, were still on the agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic was most recent proof of

the ongoing need to preserve cooperation as well as protect democracy. During the crisis, difficult and sometimes rapid decisions had been taken to stop the spread of the virus. In times like this, it was vital to have well-functioning parliaments that could scrutinise and evaluate decisions and protect the freedoms and rights of citizens.

Parliament was at the heart of democracy, just as the Baltic Sea was at the heart of the region. It was necessary to continue to protect and preserve them both. The pandemic had also underlined the importance of interparliamentary cooperation. Dr Norlén emphasised the fact that the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference had quickly adapted to the new circumstances and had held its annual conference online back in August of the previous year. The speaker applauded the BSPC's achievement.

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. This theme was also connected to the Swedish parliament's commemoration and celebration of 100 years of democracy. In September 2021, just a few weeks later, one century would have passed since women had been allowed to vote for the first time in parliamentary elections in Sweden. Dr Norlén strongly believed that democracy was worth commemorating and celebrating to revitalise it. The purpose of celebrating the centenary was to generate engagement and understanding of the importance and development of democracy in Sweden, in a historical perspective and for the future. That would also increase knowledge of the process of democratisation and the role that the Swedish parliament both in history and the present day. By increasing the knowledge of history, the understanding of and the engagement in politics today would increase. The democracy centenary, he went on, also served as a reminder that democratic values, participation, equality before the law and trust in the democratic system were nothing that one could take for granted. It was necessary to always keep striving to protect and develop their democratic institutions and systems.

On this note, Dr Norlén mentioned that the main issue was youth participation which was expressed through the organisation of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum in connection with this year's annual conference. Young people were the future. Older people ought to – and indeed had to – listen to their opinions and encourage their political engagement. Intergenerational cooperation helped them to protect and develop their democracy. He added that when listening to young people, he was always filled with hope –

they had the engagement, the compassion and the courage to take on the challenges that lay ahead.

When reflecting on historical events, there was a tendency to take the outcome for granted. But the breakthrough for democracy was never something that could be taken for granted. It could not be taken for granted in Sweden a hundred years before, not in the Baltic Sea region thirty years earlier, and nor could it be taken for granted in the present day.

Thirty years ago, the parliamentarians' predecessors had established this cooperation across the Baltic Sea. The coming thirty years would bring new challenges and new opportunities. The BSPC was a forum for political dialogue with the purpose of strengthening cross-border cooperation in the region. Meetings, formal and informal conversations as well as the exchange of ideas and experiences were all crucial part of this work. In this spirit, Dr Norlén took this opportunity to welcome the attendees to the Swedish parliament on 12 – 14 June 2022. He hoped that by then, they would be able to meet in person. The Speaker wished everyone a successful conference with fruitful discussions and debates.

President **Pyry Niemi** thanked Dr Norlén for his impressive contribution. He next introduced the esteemed Minister for Foreign Affairs in Sweden, Ms Ann Linde.

*Speech by Ms Ann Linde,
Minister for Foreign Affairs in Sweden*

Ms **Ann Linde** thanked the president and her audience for the opportunity to address them on the very day the BSPC was also celebrating thirty years of fruitful parliamentary cooperation. The main theme of the Swedish presidency of the BSPC – Sustainable Democracy – was very timely. Democratic backsliding, challenges to human rights and the undermining of the rule of law were trends they had witnessed for several years. It took time – sometimes generations – to build up stable and independent democratic institutions but they could be dismantled very quickly. Over the past year, they had witnessed how the respect for human rights had been seriously challenged, both in their neighbourhood and elsewhere. Members of parliament had an important role to preserve and protect democracy and human rights. The COVID-19 pandemic had had a clear and negative effect on the



Ms Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Sweden

respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the virus had to be fully in line with international law. It was necessary to follow this closely. It was also necessary to pay particular attention to the gender perspective. Women and girls had been much more exposed during the pandemic than men. The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the Council of the Baltic Sea States were important partners in highlighting and tackling these challenges. Sweden was a strong voice and actor for the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law globally. These were also key to Sweden's OSCE chairpersonship and a reminder that all the CBSS members had made a commitment to respect these values and principles. It was the Swedish side's firm belief that democracy was the best foundation for a sustainable society.

Yet democracy was in decline across the world. That was a deeply worrying trend, Minister Linde underlined. At the same time, aspirations for democracy were still strong in many parts of the world. It was necessary to ensure that those fighting for democracy were supported and defended. Since 2019, Sweden had pursued a full foreign policy initiative called The Drive for Democracy, with the aim to provide a counternarrative to the global trend of democratic backsliding and the shrinking space for civil society. For most people, the case for democracy was clear: It provided political accountability and therefore a mechanism for correcting mistakes and doing better. Democracy also ensured transparency and access to information and enabled everyone to make their voice heard and get involved in building their common future. Through diplomatic activity and the series of events, the Swedish Drive for Democracy aimed to promote and strengthen respect for human rights, democ-

racy and the rule of law. Other aspects also supporting sustainable democracy were also included, not least equality, participation, sustainable development, inclusive growth, governance and security. Democratic societies depended on the respect for freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. These were fundamental conditions enabling several other freedoms and rights and thus served as the foundation of a functioning democracy. However, Ms Linde cautioned that attacks and restrictions on free and independent media and civil society were often used as tools to undermine democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This was also true for trade unions, demanding human rights in the world of work. There was therefore a great need to draw attention to and strengthen freedom of expression in a wider sense – both to protect freedom of expression as such but also to support the ones acting for human rights. The threats and challenges these actors face worldwide had to be addressed, she underlined. The pandemic had shown how vulnerable and inter-linked societies were, making cross-border cooperation even more necessary. Climate change was another challenge in the region for the citizens and their safety, best met in cooperation with neighbours. Much of the strength of the Council of the Baltic Sea States lay in its ability to function in a concrete and practical manner, even in times of difficult international relations and when everybody had been strongly affected by the pandemic. This cooperation had a proven track record of successful results of tackling cross-border challenges, such as climate change, youth unemployment, social and gender inequalities and the protection of children at risk.

Minister Linde saw four areas where there was a particular need and indeed an opportunity to reinforce this cooperation: First, people-to-people contacts in cooperation, particularly between young people. This bound people together and served as a platform for building long-term relationships. Such contacts made lives richer and increased understanding which made the Baltic Sea region more secure. The outcome of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum on 28 August and the Baltic Sea Youth Platform were valuable contributions to this end. The minister had heard that the youth forum on Saturday had been very good, with good dialogue. Cross-border cooperation between schools on different levels should also be encouraged. Second, the fight against international organised crime, closer ties between the Baltic Sea taskforce on organised crime – where Ms Linde herself had been the personal representative of the prime minister when she had been Vice Minister of Home Affairs – and the CBSS should increase their ability to fight organised crime, including trafficking human beings for sexual and labour exploitation. Third, cross-border cooperation in civil protection. Their efforts in this area had to be flexible and wide-ranging,

covering everything from dealing with the effects of the pandemic to wildfires. It was necessary to strengthen cooperation and networks to ensure that adequate resources were available in the region. Fourth, the environment. The Baltic Sea was heavily polluted, the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan was a promising step in dealing with this common challenge, but more concrete action was needed to achieve sustainable results. As part of their efforts, it was also required to support sustainable shipping and ports.

To conclude, Minister Linde said she was convinced that the recently agreed direction of CBSS activities would prove valuable and help the organisation to deliver concrete results to the benefit of the member states and people of the Baltic Sea region. She was looking forward to continuing their robust support and cooperation with Norway.

President **Pyry Niemi** thanked the minister for her important words.

Overview of the BSPC's Past Activities by BSPC President Pyry Niemi

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** noted that two years had passed by since the BSPC had last met in person in Oslo. The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the virus had affected all of them not only in their daily lives, but also in the framework of their parliamentary cooperation. The president was convinced that all of them were looking forward to being able to meet again and to engage in conversations not only during the Conference but also in the important sidelines.

With that said, he was very proud that the work of the BSPC had permanently continued during the pandemic. With online meetings, seminars and deliberations, they had done their best to work for a better future for the Baltic Sea region together – not letting the pandemic interrupt their intense cooperation and contacts.

The current Swedish Presidency went under the title Sustainable Democracy and focused on how to face common challenges in a changing world where new circumstances had emphasised the need to preserve and protect what was good and address the challenges that lay ahead by adapting to changes. Democratic institutions, solid cross-border cooperation as well as environmental and social sustainability were cornerstones of the BSPC: Preserving these had been their priority throughout the year.

As already pointed out, since its foundation in 1991, one of the stated goals of the BSPC had been to support and strengthen democratic institutions, and it was necessary to continue in this direction. This year, it had been 100 years ago that women had been given the right to vote in Sweden. The Swedish Parliament's celebration of 100 years of democracy was a reminder that democracy was nothing that one could take for granted: It was necessary to strive for democracy and democratic values every day.

The spread of COVID-19 and the fight against the pandemic was yet another reason to safeguard democratic values, and the speaker noted that this had also provided a reason to appreciate and safeguard the strong cross-border cooperation at the heart of the BSPC. Many of the challenges in the region went beyond borders, and the cooperation and intention to find solutions must do the same.

At the BSPC's online Standing Committee meeting in November, they had discussed the topic of democracy more intensively – with expert presentations on democracy and political participation and how this had changed over time. They had also spoken about how young people could be involved in the decision-making processes in the region.

The president pointed out that these discussions had been continued at an online seminar in connection with the Standing Committee meeting in February, with expert presentations on democracy in a new media landscape: digitalisation, combating disinformation and fake news as well as protecting free media and freedom of speech – a discussion that would be continued at this Conference.

At the Standing Committee meeting in February, the COVID-19 pandemic had been discussed with particular regard to the situation and progress on vaccination through presentations by the World Health Organization as well as the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being. This was another topic that would be addressed on this day.

In May, President Niemi explained, the BSPC had once again held an online Standing Committee meeting. In connection with this meeting, they had discussed other challenges associated with the pandemic, such as youth employment and challenges to the welfare system in a digital age. Demographic changes, labour shortages and an ageing population had been other topics on the agenda.

Another challenge that lay ahead, as had recently been shown in the IPCC Report, was climate change and how it was threatening bio-

diversity in the region. The current working group, chaired by Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, was focusing on these issues. Protecting the environment and safeguarding the Baltic Sea had been a top priority of the BSPC for a long time and still was a core issue for the organisation. More about the results of the working group would be heard later on during the Conference.

An important aspect of the BSPC's cooperation were their relations with others. The increased and improved relationship with the CBSS and other Baltic Sea region organisations also strengthened the common identity of the region. People-to-people contacts and relationships between citizens – this was the real backbone of their cooperation, the president underlined.

Another aspect of parliamentary cooperation was evident in the BSPC's partner organisations. The BSPC had for example continued to fill their Memorandum of Understanding with the PABSEC with life even in times of the pandemic. In November, there had been a joint meeting with the Standing Committees of the BSPC and the PABSEC, in which Minister Linde had also participated. During the meeting with the PABSEC, issues such as oceans, climate and democracy had been discussed, issues that did not stop at national borders but also called for solutions in supra-regional cooperation. Another example was the strengthening of the BSPC's relation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the aim to sign a Memorandum of Understanding this fall.

Traditionally, ever since their parliamentary organisation had been founded, there had been intense, close and, in every respect, productive and fruitful relations with other regional organisations. The president was therefore happy to see so many people attending today's Conference.

He noted that they often talked about the future of the Baltic Sea region – and what was the future if not the younger generation? Youth participation in decision-making processes had been an issue high on the agenda for several years. On the preceding Saturday, a Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum had been held. About 100 young participants from the eleven countries in the BSPC had attended and showed commitment, engagement and creativity in the discussions both on democracy and on climate and biodiversity. President Niemi was very proud to have been a part of this successful event and he was also proud to say that three representatives of the youth forum had joined the parliamentarians in this Conference who would share some of the main conclusions from the Forum.

At today's Conference, they would also celebrate 30 years of parliamentary cooperation. For 30 years, parliamentarians had directly and indirectly been making a decisive contribution to realising what the people who had elected them primarily regarded as the most important aim: stabilising and guaranteeing the peaceful coexistence of all people and countries in the region and, on this basis, achieving the highest possible level of prosperity and sustainable use and protection of the natural foundations of life.

During a ceremonial session at this Conference, participants would discuss and remember what the BSPC had accomplished and deliberate on what lay ahead regarding cooperation in the Baltic Sea region today, yesterday and in the future.

The BSPC had built its cooperation on contact between people, personal dialogue along with a familiar and friendly atmosphere. Even if this – due to the pandemic – had been difficult to achieve during the previous one and half years, President Niemi was very proud to say that the BSPC had been successful in continuing undiminished and had even succeeded in deepening its work by shifting to an online format. They had maintained and intensified the parliamentary dimension of international cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

However, he cautioned that a digital format could not beat meeting in person. It was therefore his great pleasure, together with the Swedish delegation to the BSPC, to also host the 31st Conference, which was planned to be held in Stockholm on 12–14 June 2022.

Finally, the president congratulated the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 30 years of parliamentary cooperation and wished everyone attending a successful Conference.

On that note, President Niemi handed the screen over to the BSPC Vice-President Johannes Schrap for the first session of the Conference.

FIRST SESSION

Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region



Chair: Mr Johannes Schraps, Vice-President of the BSPC

BSPC Vice-President **Johannes Schraps** thanked the president not just for giving him the floor but also for these very important introductory words. He further offered his gratitude to Dr Norlén and Ms Linde for their introductory speeches. In his mind, there had already been a lot of important topics mentioned that would be discussed at the present Conference. As Vice-President, he felt honoured to chair the first session of this annual Conference, explaining that this session traditionally dealt with cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. On this day, they wished to discuss this topic under the headline of Peaceful and Reliable Neighbourliness and Intense Cooperation Built on Inclusive Participation and Trust in the Democratic System. That, he added, included the main goals of the BSPC's cooperation for the last 30 years and their values. That was also what they were striving for, what they wished to keep at the highest possible level in their respective countries and what they also wanted to see in their neighbouring countries. Only if the BSPC's neighbours were based on the same fundamental principles and foundations, they could expect to realise their own goals of peaceful surroundings.

Mr Schrapls noted that just the preceding evening, together with the former BSPC President Franz Thönnies who was also attending the Conference, both of them had been at a very good meeting of the board of the Norwegian-German Willy Brandt Foundation. Not just this Norwegian-German cooperation was proof of the very good bilateral relations between the countries of the BSPC, but even more important for them were the excellent multilateral collaborations in the Baltic Sea region, like the BSPC or the CBSS.

Therefore, the Vice-President was particularly pleased that the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs as the current chair of the CBSS, Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, had agreed to speak to the BSPC on this day – especially given the current trouble spots in the world, in particular the situation in Afghanistan but also other developments and tense situations in the BSPC's immediate neighbourhood, such as in Belarus. These also required their full foreign policy attention. Accordingly, he noted their common delight that Minister Søreide had made it possible to attend this Conference and give a speech. Mr Schrapls noted that it was also of particular importance, also for the BSPC's work, that the Foreign Minister held the presidency within the CBSS. Some of the attendees, he added, had already been fascinated to hear her speech at the CBSS Foreign Ministers Meeting on 1 June 2021 as well as her address at the Barents Sea Parliamentary Conference recently. Mr Schrapls said that the attendees were very much looking forward to her speech and handed the screen to her.

Speech by Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Chairwoman of the CBSS

Minister of Foreign Affairs **Ine Eriksen Søreide** thanked the BSPC for the invitation and opened her speech by addressing all attendees, noting that she was very pleased to join the 30th BSPC annual Conference. She warmly congratulated them on 30 years of collaboration. She further extended a special greeting to former BSPC President Franz Thönnies whom she knew from many, many years back, especially during their work together in the Willy Brandt Foundation.

The parliamentary cooperation that could be witnessed on this day was of great importance. As many of the attendees would remember, the Norwegian storting had had the pleasure of hosting the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Oslo two years earlier. Ms



Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Chairwoman of the CBSS

Søreide believed, as a long-standing parliamentarian herself, that conferences like these offered the opportunity to check the pulse of political cooperation and also discuss opportunities and challenges facing the region. She very much valued these dialogue forums.

This was a time of major change and ongoing challenges, as had been mentioned in the introduction. The overall security policy situation was also shifting. Stronger global political rivalries were emerging, and many global fault lines were widening in a way. It was her belief that there was no doubt that the impact of climate change was ongoing and also materialising around them as they were speaking. On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic had brought serious disruption to their societies. One could see that the barrier regions of the world were struggling with instability and unrest. Maybe the most dramatic and most current example was the present situation in Afghanistan. Combined with deteriorating living conditions in many places, the current crisis meant that one had to expect and also prepare for new and persistent migration challenges.

Minister Søreide expected that all of them had seen the recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It was a wake-up call, and there was a need for an urgent global response and the implantation of the green transition. The green agenda had to be viewed as more of an opportunity for their societies to become more technologically advanced, more equitable, as a stimulus for growth and not necessarily as a burden on their economies and communities. In her opinion, the green transition was absolutely possible. Much of it was already underway, she noted,

that they all knew about. The minister pointed to what the European Union was doing as what she perceived to be a global leading force in this matter with the European Green Deal and with the Fit for Fifty-Five as major platforms for success. She had to note, though, that it was up to all of them to fill these platforms with the contents that would make them successful. She was hopeful that this would have a positive effect across the entire region. When one looked at the European Green Deal, seeing that it was both a growth strategy but also a way of implementing the Paris Goals, she considered it a wonderful package that all of them could make use of.

However, she needed to mention that she was more concerned regarding the status of democracy and the rule of law. A weakening of democracy and its institutions also constituted quite a threat to their internal cohesion. Political and economic success stories in the framework of European cooperation as well as in their individual countries had unfortunately not always been accompanied by increased trust in established political processes. Democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, these were all values that they had to continue to fight for. At a time when fragmentation, when distrust, when polarisation was on the rise in many countries, what they had to do was learn from the past as they focused on the future. In her view, there was a great responsibility resting on all of them – especially as political leaders from governments and parliaments – to work to counter the negative trends by supporting cooperation, by seeking compromise and to find some common solutions through that strong global governance that they had, based on agreed principles.

Despite the many challenges facing them, she thought it fair to say that the Baltic Sea region was a prosperous region. The eleven countries that made up the region represented what she considered an impressive nine per cent of global GDP. Moreover, eight of their countries were EU members. Trade among these as well as the three non-EU members accounted for about one hundred and eighty-five billion euros annually. This was very much a reflection of a remarkable level of trade, professional contact and exchanges. She considered the region to be a success, and they were probably better positioned to handle the challenges coming their way than any other macro region in the world. Of course, though, they could always do better. Although they were managing well in the security policy area, she believed that could be improved as well. Minister Søreide was convinced that the EU and NATO remained key platforms for ensuring the stability, predictability and prosperity for members as well as their neighbours. Two organisations were of fundamental historical importance for the whole region, she pointed out. This year, they could look back at the events of thirty years earlier when

several of their members had re-emerged as fully independent states and parliamentarians had been very quick to seize the moment, as were governments. Robust cooperation platforms had been established, with the primary focus on practical issues of importance to the region and its citizens.

As had been mentioned at the beginning, Norway currently held the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States until July of the following year. The Ministerial Meeting that had taken place on 1 June 2021, hosted by Lithuania as outgoing presidents of the CBSS, had been important for the Norwegian presidency as well because the meeting had adopted a new political vision for the development of the Baltic Sea region by 2030. She saw it as a distillation of all the good things that they were aiming to achieve in the region, and moreover, it attached importance to the rule of law, democracy, equality and inclusiveness. In addition, it also valued the involvement of civil society and young people. The region intended to remain at the forefront of efforts to promote sustainable development, cross-border cooperation and integration. This document would also guide the work of the Norwegian CBSS presidency, and it would be important to ensure the continuity from the previous presidencies. Their programme, the foreign minister explained, targeted innovation and green transformation in industry, transport and energy and the circular economy as special themes. Norway attached importance to nurturing regional identity and cohesion, and they also put great value in expanding the cooperation with regional and municipal authorities. Therefore, they intended to build further on the Council's very successful mandate on civil protection, children at risk and trafficking in human beings. They had a very strong focus on organised crime and cyber-crime.

In her opinion, the strength of the Baltic Sea cooperation lay in its very practical approach to issues, to opportunities, to concerns that were shared by eleven countries, bound by common international commitments. This was an approach that was important to be maintained. At the same time, they could not turn a blind eye to the situation unfolding in their neighbourhood. With regard to Belarus – which also had an observer status in the CBSS –, it was dramatic to see the use of force to suppress the aspirations and wishes of ordinary people and to create tension among neighbours as part of the regime's survival tactics. The only way forward for Belarus was through dialogue and agreement with the opposition, ending the violence, releasing all political prisoners and returning to compliance with binding international commitments. Minister Søreide very much regretted that Mr Lukashenko was not accepting the assistance that Sweden as chair of the OSCE was offering.

Concluding her remarks, the minister provided a few words about the importance of including young people. Young people, of course, held the key to the future of the region, and it was necessary to listen to what young people had to say as all of them were working to build a resilient Baltic Sea region. Dialogue and contact between young people would help to forge a common identity and mutual understanding as well as create networks that would form the basis for solving common challenges in the future. This parliamentary conference had its own youth forum on the preceding Friday, focusing on the future of democracy and on climate change and biodiversity. It was vital to engage young people from all countries in a serious dialogue with political leaders and to listen to their ideas, their fears, their hopes. It was necessary to encourage their participation and be open to their insights. Numerous meetings with young people had given Minister Søreide first-hand experience on how inspiring it was to meet them directly, to discuss topics they were concerned about. Many of the attendees might have seen that Norway had launched their new white paper from the government side on the Arctic in November 2020. The government had wanted to make sure to include young voices in this paper. What they had done was establish a youth panel, consisting of fifty young people from all over the region. Their insights and their ideas had shaped much of the foundation of the white paper, and the government had followed up on this through budgets and meetings. What they had seen was that this youth panel had been a little bit of an international export success as there were many countries and organisations looking at how Norway had done this and how they in turn could do much of the same. Her point was that it was necessary to listen and learn from young people as the politicians were working on building a greener, prosperous and more inclusive Baltic Sea region.

Session chairman **Johannes Schraps** thanked Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide very much for her contribution, noting the digital applause and that she had mentioned a lot of topics that the BSPC was also taking into account in this year's resolution that would be adopted later on during the Conference. Mr Schraps noted that he had seen a lot of smiles on display when she had mentioned the implementation of a regular youth panel. That was a very important topic that was being discussed in the BSPC as well.

Mr Schraps added that the organisers were aware that the minister still had other commitments on this day and that she would have to leave right after her speech. Therefore, he expressed once again their

gratitude for her participation as well as for her impressive and enriching words.

He moved on to say that the attendees would now listen to a video message by the German State Minister for Europe, Mr Michael Roth. The German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas had been in Turkey the day before, apparently negotiating with the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan about migration from this very hard-hit region at the moment. Therefore, as Mr Maas was not able to attend the BSPC Conference, Mr Roth as the State Minister for Europe, representing the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the upcoming German CBSS presidency from 2022 – 2023, had sent a video message that would now be presented.

*Video Message by Mr Michael Roth,
German State Minister for Europe*

State Minister **Michael Roth** addressed the Conference, saying that the German side wished to intensify cooperation between the governments and parliaments and civil society. They wanted to strengthen democratic organisations and the basic idea behind the Council of Baltic Sea States because together with the BSPC, the CBSS was also an important place where they acted as a team. It was a strong presence in the region. He considered it such a shame that they could not meet in person because face-to-face get-togethers, exchanging information and ideas directly, those were truly the



Mr Michael Roth, German State Minister for Europe

engines driving the building of trust and the cooperation between all of their countries. Mr Roth still hoped that, even in a virtual format, they would be able to exchange some good ideas.

He mentioned three issues of interest for this day's conversation. First were their common values, then the protection of the environment and the climate as well as finally youth. Democracy, human rights and the rule of law were things that had to be common denominators in the Baltic Sea region. The fact that they could not be taken for granted was something one saw again and again in Europe as well. For that reason, they had to actively fight for these values together, again and again, without ever letting up the pressure. Parliamentary cooperation across boundaries, strengthening democratic understanding in the region, was particularly important.

Addressing his second point, Mr Roth said that the environment and climate protection were global challenges that could hardly be greater than they were at this point. They impacted every one of them and could only be solved together. He saw the Baltic Sea region as an incubator for future-oriented technologies and the Baltic Sea as an increasing source of green energy, particularly offshore wind energy. To achieve the ambitious EU climate-neutrality goal by 2050, it was necessary to strengthen their cooperation between their nations, in order to harness the full potential of renewable energies. An issue also affecting Germany concerned the dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea. The report by the special Rapporteur, Mr Stein, on this subject showed in no uncertain terms what immense pollution and contamination would result in the Baltic Sea if no action were taken and especially if none were taken quickly. It was in all of their interest to make the Baltic Sea a global pioneer regarding the removal of dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance on the seabed.

Finally, he spoke about the topic of youth. He was very glad to see just how active young people were under the auspices of the CBSS, not least with the Baltic Sea Youth Platform. All of them were contributing a great deal to creating a sense of identity across borders in the Baltic Sea region. He was very much looking forward to hearing what the Baltic Sea Youth Forum would give them in terms of recommendations for a democratic, environmentally sustainable Baltic Sea region.

He thanked the organisers very much for giving them a platform to exchange ideas in this manner. Mr Roth noted that Germany, in July 2022, would take on the presidency of the Council of Baltic

Sea States. They wanted to continue the long-term goals of the CBSS and ensure that Europe and the Baltic Sea region would build bridges to tackle the challenges facing them in the world. The BSPC remained a very important partner, and he wished them every success and good discussions. He thanked them for their attention.

Chairman **Johannes Schraps** highlighted the digital applause for this video message by State Minister Michael Roth. He thanked the speaker, noting that he would express the attendee's appreciation to him at their next meeting.

Based on what they had heard from both ministers, Mr Schraps thought that this confirmed the BSPC were discussing the right topics, also during their previous working group on Migration and Integration. They were on the right track discussing the issue of climate change and biodiversity as well in their current working group, an issue that would be revisited later on.

Mr Schraps opened the floor for comments or remarks on the contributions that they had heard until now. These might also be raised in the general debate later on, but he invited immediate comments or remarks. For the time being, no such comments were provided. The chairman said that he considered this first session a great start into the Conference. He offered his thanks to the speakers for their valuable speeches again, promising that their core messages would be taken into account by the BSPC.

This had been a short but essential part of their Conference about the cooperation at the governmental level. That was important for the parliamentary level as well. He thanked the attendees and handed over the screen for the second session to Pernilla Stålhammar from Sweden who would chair the second session.

SECOND SESSION

Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape



Chair: Ms Pernilla Stålhammar, MP, Member of the Swedish delegation to the BSPC

Session chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** thanked Mr Schraps for his words. She called for the attendees to move to the second session of their Conference, concerning Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape. For one hour, they would discuss how digitalisation was affecting democracy, how to combat disinformation as well as support the importance of free media and freedom of speech. She explained that she was a member of the Swedish delegation to the BSPC. In February, she'd had the opportunity to share a BSPC seminar on this particular subject and was very delighted that they could continue the discussion on this day.

Sad to say, they were seeing democratic backsliding globally and also in their close neighbourhood. It was always necessary to work in the direction of strengthening and safeguarding the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Democracy was not only free elections but also freedom of expression, a free and independent media, a vivid civil society and a vivid political opposition. They also needed to strive in the direction of these fundamental values.

She noted that they were living in a digital age where information and communication technologies were central to their daily lives. There were new ways to communicate with each other, to share ideas and information. Digitalisation made the spread of word much faster than ever before. On the one hand, this development meant new possibilities for political participation and access to information. It was easier for people to stay informed and, together with others, create and formulate opinions. On the other hand, there was an increasing risk for disinformation and fake news. That, in turn, had the potential to create polarisation, extremism and undermine democracy.

During the BSPC seminar in February, one of their eminent experts had argued that democratic dialogue was being challenged by disinformation, online hate and propaganda. He had exemplified this by stating that one out of three politicians in Sweden had been subject to harassment, threats and violence and had thus avoided speaking out or getting involved in particular issues. Further on, four out of ten journalists in Sweden had at some point refrained from certain topics due to the risk of threats. This, Ms Ståhlhammar said, was indeed a very bad development.

In connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, they had also experienced an infodemic. The UN and the WHO had urged countries to address this infodemic and promote science-based information and to combat misinformation. Social media had been used to inform people but, in some cases, had also been used to undermine the global response to the pandemic and the measures taken to stop the spread of the virus. The flood of information connected with disinformation and fake news made it very difficult to know what was true and what was false. One important response to this was, of course, the free and healthy independent media. These issues were of cross-border character, and they had to be tackled jointly.

Since 1991, the BSPC had been the main platform for cooperation and political dialogue in the Baltic Sea region with a well articulated aim to support and strengthen democratic institutions. Digitalisation was a process offering both challenges and possibilities for democracy, and Ms Ståhlhammar was looking forward to the deepening of the discussion in that day's panel.

She congratulated their first speaker on her new position as president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Ms Margareta Cederfelt had been a member of the Swedish parliament since 1999 and currently served in the Committee for Foreign Affairs. She had also been on the Swedish delegation to the OSCE PA since 2010 and

had extensive experience in election observation as well as in defining and defending democratic development and democratic values, the rule of law as well as peace and security.

*Speech by Ms Margareta Cederfelt, President,
Organization for Security and Co-operation in
Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)*

OSCE PA President **Margareta Cederfelt** began by stating it was a pleasure to be invited to this Conference as it was with friends in the Nordic, Baltic countries all around the eastern sea. This session's topic was something that was truly of concern to all of them, not only as parliamentarians but also as members of society. She wished to go a bit beyond the Baltic Sea region. Ms Cederfelt believed that the tragic events in Kabul, Afghanistan, over recent days and weeks truly put into perspective how media were perceived and consumed. She asked her audience to remember that twenty years earlier, the 9/11 terrorist attacks were the first ones to be televised live as they had happened. Footage from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had mainly come from embedded journalists. Today, though, everyone with access to a phone and the internet could be a media producer, and footage from terrorist attacks was appearing on their devices within minutes, sometimes seconds. All of them had witnessed how people had taken videos, using their cell phones, of tragic accidents around the world. While world events had traditionally been covered by established news organisations, independent agencies and



*Ms Margareta Cederfelt, President, Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)*

journalists had sprung up to offer new points of view. Extremist movements, such as the Taliban, had also understood these means to build up narratives to assert control. Often, these meant that opposing sides would have their own truths.

As had been seen in recent years, the rise of disinformation in western democracy offered major challenges to democratic institutions. While this had occurred in Europe and America, it was a growing trend in European politics. As part of the OSCE work to observe elections, for example, they had integrated the monitoring of social media for some years. They had seen that social media had a higher impact on democracy which was the reason for them including it. In addition, the OSCE had also monitored traditional media for a very long time. For example, they had looked at the time that the different candidates had access to the media but also who owned the media. That was also of interest. Another area of concern was who was using the media – was it the majority, was it the opposition, or was it somebody else? This, Ms Cederfelt emphasised, also had an impact on democracy. More and more findings would point out the negative impact of disinformation on electoral campaigns. In her view, politicians had to keep this in mind, both in how they communicated but also regarding the threat to democracy. Nevertheless, she did not wish to sound pessimistic because those developments also provided possibilities. Debates had been becoming more and more polarised, and political contestants were becoming victims of personal attacks. That had been seen in Sweden but also in other countries as well. In the end, there were fewer opportunities for in-depth analyses and political compromise.

However, it was necessary to remember that fake news and propaganda had been around for as long as human beings had been on earth. It was just the degree of monitoring that varied. What made it seem such a new phenomenon was the immediacy provided by the mobile technology. Ms Cederfelt, just as her listeners, was using social media and considered it a very good way to communicate. Nonetheless, there was also the hate speech and the lack of an auditor. She believed it was a fantastic tool that they should be using, also to communicate with their constituency. Moreover, there was the possibility of using the internet for conferences, such as this day's. She noted that the BSPC had spent a lot of time during the COVID-19 pandemic on the web. Without the web, it would not have been possible to have this communication.

Easy access to information was a very positive development, and Ms Cederfelt mentioned the internet had helped the opposition in Belarus to organise and gain strength since the preceding summer. She had noticed it by herself when visiting Belarus. She had last

been there in 2019, and it had been a totally different society from what it had been just two years before that, in 2017. That had been thanks to the internet and the possibilities it offered. While the ease of access had empowered citizens to move towards online platforms, it had also undermined traditional media as a pillar of the democratic society. She believed the key here was to bridge the gap between reliable information and plain propaganda. This called on politicians to take steps to better educate the wider public to become more media-literate and resilient to disinformation. Within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, her special representative on disinformation and propaganda worked to establish some degree of regulatory governance. For instance, they wanted to promote high-quality political journalism to be strong and independent public broadcasters. It was necessary to work together towards developing better norms and standards applying equally to traditional and digital platforms. It was equally necessary to make sure that throughout the OSCE region, legislation was implemented to guarantee freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

During the pandemic but also all over the world, Ms Cederfelt saw that the freedom of speech was stricken just as well the freedom of media. On all these issues, they continued to work in synergy with the OSCE representative on freedom of the media, the OSCE chairpersonship and the other OSCE structures to ensure the compliance of all participating states with the commitments to respect the freedom of expression and the free media. The OSCE PA was also eager to deepen their partnership with civil society and media organisations and all institutions adhering to these principles. But as politicians, they also should consider the role they were playing. She knew herself that it was not easy to react to an event with 280 characters in a tweet. Perhaps sometimes, it would be beneficial to think beyond their next tweet to focus on ways to reinforce democracy in these troubled times.

Ms Cederfelt thanked the BSPC for their attention and was looking forward to their thoughts on this topic.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** offered her gratitude to Ms Cederfelt, noting that the speaker had raised important issues and steps that were being taken under the auspices of the OSCE. They could build further on this in the discussion later.

She introduced the next speaker, Prof Jeanette Hofmann, who was a political scientist specialised in internet policy and digital society.

She was the founding director of the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society as well as professor for internet policy at the FU Berlin. At the international level, Prof Hofmann had participated in the UN World Summit on the Information Society and the Internet Governance Forum. Her current research focused on digitalisation and democracy as well as the emergence of the internet policy in Germany.

*Speech by Prof Dr. Jeanette Hofmann,
Director Alexander von Humboldt Institute for
Internet and Society, FU Berlin*

Prof Dr **Jeanette Hofmann** said it was a great honour for her to address this important conference and to share her thoughts on digitalisation and democracy. In the short time allotted to her, she wished to address two points. The first concerned the question of how digitalisation and democracy were actually connected. The second was about current tendencies regarding the regulation of platforms.

When looking at how the public discourse was talking about digitalisation and democracy, a recurring pattern could be seen. Usually, digitalisation was regarded as the driver of democratic change. It was held responsible for the decline of mass media, for the increase of disinformation campaigns, for phenomena such as hate speech and populism. It seemed that the internet was being blamed for



*Prof Dr. Jeanette Hofmann, Director Alexander von Humboldt
Institute for Internet and Society, FU Berlin*

anything threatening democracy at the moment. In her view, this interpretation was looking in the wrong direction because technology – particularly digital technology – was not something acting on its own. It had been invented by human beings, and more importantly, it was used by human beings. Prof Hofmann suggested that they look at the relationship between digitalisation and democracy in a different way, namely as two entities that were shaping each other. The way digital technology was used shaped how engineers further developed it, and the way it was used created new ways of institutions that then shaped who people were and how they perceived the world. It was this interaction between the people using technology and engineers further developing technologies that was so interesting, in her view, when discussing digital democracy.

A closer look at how democracy had developed over the past decade would show how democracy as a practice introduced certain demands towards technology. Over the decades, it could be seen that democracy had been changing quite a bit. Even if their constitutions were fairly stable, even if the democratic rule and institutions seemed to stay quite the same, as a practice, a lot had been changing. Two lines of change could be distinguished. One had to do with aging institutions, the other with expanding institutions. Considering the first, she noted that certain types of political participation that had used to be at the core of democracy were losing in terms of attention and value for the people when they were looking at democracy. Young people were not becoming members of political parties anymore, they did not think voting was the most important aspect of democracy. Moreover, US parliamentarians were surely aware that the relationships between voters and representatives was changing. That shift was occurring in many ways. For example, the core electorate of political parties was shrinking. People were making short-term decisions these days about the political parties they voted for. The respect for members of parliament was decreasing as well. At the same time, trust in parliamentary institutions was clearly declining in many countries. That did not mean that democracy as such was in decline. Prof Hofmann believed that democracy was changing. New institutions were emerging that gave them a lot of hope. For example, lots of people wanted to participate in new ways, such as many social movements springing into being. Young people wanted to express their concerns in movements, for instance Fridays for Future. Political participation nowadays was more oriented towards specific issues, i.e., people did not commit to long-term engagement, through unions and political parties, for example. Young people expressed their concerns in non-institutional, more informal ways geared towards what specific issues they cared about. Climate change was one of these issues, immigration politics

another of concern to many young people. That was one type of change, she noted: political participation outside of political parties.

Another significant change was the growing importance of the public sphere and digital media. Even before there had been platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, it could be seen that the public sphere was changing in many ways. People were expressing their political opinions instead of just reading the newspapers. The public sphere over the last decade had become much more interactive, and new ways of expressing one's opinion were emerging. Platforms such as Facebook facilitated people's urge to comment on political actions, observing what governments were doing and also criticising governments. Voting for or against a government every four or five years was not the only way of expressing one's democratic rights as there were other ways now. The public sphere was playing a truly important role in this. Democracy, even within the constitution, was changing in what could be called daily practice. This shift was what Prof Hofmann saw as creating certain impetuses and demands on digital tools. People used digital tools to express their new way of participating in democracy.

Digital democracy in her understanding took part at the intersection of the changing democracy and digital tools allowing individuals to enact their rights as citizens out of a desire to participate. While it was true that in most democratic countries, only about ten per cent of the population were very active while others were more passive observers of what was going on, these ten per cent of active people were driving the development of digital networks. They were driving it by using it for new ways of engaging in democracy. As an example, Prof Hofmann mentioned a new phenomenon called "platform parties". Parties were set up in a much speedier way, often even without formal membership, using off-the-shelf platform software to create new organisations in the hope of interacting more horizontally and less hierarchically. The speaker was a bit sceptical whether this would work out in the long run, yet there was an attitude towards experimental organisational structures to change politics in the everyday setting. Instead of the hierarchical, large organisations, people were giving new ways of interacting a try and also finding consensus. Therefore, democratic change was also a driver of technological change as well, the professor emphasised. People wanted to have less hierarchical, less bureaucratic and more spontaneous ways of working together, and they were using the internet for that purpose, for example. They desired methods of instantly expressing their concerns, their criticism but also what they wished to see happen. Particularly for the young generation, this was an

important issue. They were impatient and thought that there had been no change. They wanted to see action right at this moment, and the internet was their way of expressing it.

Prof Hofmann suggested that they should talk about and see the current situation as a digital constellation where new phenomena such as user-generated content served as an alternative to media representation of politics. It was an alternative in the sense that the media did not control the public sphere any longer. One could see both media reporting but also people commenting and discussing their political realities. This situation amounted to a thorough transformation of the public sphere. Said transformation called for new rules, she underlined.

Starting perhaps in Germany, new laws had been enacted that were geared towards enforcement of existing laws – such as the Network Enforcement Law – but also the Digital Services Act on the European level. These shared a few items. They dealt with the takedown of illegal content, which was really important not because there had been no illegal content before but because of the lack of forms of enforcing existing laws. Both the Network Enforcement Law and the Digital Services Act set strict deadlines for platforms to remove illegal content, and they imposed heavy fines for platforms which did not follow these new laws. What was equally important, they imposed new rules for platforms and social networks to report what they were doing, called transparency reporting. The platforms had to issue reports about complaints but also about the algorithms they were using. The ambition of the Digital Services Act was to ask platforms to tell the public about the algorithms in use and the principles behind them for filtering content but also for the advertisements they showed to their users. There would be new forms of complaint management as well as, in the long run, data sharing. As an academic, Prof Hofmann considered it very important that they got access to all the data gathered by platforms about their users and about societies.

So far, so good, she commented. The emphasis of these new laws was on enforcing existing laws. In her view, they must not forget that it was not only about law enforcement, but that user-generated content demanded that one look at the change of human rights, its changing role. Some of these human rights, she hoped, would extend their scope towards digital platforms. Human rights usually regulated the relationships between citizens and governments. These platforms, though, had become so powerful and were affecting the exercise of human rights to such a great extent that Prof Hofmann believed that in the long run, they would need to ask platforms to

not only respect human rights but also to help people exercise human rights. That seemed to her a very important step that all of them had to take. Second, forms of institutions for citizens' right to appeal were needed. When platforms filtered content, citizens had to be able to appeal when their content had been taken down even though users believed they had the right to publish certain things. She explained that algorithms did not understand irony, they did not understand citation or other forms of rightful ways of expressing oneself. So there had to be powerful rights to appeal. Furthermore, the speaker believed that support for victims of disinformation and hate speech had to be institutionalised. Not enough was being done at the moment to help people who were victims of hate speech. In the long run, she envisioned the goal as heading towards a public-private infrastructure for protecting human rights online. People could now speak up, use their human rights in new ways that also called for new environments to be created that would support the people making use of these human rights.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** thanked Prof Hofmann for this very important speech and lecture. Picking up on the preceding, Ms Stålhammar pointed out that digitalisation was not bad or good in itself. What mattered was how it was used, how it was regulated and that it was accessible to everyone that wished for it.

She introduced the third speaker of this session who had been a member of the state дума of the Russian Federation since 2016. He was now the first deputy chairman of the Committee for Control and Regulation as well as a member of the Committee of Education. She yielded the screen to Mr Oleg Nilov.

Speech by Mr Oleg Nilov, MP, State Duma, Russian Federation

Mr **Oleg Nilov** began by noting that it was a difficult issue they were talking about: digitalisation and democracy. These were two rather general terms, and that could lead to the opposite result of what the words actually said. Over the course of the development of digitalisation, one had to ask the question of the necessity for MPs as representatives to decide important issues in their countries. If one said, "The power belongs to the people", "The wealth of the country belongs to the people", and if the opportunity was given – as was the case, more or less –, citizens were allowed to make decisions and



Mr Oleg Nilov, MP, State Duma, Russian Federation

almost make laws on their own, without mediators. Important items in the budget could almost be decided by the citizens, if all these trends developed in line with democracy. Nevertheless, there was another problem in play here, he cautioned. Mr Nilov believed they had to look at where this could lead, to discuss the future.

Going back to the freedom of the media and the freedom of the press in the new reality they were living in, he pointed out that this was at the same time accompanied by the question of combatting misinformation, disinformation and fake news. In a sense, that was an oxymoron. Talking about freedom of the press and freedom of the media, that was one subject. Or one could talk about combatting the media. It was the same media, essentially. At least, the Russian side took the view that it could only be seen in relative terms. Either it was not the news or not the priorities they wished to see, or it was. It was almost like a Gordian knot. What platforms, according to what rules, what was the meaning of freedom or of the lack of freedom? When would they decide that news were fake news? It could not just be their perspective or the perception of the citizens. This was a very tricky point. One could almost say that all of these processes, first of all, were joined together, and then there was the battle against misinformation, disinformation, lies, fake news. Mr Nilov considered it a somewhat deplorable state of affairs. It was necessary to have clear standards. He compared the situation to an infection. It was spreading, contaminating and killing many, and that was particularly true in the area of politics and the context of the media.

In that context, Mr Nilov addressed his homeland of Russia. To put it mildly, it seemed to be problem of double standards, and it was

not confined to Russia. He wished to look at where the issue could be found and where examples of such things occurred. In a political sphere, obviously, but that sphere also reflected the media landscape. The problem was like trying to square a circle. People perceived things differently in their different countries. A good example was the Taliban in Afghanistan. The whole world was shaken by what had happened there. The results might well be difficult. But at some point, the Taliban had been created as a virus, created to combat the Soviets. They had been an antidote at some point, strengthened to fight against the Soviets. And they had been created, pursuing so-called reasonable ends. That had been their origin, Mr Nilov insisted, and how they had been strengthened. It was a very sad state of affairs. It was almost like a virus that had been created in a lab, such as the situation they had in a different field, with the creation of another virus. It was depicted as a nice virus, and this was the Ukrainian Taliban. There were very different views – Russia saw it one way, European countries another way. These were the double standards that he had been talking about to measure these occurrences. That meant that social personalities, politicians and the media were assessing these issues differently – very, very differently. Here, he raised the examples of Edward Snowden and Julian Assange and how they were seen. American and European colleagues saw them as traitors and criminals, as spies. Traitors who had betrayed their countries, who had spread state secrets to the world. But if one spoke about Russian fighters against corruption or people who were actually corrupt, like Alexei Navalny, then everybody said, “No, they were in prison even though all they did was follow their conscience”. Again, very different assessments were made, depending on who one spoke to. Mr Nilov believed they would never make any progress if unified standards were not set and implemented. There were plenty of examples of this, such as Kosovo, Crimea or what was happening with the tigers in the Russian province of Yakutia. There were millions of hectares of forest that had burned, and the forest fires were continuing, even today. A year earlier, Mr Nilov had asked the BSPC to find forms for assessing the huge losses for their planet that were taking place and to the environment. He had called on them to talk about what policies impacted worse on the environment. As an example, he mentioned policies led by Greta Thunberg in terms of the reduction of carbon emissions, and she had been sorry for the poor cows, but on the other hand, they were doing nothing against the fact that the Russian forests were burning. Nor were there unifying international efforts in order to combat this evil. The green agenda simply didn’t focus on these issues at all, and that was not the right way to proceed. Mr Nilov believed there were countless problems of this kind.

So, talking about the free media as a reflection of reality, it was either a mirror reflecting reality as it really was, or it was a distorted mirror distorting reality as well. One could not blame the mirror for what it was reflecting. Combatting the mirror was not the way forward. What had to be done first and foremost was to talk about how they could achieve these unified standards and stop having a double standard and applying that. He called on his colleagues to think about how long it had taken to stop these double standards in terms of Russian inventions. Here, Mr Nilov spoke about the Paralympics as an example. The Russian Paralympic athletes had been libelled for years. First, they had been allowed to compete in the Paralympics and then they had been told they were not allowed under a Russian flag in the Paralympics. But these were people with disabilities, he pointed out, people who were ill in certain cases. It could not be the case that they measured everyone the same way. These double standards had to be dropped, he underlined, or at least the limitations of policymaking had to be reflected in the mass media as well.

Mr Nilov concluded his speech at this point by referring to Omar Khayyam who had said, “And how could he have lived, had he not committed sin, can you tell?” what means: if anyone had lived without a sin, then they had not lived. He further quoted, “If You punish with evil the evil I have done, tell, what is the difference between You and me?” Responding to evil with evil did not make the responding side any better, Mr Nilov said. He very much appreciated that they could speak freely in the BSPC, expressing their ideas freely. What he would like to see was that they should be less prejudiced and biased in their encounters with one another and be more honest with one another. Combatting the double standard had to be something that they should achieve and keep high on their agenda. He called on the BSPC to fight against Russia-phobia and Russia-bashing and fake news regarding Russia. Russia was an independent nation.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** thanked Mr Nilov. She noted that some of these perspectives were seen differently, but it was always important to safeguard the freedom of expression. On that point, she introduced the representative from civil society. Since 2019, Mr Erik Halkjaer had been president of Reporters Without Borders in Sweden. Mr Halkjaer had about twenty years of experience of being a journalist and having worked for various written media in Sweden.

Speech by Mr Erik Halkjaer, President of the Swedish Section of Reporters Without Borders

Mr Erik Halkjaer thanked the BSPC for the invitation as well as Ms Cederfelt, Prof Hofmann and Mr Nilov as speakers before him. Their contributions had been interesting, he noted. Mr Halkjaer pointed out that he had addressed this forum in the spring, before



Mr Erik Halkjaer, President of the Swedish Section of Reporters Without Borders

the summer, although the audience might have been a little different. At that point, he had mentioned that press freedom was under pressure all over the world, including Europe and in the Baltic states. They were not free from this attack on press freedom, not even in this area. A quick look at the report by Reporters Without Borders, the Press Freedom Index, showed that – apart from Norway and Finland at the top –, Lithuania and Latvia were the only two countries showing something like improvement in terms of press freedom over the last few years. All the other countries, including Sweden, were going up and down the list. It was not looking that positive, in his estimation. All of them were facing great challenges in their respective countries.

He went on to point out that journalists were being killed, even within the European Union. That was horrendous, he underlined. Nevertheless, he considered the greatest threat they were facing in the EU and the Baltic states were harassment, threats and hate speech. These were generated both by state actors as well as private sector representatives, organised crime or common citizens. With the pandemic, there had been a rise of these threats. Journalists covering the pandemic or the regulations and methods used to inform

or handle the spread of the virus had been suffering more threats and hate speech, or they might have been oppressed by the state or put in jail or forced to cover something else, such as sports or culture issues. The flow of disinformation had been increasing all over the world, including the Baltic Sea region. As Ms Cederfelt had said earlier, this was not a new occurrence. All the factors he had just mentioned were something that had always been there. But what the pandemic had brought about was something that the World Health Organization (WHO) called an “infodemic”: a worldwide spread of disinformation along with threats and harassments in the footsteps of the virus. All of this was much more than there had ever been before, because of the global digital platforms. He noted that this had been pointed out earlier by Prof Hofmann in particular. This development could be called a storm or a hurricane of disinformation, threats, harassments but also surveillance. This did not only concern journalists but most citizens.

At Reporters Without Borders, they had long advocated for more transparency towards these platforms, as Prof Hofmann had asked for earlier. For long, they had asked for more open algorithms and more transparency, to see why certain contents were promoted while others were blocked or even suppressed. His organisation had long advocated for more press freedom on the platforms so that journalists and journalistic or media contents were boosted and that verified journalistic contents would be easily spread and shown on these platforms instead of contents and information from non-verified sources. More media plurality was needed on the media platforms. As a citizen, one could get a variety of information, from a lot of different sources. This, Mr Halkjaer underlined, was truly life-saving during a pandemic. That was necessary. As a citizen, one needed to be able to make their own decisions, to make up their own mind, with information from a variety of sources, with different angles and views. That was vital in stopping a pandemic. During the pandemic, the platforms had indeed been blocking and in some cases taking down misinformation – what was called “fake news”. The question, though, was what constituted fake news and who decided what fake news was.

Mr Halkjaer said that the methods employed by the platforms were okay but not unproblematic. At Reporters Without Borders, they would rather talk about carrots than sticks. Instead of blocking and erasing content, they would prefer if the platforms and digital outlets were spreading more information from verified journalistic sources to boost these sources. His organisation had even created a tool for this: the Journalism Trust Initiative which had been launched in the spring of 2021. That was a method for media out-

lets to certify journalism and show their audience how these worked, providing more transparency. Moreover, while they were asking the digital media platforms to be more transparent, they equally asked the journalistic content – the traditional media outlets – to be more transparent as to how they implemented their journalism. This concerned questions such as which sources they were using, how the sources had been acquired, how were the contents verified, who was paying for the contents and who were the owners of the outlets. With this certificate from the Journalism Trust Initiative, Reporters Without Borders was hoping that this could be used by the digital media platforms and by users to know that this was a trusted media outlets in contrast to another not verified source. Disinformation and fake news were best fought through journalism with verified sources, it was best fought with investment in journalism.

His organisation had also worked with an initiative called Information and Democracy. There, a large group of countries had been put together. Mr Halkjaer mentioned that all countries were of course welcome. They had created a forum for information and democracy. The idea behind it was to work together to find a way to make the internet more democratic – to make the digital platforms more democratic. As Jeanette Hofmann had said in her contribution, the goal was to make it easier to enforce and appeal to the platforms as a citizen.

Unfortunately, in a forum of parliamentarians from all countries around the Baltic Sea, Mr Halkjaer had to say that there were countries in this region who were not using what he had just described. Those nations were using another method, i.e., blocking, suppressing and making it harder for journalists to work. For example, there was Russia which had implemented a whole set of laws according to which journalists had to register as foreign agents or where the telephones one bought featured pre-installed software. It was illegal to spread false information – as had been discussed here. But the question was how to decide what such false information was. Russia was blocking sites, and platforms needed to block illegal content. This was interesting, Mr Halkjaer noted, because Prof Hofmann had also mentioned this as a German law. In his view, this was a very sensitive issue because the question remained of who decided what was illegal and what had to be blocked. He said that this decision-making process had to follow the human rights and already existing laws. All of these methods, though, were highly sensitive, and he would be careful about using them. Instead, he preferred using the carrot, to work for more media plurality and create a state where there were more journalists who could work, where it was easier to verify who was a journalist. After all, there were tools to do

so, such as the Journalism Trust Initiative. It should also be revealed what methods these journalists were using. All of that should be shown openly, instead of blocking and making it harder for different actors. In the end, one had to ask themselves who was deciding what was fake news, false information etc.

He went on to talk about the situation in Belarus which was deteriorating quickly and how Belarus was using disinformation in an information war against Lithuania. That affected the European Union and its citizens. Once again, Mr Halkjaer was getting calls from journalists, asking him how one could determine if something was verified content, dealing with information received from the border between Lithuania and Belarus. He could only answer that he didn't know but that the journalists had to check the sources. That was essential and a journalist's job. Where did the video come from? Who was behind it? Could the journalist verify the information from another source? These and more tasks along this line were crucial for journalists and had to be done.

He went on to describe the situation south of the Baltic, specifically in Poland where laws and media takeovers were used to diminish media plurality. Once again, he emphasised that this was not the way to create a democratic society. The recipe for fighting disinformation was with media plurality, journalism, transparency and press freedom. That was how one built a long-lasting, sustainable democracy, he concluded.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** offered many thanks to Mr Halkjaer for these very important words and also for the important work that Reporters Without Borders were doing all over the world in following the situation for reporters that had been silenced, harassed and even killed. The situation was truly tense for many journalists around the globe, Ms Stålhammar pointed out, and it was important that this concern was raised. The possibilities to work through media plurality and press freedom were decisive.

Panel Discussion

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** explained that they had listened to all their panellists, noting that different views had come up during the discussions. In that respect, she asked if Ms Cederfelt would like to react because she had been the first speaker.

Ms **Margareta Cederfelt** also thanked all her fellow panellists. It had been very interesting to listen to them and receive all their different remarks. She noted it was very positive to hear that everyone was supporting freedom of expression and the freedom of media. But as



always, she cautioned it's all in the details. First of all, she pointed out that the OSCE was defending freedom of expression and the freedom of media. It was not optional. In the OSCE, all participating states had committed to this, and it was their role to make sure that governments lived up to that pledge. It was also necessary to give the media the tools to be independent and free. Protection had to be given to ensure that journalists and their sources were not harassed. Nevertheless, she also had to admit that that was far from the case in several countries. Research and science were very important aspects, as Prof Jeanette Hofmann had presented. Ms Cederfelt believed that the professor's results needed to be included in a political dialogue because of the recently implemented laws and agreements. Referring to Mr Halkjaer's comments, she underlined the importance to act and promote content rather than enact new blocks to freedom. Regarding Mr Oleg Nilov, Ms Cederfelt had considered it very interesting to listen to him. She was first very happy to hear about the freedoms that had to be protected but was also very sad concerning the fires in Siberia and how they were affecting the people there and the whole world. Nevertheless, she thought that there was in fact a debate on how to defeat the fires. That was what the UN Sustainable Goals were about. Moreover, that was what they were debating all over the world, not only the fires in Siberia but also fires in the US and the Mediterranean area. All of this showed the importance of global cooperation. Ms Cederfelt was looking forward to cooperation inside the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with Russia on this important issue, on climate change, because they all needed to cooperate. Moving on to the issue of media, Ms Cederfelt referred to Mr Nilov's quote of Omar Khayyam and said that she was not responding to evil with evil.

Regarding Ukraine, she had to speak up because she had been very engaged in that country for many years. She could have said that

this issue showed the difficulty with truth but rather the truth could be used in a way that Ms Cederfelt did not see as proper. In the OSCE PA, the discussion was framed as the crisis in and around Ukraine. It was very difficult for her to use such terminology preferred to call it Russian aggression because that was a war that had gone on for seven years. Crimea, much like Ukraine, was an area with internationally agreed borders. Ms Cederfelt repeated the last part. Nonetheless, Russia was denying these borders. She had heard Russian parliamentarians saying that Crimea had finally come home. The speaker did not agree with this picture because there were international agreements about the borders. Again, this should actually be what is the truth. Otherwise, why should there be negotiations? Why should there be political agreements if they could simply be broken because one party wanted to change them? This highlighted that difficulties would remain even after agreements on reporting had been enacted. Ms Cederfelt further refrained from saying anything about Mr Navalny or Mr Boris Nemtsov, although she referred to a report by a special Rapporteur of the OSCE on the assassination of Mr Nemtsov that could be found on the OSCE homepage. She recommended it for reading because it also showed the narrative of what might be the truth and what might not be the truth. She believed that freedom of expression was very important, adding that, as a politician, she did not like being criticised, either. Nonetheless, it was important in a democracy that there was the possibility for people, for organisations, for media, for journalists to be critical and to do so without any fear of having to go to jail or being assassinated. Ms Cederfelt hoped that Russia would continue to cooperate on these issues because she was certain that the Baltic Sea region – as well as the OSCE region – would benefit from this: the freedom to be critical of those who had the power to make decisions.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** underscored the importance of Ms Cederfelt's remarks about Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea as well as Messrs Navalny and Nemtsov which she agreed with. She asked if someone else among the panelists wished to react. As there was no immediate response, she turned to Prof Hofmann as she was doing a lot of research on implementation and how digitalisation should be handled. Ms Stålhammar asked what parliamentarians could do regarding these subjects and what the most important things were that they should pursue.



Prof **Jeanette Hofmann** thanked the chairwoman for this very important question. One thing she had noticed during this discussion as well but also earlier when listening to politicians at the national level was that the focus was very much on media and how to ensure plurality of



media. While that was of course important, she said that her feeling was that it had to be taken into account that there was a new type of content. That was the expression of individuals who were using the digital sphere as their new medium to take their rights and express themselves. This was such an important area, she underlined, and it would not go away anymore. When she looked at the German but also the European legislation, there was not enough of a focus yet on how to deal with user-generated content. First of all, the term was poorly chosen. Content sounded like a product while in fact, it was more the result of the freedom of expression. A different term was needed to describe that, thanks to the internet, everybody could now speak to the world or entertain the world and had an individual loudspeaker. There were a lot of good aspects about this. It could strengthen democracy. But they had seen and heard as part of this Conference that it was also misused to a great deal for hate speech, disinformation and similar things. The big task ahead was to balance the protection of human rights, of freedom of speech and the enforcement of law against disinformation and hate speech. What Prof Hofmann found very important was that none of them were in a position to distinguish between truth and lies. They should not enable and empower any government to make this distinction. Processes were needed as was the rule of law to deal with this really delicate problem, namely that nobody owned the truth or had the authority to determine what was true and what was a lie. These were new topics. The content created by users posed a new regulatory issue, and it was necessary to spend a lot of time understanding this issue to regulate it in a proper way, without harming freedom of speech and other human rights.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** thanked the speaker for her very important words. She yielded the screen to Mr Nilov.

Mr **Oleg Nilov** wished to respond to the comments by Mr Halkjaer. He agreed with the journalist's opinion that bad examples were contagious. However, this bad example – the legislation on the foreign agenda and the media – was hardly something invented by Russia. He suggested that Mr Halkjaer look at how other western countries



were dealing with this issue. Mr Nilov asked where such laws were first used, where they had been invented and where they had been first actively applied to Russian media. He noted that Mr Halkjaer was outraged that Russia was responding the way it was

and that he felt the Russian response was not appropriate. Mr Nilov wished to look a bit deeper at the underlying causes. If one spoke of Ukraine or Crimea, he wondered who had created the precedent case in Kosovo and what international basis was used there. There were mafia-like structures that had committed terrible crimes, including trading with organs, and there had been plenty of press reports on this, and the European prosecutors always complained about this, but the European politicians had been silent on this matter. Therefore, he considered this issue an example of the double standard that he'd been referring to. It was necessary to combat the underlying causes rather than the symptoms. He said he would certainly agree that things like this shouldn't happen in Ukraine, and they shouldn't happen in Russia, but they shouldn't happen in other countries either. The reasons, though, were to be found elsewhere.



Mr **Erik Halkjaer** conceded the Mr Nilov was absolutely right. This was not a Russian invention. What he had been pointing out were the Baltic states and what was happening there right now. In that condensed view, a lot of elements had been left out. He

added a comment that he agreed completely with Mr Nilov that Julian Assange and Edward Snowden were victims of a global war on who had a right on information as well. They were whistle-blowers and should be protected as such. Very briefly, he wished to agree this was something that could be fought in all countries all over the world.

Chairwoman **Pernilla Stålhammar** offered her gratitude to the speaker and announced that the session had come to an end. She was glad that they now had some written words on this matter for the end of the Conference when the BSPC would be adopting their resolution. She handed over the screen to the next speaker.

GENERAL DEBATE

Re-starting after the COVID-19 pandemic



Chair: Mr Arvils Ašeradens, MP, Latvia

Introduction – conclusions from the region

Session chairman **Arvils Ašeradens**, MP of Latvia, welcomed everyone to the general debate of the 30th BSPC. This session represented a forum that had been introduced in 2018. Three years ago, in Åland, the BSPC had tried out the new format, a general debate without restricting the content to allow everyone to contribute what was particularly close to their heart. The format had been further refined during the BSPC's Conference in Oslo in 2019. The response to this initiative had been excellent. Therefore, it had been decided to continue at this Conference as well. The format had opened up opportunities to encourage the attendees to contribute and share their perspective on issues that were particularly significant from their point of view and that of their delegation. This format, Mr Ašeradens continued, allowed them to better understand the spectrum of opinions and priorities within the Baltic Sea region at the parliamentary level. For this session, he encouraged the attendees from the outset to make use of this opportunity.

This year, there was a particularly wide range of topics to be discussed. Of course, that included the one affecting all of them in

their parliaments, namely the pandemic, so that one question of the discussion was how the pandemic had affected the parliaments and the ways they worked. Other questions suggested by Mr Ašeradens concerned how to deal with economic consequences and the resulting burdens on public budgets, how to start over after the pandemic, which lessons had been learned, which answers could be given to current political developments as a whole, which problems would be raised as a consequence, whether there already were answers to these problems, and if so, which those would be. He noted that they had already heard about the foreign ministers of the Baltic Sea states having adopted the Vilnius II Declaration, an update for the Vision of the Baltic Sea Region Until 2030, on June 1, in the framework of the CBSS Ministerial Meeting.

In that respect, he introduced the keynote speaker, Mr Arnoldas Pranckevičius, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

As chairperson of this session, he used the opportunity to talk about the situation in the Baltic states, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. He started by noting that the second wave of COVID-19 had not left the Baltic states untouched. As a matter of fact, it had hit the countries quite hard and forced them into the second quarantine at the end of 2020. That time had been difficult for all the Baltic states as the economies had had to cope with significant lockdown measures. The economic sectors hardest hit across the Baltic states were similar, including transportation, entertainment and recreation as well as accommodation and all kinds of catering services.

Job retention schemes had been applied in all three states in order to prevent high increases in the unemployment rate, the chairman explained. These support measures could be considered effective, as the unemployment levels had remained moderate in comparison with other EU states. Important strategic decisions with long-term effects had targeted the transportation sector as well. For example, significant state aid had been provided to Latvian AirBaltic – providing flights in Europe – or Tallink – providing passenger ship services within Scandinavia. The current crisis and the means to manage it were significantly different from the previous financial crisis since generous support budgets were promised by the European Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Mr Ašeradens pointed out that all three countries had adopted and implemented strategies for overcoming the crisis and exiting the state of emergency: The Lithuanian government had adopted the Economic and Financial Action Plan in mid-March. It had five focus

areas, such as providing the necessary resources for the efficient operation of health and social security systems, preserving jobs and income, maintaining business liquidity and boosting the economy. Next to the Action Plan, the government of Lithuania had approved an economic stimulus package called “Future Economy DNA” in June 2020 aimed at promoting conditions for a qualitative transformation of the Lithuanian economy, sustainable development and the development of innovative, high value-added business.

In its strategy adopted in May 2020, Latvia’s government had identified three steps in overcoming the crisis: 1. Survival (aimed at limiting the spread of the virus and improving financial stability during lockdown); 2. The reorientation phase (defined as the post-crisis strategy, including immediate measures for activating the business continuity and structural adjustment); 3. The growth phase (targeted at securing higher growth in the future by implementing a set of medium-term support measures for economic transformation based on stimulus for export and productivity, automation and digital transformation as well as the green course).

The Estonian Strategy for Exiting the Situation Caused by the Spread of COVID-19 was tilted more towards solving the public health problems and mitigating the societal effects of the emergency situation. The first stage mentioned in the Strategy addressed the escalation of the infection outbreak, the second concerned stabilisation while the third stage brought the return to everyday life, also including the readiness for another possible disease outbreak. The imposed restrictions had been set in chronological and priority order, and their effect on the spread of the infection had been assessed.

Despite the near-term setback from the coronavirus resurgence and the slow start to vaccinations, Mr Ašeradens noted that the news on the accelerating supply of vaccines and increasing vaccinations of the most vulnerable population reinforced confidence in a gradual resolution of the health crisis throughout 2021 and in early 2022. The challenge of the coronavirus pandemic had added urgency to address long-standing endeavours to better use research and innovation to tackle health emergencies, climate change and digital transformation all at the same time. The Baltic countries had started to devise investment plans for a transition into greener, more circular and digital economies, which were required to reach the ambitious 2050 climate-neutral goals.

The chairman notified the attendees that the Lithuanian Vice-Minister had now joined the Conference and would present his speech.

*Keynote Speech by Mr Arnoldas Pranckevičius,
Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic
of Lithuania*

Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs **Arnoldas Pranckevičius** was grateful for the invitation from parliamentarians from across the Baltic Sea region. Being able to meet online had been one of the first lessons of COVID-19. He pointed out that it was important and interesting to discuss how in particular the Baltic Sea parliamentary dimension could contribute to the endeavours to combat the pandemic. It was his pleasure to address the Conference on behalf of the former Lithuanian presidency of the CBSS, noting that the term had ended in July. During this period, Lithuania had actively sought ways of turning challenges of the current period and difficult times into future opportunities. In Mr Pranckevičius's mind, there were four lessons for the COVID-19 aftermath: First of all – and very important for the region – was that the climate crisis had not disappeared but had in fact become even more important. Despite their economies and having limited travel and trade during this period across the world, the recent report by the IPCC had shown that the global community was way behind the set goals, and therefore it was important to tackle this matter with political will and with joint endeavours, not only in Europe but with their global partners. Therefore, this ambition of Europe to become a climate-neutral continent in 2050 was extremely important as well as implementing a transformation of the economic model in a global way, to see that as a new source of economic growth and to make sure that important technological change as well as new inventions reached all involved sectors. That would be transport, agriculture, energy or the environment.



*Mr Arnoldas Pranckevičius, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Lithuania*

The second lesson to be learned was the difficulty of transformation. They had not only seen the rise of digital communication and digital ways of doing business, learning online or working at a distance, but also the phenomenon of the world being more connected than ever before in its history but at the same time, citizens and communities were living more and more in digital tribes, in digital spheres that did not speak with each other, that did not understand each other and increasingly felt animosity towards each other. This happened on different issues, whether vaccination or any other aspect of the current reality. This, in his mind, gave them as diplomats and politicians an obligation to look for ways of using the digital tools not to distance people from themselves but to empower them and to build bridges between different communities that did not necessarily share the same ideas or sometimes were prone to disinformation or fake news. The digital transformation had to be accompanied by very strong cybersecurity, the fight against disinformation, data security and privacy, the ethics of artificial intelligence. At the same time, far more investments and emphasis on new technologies and big data, on the Digital Services and Markets Act – which was currently on the table for the European Union – were necessary.

The third lesson concerned migration. It was true that during the past year and a half, they had seen people travelling less. As a matter of fact, borders had been reinstated temporarily in order to stop the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, they should not be fooled that this century in many ways would be defined by the way politics managed to control the migratory flows. Not only were they happening because of such tragic events as were currently unfolding in Afghanistan but also due to climate change, due to the different authoritarian regimes, human rights violations across different world regions. Europeans would have to tackle this issue upfront, including a new – and at the same time old – threat of instrumentalising migrants for political reasons. An example of that had been seen in the preceding few weeks in Latvia, Poland and Lithuania from the Belarusian regime, using migrants as an instrument to advance their political agenda. That was unacceptable and should face consequences. At the same time, Europeans should work much harder on a common solution for this common problem and finally agree on a common migration and asylum policy. This should not only put emphasis on the security of external borders but also on clear asylum rules and rules on secondary migration. At the same time, viable and sustainable agreements with third countries, countries of origin and transit were very important in order for Europeans to be prepared to tackle migration in this 21st century.

The fourth and final phenomenon resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic that Vice-Minister Pranckevičius wanted to draw attention to was democracy. In the past decade or so, there had been an unfortunate retreat of democracy in various parts of the world. There had been attacks on human rights and freedom of speech and civil liberties in different parts of the globe, including Europe. Therefore, it was of utmost importance today to speak more, not less about democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the importance of equality and non-discrimination. This was exactly what the presidencies of the CBSS were trying to accomplish, also by working on a common resolution which had been adopted by their states. The concluding document of the Lithuanian presidency, the Vilnius II Declaration, a Vision for the Baltic Sea by 2030, had been adopted by the foreign ministers on 1 June. It spoke precisely about climate issues, the importance of the restoration of the ecological health of the Baltic Sea, about the importance of the green and blue economies – the potential of which still would have to be used fully, thanks to innovations –, about renewable energy and the green transition which were incredibly important for all of their nations and was also a part of the European recovery strategy, about fighting new forms of cross-border organised crime, about building up resilience across all parts of the society as well as regional cooperation and civil protection, the importance of cooperation in science and research as well as education, culture and tourism. Last but not least, the Declaration concerned upholding the rule of law, democracy and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr Pranckevičius ended his intervention with a quote from Andrei Sakharov, whose 100-year anniversary had been recently marked. That quote had also been brought forth by Gabrielius Landsbergis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, addressing the Ministerial Meeting of the Lithuanian presidency of the CBSS. The quote was, “Peace, progress, human rights, these three goals are insolubly linked to one another. It is impossible to achieve one of these goals if the other two are ignored.” Vice-Minister Pranckevičius believed this was a wise and very important statement that transcended time. They could not achieve peace, they could not achieve progress, nor could they achieve strong and sustainable economic growth and ecological well-being of the Baltic Sea region if they did not also take very strong care of human rights. He reminded his listeners of the fact that all of the citizens of the region could live in a society where they themselves and nobody else could decide about the future. He wished the Conference good luck and concluded his speech.

Session chairman **Arvils Ašeradens** thanked the Vice-Minister for his input into the general debate. He opened the floor for questions to Mr Prankevičius. As there were none, he moved on to the debate proper.

Mr **Wille Valve**, MP from Åland, began by noting that this was an important day for all of them. Their organisation was turning 30 years old. The BSPC had withstood the tests of economic crises, pandemics and international tensions, just to name a



few things. The organisation had propelled the development of the Baltic Sea Strategy and even evolved into a kind of role model for other regional modes of cooperation. In his speech, he wished to emphasise the environmental status of their common sea. As an Ålander, one constantly lived in the middle of the Baltic Sea and saw its changing face. That was not always a beautiful sight: He presented a picture taken from a boat, showing a slimy, yellow layer on top of the waves. Mr Valve said that every summer, the sea turned into a poisonous porridge for a couple of weeks. One could not swim, and it was important to protect animals and small children from drinking the water. The reason was quite simple: inputs of phosphorus and nitrates into the Baltic Sea. Phosphorus and nitrates came from toilet waste, ships, private drainage, agriculture and aquaculture.

However, there was good news: They could do something about that. And they had. When the use of phosphates had been banned in laundry detergents, it had been possible to see a small improvement in the status of the Baltic Sea. The building of water canals in St Petersburg had reduced the nitrogen influx by 1.5 times and phosphorus by 5.4 times, according to official statistics. On 7 June 2017, Kaliningrad in Russia had inaugurated its wastewater treatment plan – a very good use for the Baltic Sea, Mr Valve commented. Last but not least, the Baltic Sea was now the first sea in the world to ban cruise ship wastewater dumping. This ban would take full effect in the present year of 2021. The speaker wished to be clear that there were a lot of things left to improve, including where he lived, on the Åland islands. An unacceptable number of households were still not connected to a sewer system, in particular cottages. For aquaculture, a legal phosphorus cap had been set but it was possible to do better in terms of encouraging creativity to further reduce the outlet of nutrients. Every action counted, he underlined, no matter how small. Mr Valve emphasised that their sea was still

not healthy. It was important for the BSPC to continue this success story of international cooperation. It was particularly important that their resolution stressed the need of increased joint structural efforts to reduce nutrient influx into the sea. They did have the potential, though, of becoming a success story for other areas in the world, facing similar challenges, as well. He called on his colleagues to continue their work with increased ambition. That was what they owed to their children.

Session chairman **Arvils Ašeradens** commented that this was an issue very close to his heart. He thought that the health of the Baltic Sea was critical and was sure that Mr Valve's remarks would be considered in their upcoming work.

Mr **Johannes Schraps**, BSPC Vice-President, MP of the German Bundestag, opened by underlining what Mr Valve from the Åland islands had just said. This made clear how important the work of the BSPC was and also how important it was for



parliamentarians to put pressure on their governments to act in these areas and topics. Moving on to his contribution, he said that cooperation in the Baltic Sea region had a long history and had gone on for a very long time before Mr Schraps himself, as a very recent member of the BSPC, had become involved and been able to contribute to the history of the BSPC. It wasn't quite up to that of the Hanseatic League, but the BSPC certainly had a sound history so that they could celebrate 30 years of their collaboration together. This was why he was looking forward to the ceremonial session later on at the Conference, commemorating the 30-year anniversary of the BSPC, with those parliamentarians who had been working towards parliamentary cooperation and had indeed defined it over the last 30 years. For younger participants like himself, these were indeed role models and also people who provided an incentive to continue the good work of the BSPC in the future. This anniversary of 30 years of the BSPC occurred at a time of immense challenge. In order to retain peace in the Baltic Sea region and in order to overcome the crises facing them, multilateral cooperation in the region was crucial. The BSPC was a place where they supported democratic cooperation and strengthened dialogue, not just among parliamentarians but also among the regions, the state assemblies and their societies. As members of national and regional parliaments in

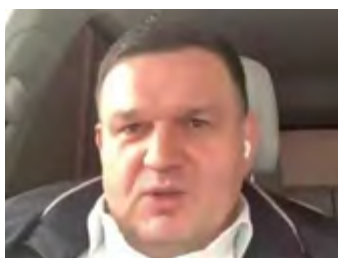
many areas, with the representatives of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, they were working towards the same ends. The Baltic Sea region could be seen as one that had a strong parliamentary presence, and they could send out clear signals, even though it was sometimes hard to assert them in their home parliaments. In the 30 years since being founded, the BSPC had expanded its mandate: Areas that the working groups had dealt with in the past had included sustainable tourism but also migratory flows, and the current working group was looking at the question of climate change and biodiversity. In light of these issues, he considered the BSPC as going far beyond the Baltic Sea region in terms of the reach of these concerns.

Over the course of their general debate, it had become clear how important the question of restarting their economy after the pandemic was. Mr Schraps noted that this was the title of the present session as well. That also showed the reach of these issues. Other matters were as important to them, such as progress in digitalisation in the whole region. The last year and a half had also shown them in no uncertain terms that in a crisis situation like this, it was necessary to pull together. That applied to tackling climate change as well. They had seen how quickly they had been able to respond to the pandemic, and it was crucial to respond the same way to climate change. The European Green Deal was one example. Mr Schraps thought that the Baltic Sea Youth Forum on Saturday had proved that they had to shift into a more climate-friendly society, and this had to be implemented. The time had come to act. This was something that the parliamentarians had to make clear to their own governments, to step up the pressure to act on this. Beyond climate change, there were so many other issues to take on, such as the conflicts among some of the states bordering on the Baltic Sea. These were either discussed formally at BSPC meetings or sometimes in the margins. He mentioned the conflicts in Ukraine and Belarus that had already been touched upon during the conference. Yet, on those issues, Mr Schraps conceded that they would never all share the same opinion. That was part of reality. What mattered, though, was having a forum to exchange their views. He emphasised the latter part. This was why their cooperation was not just important in terms of the concerns officially on the agenda but also to use the framework of their discussions to talk about some more difficult issues that could not always be put on the agenda *per se*. This was another reason why they were very much looking forward to being able to meet in person again. That gave them an opportunity to discuss these things in a more informal way, particularly the more difficult issues that were harder to discuss digitally. On this note, Mr Schraps said that he was pleased that the BSPC had at least man-

aged to meet at this Conference in a digital format and succeeded in covering a wide area of ground and sending some clear signals. He thanked President Niemi, the Swedish delegation and the Swedish Riksdag for the wonderful implementation of the agenda, taking over from their Lithuanian colleagues in the preceding year. Mr Schraps believed that the issues on the agenda were such that they touched all of them. Despite not being able to meet in person, the discussion had contributed to them working together within the BSPC on the basis of friendship and cooperation. It had also allowed them to set positive accents for all the people in their region. As the delegation of the German Bundestag, Mr Schraps added that they were looking forward to close cooperation with the Swedish presidency in the months to come and that they were very much anticipating continuing the work on the issues as the German presidency from June of the following year.

Mr **Arvils Ašeradens** thanked Mr Schraps for his contribution.

Mr **Sergey Perminov**, Member of the Council of the Russian Federation, congratulated everyone on 30 years of the BSPC. He further wished all of them successful work and mutual understanding in the future. The agenda they were discussing at the Conference



included issues that the Russian Federation Council was also discussing as well as challenges facing the Russian Federation in general, in the context of combating and containing the pandemic. There hadn't been a sense of tension or a lack of understanding, even on the digital platform they were using. He believed it was very helpful they could at least meet in digital form. They would be able to support their colleagues, should it be necessary to discuss these things.

Obviously, the environmental state of the Baltic Sea was at the top of their agenda, and the government of the Russian Federation was very concerned with this issue. He noted that Russia had approved a decision to provide comprehensive financing in order to ensure the safety of the Baltic Sea and to reduce the nutrient uptake as well as to implement things that had been agreed upon in the bilateral framework. The bilateral discussions and negotiations had led to agreements that would be put into practice in the years ahead. The

worrying questions that had been raised on this day would remain on the agenda. Mr Perminov wished to say something regarding the modern world and the digital technologies. In his view, they naturally involved challenges as they had all heard a number of times already during the Conference. The problem between *homo sapiens* and machine algorithms that were installed by the global players required common standards and rules of play. It was necessary to exchange arguments and counterarguments on these important matters. Mr Perminov believed that this was truly an acute issue because democracy – which had existed for hundreds of years now, in particular modern democracies that had been in place for about a century or so – had to deal with complex issues that were now on the political agenda in a way they never had been before. So, regarding the BSPC resolution, this was important. Just as important was finding common rules that everyone adhered to. This would become even more crucial moving forward than what one could see at the moment. Naturally, the Baltic Sea was something they all had in common as Baltic Sea states, and the future of their region was important. Thankfully, they had common scientific projects that they were working on. There were plenty of bilateral and multilateral projects going on at this time. Mr Perminov was looking optimistically towards the future, even though the context in which the discussions were currently being held was sometimes worrying. The Russian side would like to appeal to all participants of this Conference to look at the future facing them through a positive prism. The problems before them were not just facing the Russian Federation or the Baltic Sea states but everyone on the planet. He wished all of them health and success in their labours, working on the many issues that were in play. Mr Perminov noted that they had done some very effective work together.

Session chairman **Arvils Ašeradens** agreed that exchanging best practices and open dialogue was important.

Mr **Jonas Faergeman**, representative of the Baltic Sea Youth Forum from Denmark, said that their gathering on Saturday had brought a lot of young people together. He wished to extend some of the conclusions they had made on that day, regarding

some of the things that had been discussed so far, especially in the theme of the current session as to what could be done after the



COVID-19 pandemic and how those experiences could be used to further the agenda in the Baltic Sea region. To him, the most important topic for most young people in the region was the climate – by quite a margin the most important issue. They had seen the incredible ability to do a lot of very, very important stuff in each country and on a regional scale as well regarding the COVID-19 crisis. Every country had done what they thought was the best to limit the negative effects of the crisis. That had gone surpassingly well, in a short amount of time. The young people hoped that this ability could be extended to other topics, mainly the climate crisis. For many years – indeed for six or seven decades –, though, there had been a severe lack of ability and willingness to act on the climate crisis. The youths were hoping that now that they had seen politicians act extremely fast in an extremely short amount of time – which had been a great experience as that normally only happened in wartime. Finally, such speediness had happened for something that was not a war. Young people would love to see that extended to important topics on which they had been promised that something would happen for years now, for decades. Mr Faergeman noted that earlier on this day, it had been mentioned that the IPCC report had been a wake-up call. He was sad to hear that this was considered a wake-up call, considering that the report supported the same things that young people had heard for about seven decades since the first report of the UN. Moreover, there had been a significant report by the UN in 2014. Time and time again, there had been new reports, new promises and new ambitions being set annually. The new famous deadline was 2030 for most countries. The recent IPCC report had now moved the 2040 consequences down to 2031. As a matter of fact, there was now the sad position that they had lost ten years of their time for planning. That meant, currently, when subtracting ten years from 2031, one reached the present year. The youth of the Baltic Sea region would very much love to see politicians act in the same good faith and the same extreme competence on climate change. He underlined that climate changing was happening now, not ten years in the future. It had been happening for a long time. It was extremely important to have to consider it right now. Climate change was a crisis of immense magnitude, not only to their countries but the region in general and to the world in its entirety.

Session chairman **Arvils Ašeradens** thanked Mr Faergeman for his involvement in the organisation of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum which had taken place on the preceding Saturday. There was no doubt that the input of the youth in their work was very important. Otherwise, their work would lose sense. As there

were no further remarks, the session chairman thanked the attendees for their valuable contributions and input. Everything that had been said would be considered in the BSPC Standing Committee's upcoming work. He was looking forward to continuing these discussions in the coming year in June, hopefully in Stockholm and not in a digital format but rather in person. With that, Mr Ašerādens closed the general debate.

THIRD SESSION

Climate Change and Biodiversity

Climate change mitigation, adaptation and the preservation of biodiversity: trust in the state as an actor, the role of NGOs and voluntary organisations and the importance of innovation and science



Chair: Ms Valentina Pivnenko, MP, Russia

The session was chaired by Ms **Valentina Pivnenko**, former BSPC President, MP, State Duma, Russia. She said that it was extremely nice to meet them, at least in this format if they cannot meet face to face. Ms Pivnenko hoped they would survive this pandemic and find a way to meet in person soon enough. In the third session, she explained, they would be looking at an extremely important item on the agenda, namely climate change and biodiversity. They would be considering climate change mitigation, adaptation and the preservation of biodiversity, trust in the state as an actor, the role of NGOs and voluntary organisations as well as the importance of innovation and science. It was indeed the case that conservation of nature and climate change was dominating the agenda of the Conference – as indeed, it had to. It was all of their work because preserving the environment and nature was not just a job they did for themselves but for future generations.

On this day, as the BSPC celebrated its 30th anniversary, they could celebrate some of the things they had achieved in those years. They had done much to reduce the phosphate and nutrient

influxes that had caused algae bloom and had impacted negatively on marine life. Moreover, there were now international conventions for protecting the sea from dumping effluence from ships. HELCOM and its convention on protecting nature in the Baltic Sea had been implemented. The BSPC was focusing their work on protecting the environment. Now, they had seen that the fishing methods being used were ones that protected the lives of the entire chain of fish along with sustainable fishing. Then, there were the particularly sensitive sea areas that were being protected as well. At the Conference, they would be talking about an entire range of measures to protect biodiversity and tackle climate change while also looking at the role of youth organisations and the role of innovation and science. Ms Pivnenko reminded her audience that nature did not stop at their countries' borders. It was incredibly important to preserve the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea. In many countries, numerous measures had been put into place.

What they were not seeing enough of, though, she cautioned, were systemic research and studies across boundaries and borders. It was crucial for exchanging not just among the political stakeholders but also scientists. They had to be aware of the fact that the lack of nature conservation in one country would impact negatively on another country bordering it. All of the states were linked together through their nature across country borders. Ms Pivnenko hoped that this would cause producers of goods not to have manufacturing involving materials that could not be recycled, e.g., in packaging. Moreover, she wished for measures to reduce packaging quantities by up to eighty per cent. Goods should also be packaged in environmentally friendly packaging. The chairwoman underlined that this was not the first time that the BSPC had talked about this concern, and it was not just an issue that the Baltic Sea states needed to work on but rather one that all the countries in the world had to deal with, quite independent of their political and geographical characteristics. That would help protect their environmental system.

She opened the discussion by presenting a video message from Ms Svenja Schulze, the German Minister of the Environment.

Video Address by Svenja Schulze, Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany

Federal Minister **Svenja Schulze** explained that climate change and biodiversity loss were threatening the natural foundations of people's lives. Both challenges were tightly linked, onshore and at sea. For that reason, the minister was pleased by the BSPC's intense focus on the interactions between climate change and biodiversity. She noted that because of this, Germany had also made this link a focus of their HELCOM Presidency.

The seas were playing a key role in combating climate change, the minister went on to explain, pointing out that they absorbed heat and CO₂. However, the sea and its wildlife were paying a price. Acidification was occurring and affecting more than just mussels and snails. The extra heat was making numerous species move northwards while changing breeding patterns and food chains.

Marine ecosystems were heavily affected by climate change. However, at the same time, some of them made a very effective contribution to climate action. Blue carbon ecosystems, for example seagrass beds and salt marshes, stored carbon in soil over extended periods. Ms Schulze pointed out that her ministry was currently supporting research on the worldwide potential of blue carbon as well as on the factors benefitting or impairing these valuable ecosystems.

In November, she said that the German Environment Ministry would host a HELCOM workshop on the topic with policy-makers and scientists. The goals were to develop a common understanding



Svenja Schulze, Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany

of blue carbon, to clarify blue carbon's potential in the Baltic Sea, and to establish the role it could and should play in the future in marine policy.

However, Minister Schulze cautioned that the hope placed in nature-based solutions like blue carbon should not cloud their thinking. Climate change could only be stopped by sharply reducing greenhouse gas emissions, both globally and here around the Baltic Sea. The latest IPCC report illustrated how important this was.

Improving marine protected areas was another focus of the German HELCOM Presidency. The minister's goal here was to make the existing network of protected areas larger and more coherent. She further wanted to ensure that all of these areas were managed effectively. They should not just be protected on paper. Instead, they needed targeted measures. For that reason, Minister Schulze was in favour of no-take zones in the German marine protected areas. These zones were meant to help the recovery of fish stocks, representing a transboundary endeavour calling for cooperation among all of the Baltic Sea countries.

The speaker underlined that marine ecosystems were under enormous pressure. The aim of the German HELCOM Presidency was to help reduce this pressure. Minister Schulze was pleased about the progress the German HELCOM Presidency had made so far. The next HELCOM ministerial meeting would be held on the 20th of October in Lübeck. The minister had set her goal for the meeting to build on their progress and adopt an ambitious HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. It would not succeed without cross-party political support from the Baltic Sea area. She thanked the BSPC for their constructive attention to the work of HELCOM, emphasising that she was counting on the BSPC's support in future.

Session chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** thanked Federal Minister Schulze for her very interesting message, noting that they would continue debating this problem. The next speaker would be Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, MP from Sweden and chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity.

*Report by Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby,
Chairwoman of the BSPC Working Group on
Climate Change and Biodiversity*

BSPC WG CCB chairwoman Ms **Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby** said it was a great pleasure for her as the chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity to speak to them about the background and aim of the working group as well as some of the results so far. First of all, this summer, they had seen countless examples of extreme weather in different parts of the world, in the form of long-lasting heatwaves, burning forests – as her colleague from Russia had also commented on –, flooding and melting icebergs. Climate change was indisputably an ongoing process that they needed to adapt to. Even more important was doing their best to counteract and mitigate. As Minister Svenja Schulze had said so clearly and underlined in her video message, the situation for the marine ecosystems was critical and therefore, it had been most positive to hear about the German HELCOM presidency and its focus on biodiversity in this context. Ms Tenfjord-Toftby also believed that they could all agree on the necessity of cross-party political support from the states around the Baltic Sea.

The BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity had been launched at the 29th Digital Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, on 24 August 2020. When it had been established, it had been decided that it should focus on the environmental aspects of climate change and biodiversity as well as on innovation, technology and best practices. The primary outcome of their work would consist of a number of political recommendations on the topic of climate change and biodiversity. By acquiring knowledge from



Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, Chairwoman of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity

experts, learning from each other and by studying best practice 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. As pointed out in the scope of work of the working group, one of its goals was to create closer cooperation in the field and to facilitate far-reaching decisions through parliamentary support in the whole Baltic Sea region. Regrettably, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the working group had not yet been able to meet each other in person. Instead, during this first year, they had held three digital meetings at which they had been given valuable knowledge about the alarming situation concerning climate change, the current status of the Baltic Sea and not least a number of successful projects with the intention to improve the environment, both in the sea and on land. Regarding environmental projects, on a more local level, there seemed to be two important success factors: One was to both inform and involve all parts of the local community in order to gain acceptance and understanding for the different measures that had to be taken. The other one was that the projects had to be very well funded and given long-lasting financial resources for the required activities and measurements.

At their meeting in November 2020, she explained, the working group had learned that eutrophication was still the largest threat to the Baltic Sea and that it was necessary to reduce organic loads on the coastal areas and restore carbon-rich ecosystems to build resilience. They had also been told about a project called ElectriVillage, a solar-powered hydrogen refuelling station in a small Swedish municipality called Mariestad. It was aiming to create a more sustainable society while at the same time developing new professions. At the meeting in March 2021, the working group were, among other things, informed of the main contents and key issues of the upcoming update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and HELCOM's actions for a healthier Baltic Sea. They had also learned about the successful project Living Coast: Regaining a Good Ecological Status in Coastal Areas which had aimed to reduce nutrient input into the Baltic Sea.

Normally, the chairwoman noted, the working groups within the BSPC had a two-year mandate but because of the fact that they had so far been unable to arrange physical meetings which had in turn compromised their ability to draw conclusions and go forward, the working group had taken the decision that they would like to prolong their mandate until 2023. This would also mean that during the coming years, they would hopefully be given several opportuni-

ties to study best practice examples on location and that the quality and outcome of their work for that reason would be even better.

When it came to climate change and biodiversity, it was crucial to include the perspective of young people. In line with this ambition, a Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum had been arranged on August 28. As one part of the Youth Forum, the participants had been encouraged to give a number of recommendations, aimed to be presented to the working group. The group would, within its framework, further include the recommendations and consider how they could be incorporated into their work. Ms Tenfjord-Toftby had been deeply impressed by the engagement and knowledge that had been shown by the young participants, and she hoped sincerely that this had only been the beginning of a more structured collaboration with the younger generation in the future.

The Working Group CCB's interim report, she stated, that had now been published was an overview of the current results of their work. The primary focus in the report lay on the political recommendations which had been elaborated during the meeting and forwarded to the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. This report should thus be considered as the strategic summary of their work so far.

Finally, Ms Tenfjord-Toftby thanked the two vice-chairs of the working group, Ms Liz Mattson from the Åland islands and Mr Kolbein Otterson Proppé from Iceland, for their valuable contributions. Furthermore, she voiced her gratitude for all the members of the working group for their commitment, constructive discussions and a genuinely pleasant atmosphere. She was looking forward to seeing all of them in person, and with that, she concluded her presentation.

Session chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** thanked her for a very interesting full statement, with a lot of information. In Ms Pivnenko's view, she and her colleagues would no doubt support the continuation of the working group's mandate until 2023 because the problem of climate change remained one of the most important challenges facing all of them. Together with her colleague, Mr Elis-san Shandalovich, she was speaking with Ms Tenfjord-Toftby from Karelia, from Petrozavodsk where they attended this assembly meeting. They were trying to prevent climate change in their northern region because the heatwaves had been up to 33 – 35 °C up there in the north. There had been terrible droughts, it had been very hot, very dry, completely different weather from what was normal there.

Such weather conditions as these represented the change in the climate that could be seen across the globe. Their Baltic Sea region, which was a particularly fragile ecosystem, was particularly at risk.

She introduced the next speaker, Mr Anders Mankler, State Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate, Sweden.

Address by Mr Anders Mankler, State Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate, Sweden

State Secretary Mr **Anders Mankler** began by thanking the organisers of this Conference for the opportunity for dialogue and knowledge exchange on these pressing issues. As the IPCC had made clear in their latest report, climate change and its effect on water and seas were facts and global threats. Climate change would certainly have significant negative impacts on the marine ecosystems. On the other hand, they could not solve the climate crisis without healthy, sustainably used and well-protected oceans. This was because a healthy ocean absorbed both carbon dioxide and heat. Strengthening the nexus between the ocean, biodiversity and climate change was therefore a priority for Sweden. The situation was grave, the minister stressed. It was necessary to find the strength to accelerate their efforts. Remembering the words of the IPCC, the climate they would experience in the future depended on their decisions now. They had to be brave.



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

He believed it hadn't escaped anyone that water was playing a critical role in both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This had been made all too clear during this summer of extreme weather events. Forest fires, floods and extreme heatwaves leading to health risks, severe damage to property and ecosystems showed how vulnerable they already were to climate change. This was happening at this moment. So, it was crucial to work with climate change adaptation and increasing the resilience also of the marine ecosystems. Efforts for a healthy climate went hand in hand with efforts for healthy oceans. For example, to be able to preserve biological diversity in the sea, an ambitious climate policy was needed. At the same time, resilient and healthy seas contributed to the absorption of large amounts of carbon dioxide, acting as a lever making other climate measures more effective.

The Baltic Sea, the minister went on, was their shared sea and their shared responsibility. The well-functioning cooperation around the Baltic Sea was central both in handling the urgent pressures but also in contributing to the resilience of the ecosystems and welfare in the long term. He pointed out that all of them were aware that climate change would have significant negative impacts on marine ecosystems. Higher temperatures would result in less dissolved oxygen, decreased salinity and risks for higher inputs of nutrients. The rising carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere was leading to increased ocean acidification which was also a threat to several species in the food web. Urgent action was also needed for more resilient ecosystems in coastal areas and in the sea. To achieve that, it would be necessary to continue to strengthen their measures and efforts to improve the health and resilience in the Baltic Sea in several fields. They had to continue the establishment of a representative, well-connected and well-managed network of marine protected areas throughout the Baltic Sea. They had to climate-proof these MPAs and focus on carbon-rich habitats such as seagrass beds and also areas that could become climate refuges for vulnerable species.

Sweden had stressed the need for an ambitious global target of at least 30 per cent marine protection within the negotiations of the UN Convention on Biodiversity regarding the post-2020 framework for biodiversity. The situation for several fish stocks in the Baltic Sea, in particular cod and herring, was alarming, even if most stocks were fished according to the goal of maximum sustainability. It was necessary to implement an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management that also took into account the effects and interlinkages of fisheries and fish stocks with the rest of the ecosystem. They had all seen the severe negative effect of eutrophication. So, they had to continue their efforts to reach the goals set by HEL-

COM and reduce the inputs of both phosphorus and nitrogen to the Baltic Sea. HELCOM was an important basis for their efforts to reach these goals and many others. An ambitious new Baltic Sea Action Plan would be imperative, Mr Mankler stressed.

Their cooperation in HELCOM was also crucial to foster a common view among the countries around the Baltic Sea when it came to both problems and suitable solutions. In achieving these goals, working with the EU would also be of importance. He mentioned the Marine Strategy Directive, the Water Framework Directive as well as the Eco Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, science was a crucial basis for effective measures and innovative solutions. Sweden therefore supported and engaged in the UN Decade for Ocean Science and Sustainable Development. This was a unique occasion to pool their resources, to increase their knowledge also of the Baltic Sea and to engage stakeholders in that work. It was furthermore essential to educate the young people about the value of the Baltic Sea. With regards to science, HELCOM also played a crucial role with their work in their many expert groups advancing the knowledge both constantly and considerably.

The State Secretary pointed out that water was a cross-cutting issue. Therefore, it was crucial to involve all relevant stakeholders to create an understanding both of ownership and participation. Local involvement was a prerequisite for finding new solutions and working methods. The quality of the water around the globe would be – and already was – changing. Undesirable effects would be even worse if they did not reach their high ambitions on mitigation and adaptation measures. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and fulfilling the promise of the Paris Agreement, their crucial building blocks to overcome the multiple crisis the world was facing, the direction had to be the same across all sectors and organisations of their societies. It was obvious that they needed the courage and the strength to act now. In this context, the international meeting Stockholm Plus 50 that Sweden would host in June 2022 presented a great opportunity, Mr Mankler underlined. While commemorating the fifty years since the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the Swedish vision was to engage all stakeholders and focus on how they together could accelerate implementation and deliver on the 2030 agenda while fostering sustainable recovery from COVID-19. Inclusively, universally, leaving no one behind. The Swedish side saw Stockholm Plus 50 as an essential contribution to keeping the 1.5-degree goal alive. By engaging all relevant stakeholders, including businesses, the scientific community, youth and others, Stockholm Plus 50 could be a stepping stone to catalyse necessary and formative actions for system change on all levels.

Mr Mankler closed his presentation by wishing the BSPC fruitful and productive discussions on these important topics. All of them had important and complementary roles to play. Actors on the local, regional, national, global level, future and prescient policy-makers, grassroots organisations, civil society, NGOs, international organisations, youth, committed individuals had to join forces in building resilience faster.

Chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** thanked the minister for his very interesting contribution. The quality of water, she agreed, was the most important strategic resource they had because it provided all of them with life and should continue to do so for decades ahead. She had to say that it was important for all of them to continue their trans-border cooperation aimed above all at solving the problem of quality drinking water available to everyone. This was a core of their cooperation.

She moved on to give the floor to Mr Erwin Sellering, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection and former Prime Minister of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Address by Mr Erwin Sellering, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection

Mr **Erwin Sellering** said that climate change and biodiversity were at the heart of this Conference. He was very pleased that he could speak for the Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. He noted that the state parliament had set up this foundation in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern so that the efforts of the state government could be supported. He opined that it had been a very good decision worth copying. The basic idea of the parliament was that the efforts made on a general national level in expanding wind energy and mitigating the carbon footprint left by Germany had to be reflected in civil society as well, in a manner that was carried out by an independent foundation. In their Articles of Association, it said that the job of the century – climate protection – could only succeed if the vast majority of society understood just how crucial it was, how existentially important it was. Only if it was anchored in their awareness could it really be achieved. That was the foundation's mandate, Mr Sellering under-



Mr Erwin SELLERING, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection

lined, this awareness was what they were trying to achieve. As a private foundation, governed by private law, his organisation could determine their mandate themselves, free of instructions from the government itself – created as a state decision but completely independent in terms of the way it worked together with civil society and setting its agenda and goals.

On this basis, the executive committee of the foundation had defined two main areas of their mandate and had approved certain financial measures as well. On the one hand, for approving the funding of third-party organisations – as a foundation that did not have a particularly high budget, at only two million euros a year –, they had to focus on the most important areas within the scope of their responsibility. The focus of their work was the desirable initiative of individual citizens or small volunteer-based organisations. These were the type of organisation that the foundation wanted to offer help without red tape, as simply as possible, so that they could do what they were trying to do. Accordingly, they tended to pay smaller funds which was usually enough to complete these projects to 100 per cent, and they were prepared to finance these small initiatives in full. Where they were working together with larger institutes and foundations involved in climate change and the environment, they were prepared to pay larger amounts. But these had to be governed by clear rules and regulations in terms of their cooperation, Mr SELLERING emphasised. First and foremost, this sum could be matched by larger organisations in looking for innovative solutions from the world of science, research and industry. They believed that the state should fund organisations of this kind, and they would not wish to compete with the state. For that reason, they had

come up with a new idea regarding funding for larger-scale operations: It would only be for projects that did not receive any state funding and in which the foundation's contribution would make a positive process get off the ground. If this new idea were to be successfully implemented, there might well be eligibility for state funding programmes. In other words, the foundation would only help these efforts get off the ground. Afterwards, they would be funded by state or national funds.

Financing third-party organisations focused particularly – from the aforementioned aspect – on developing the foundation's own projects in three main areas where they felt they had the necessary skill set among their human resources. Mr SELLERING noted the organisation of civil involvement processes. For example, if a local authority or municipality wanted to carry out a climate neutrality project facing conflicts of various interests that had to be figured out before the project could be launched, the foundation would be happy to mediate between these conflicting interests to get the effort off the ground. Processes of this kind would kick off in the following week, he noted, in a small town in eastern Germany. A second mandate concerned climate change education. That began in day-care centres and primary schools. The foundation had asked many day-care centres to explain to children just how important trees were, how important nature was, and the foundation wanted to provide the funding for day-care centres. He pointed out that there were 1,000 of them in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The foundation wanted to give them the money and plant trees with their children. 400 day-care centres were involved at the moment.

Another area they were working on was awareness raising, trying to get people involved in combating climate change. For that, the foundation was carrying out climate change and environmental conferences throughout Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in various different cities. For the BSPP Conference today, what was perhaps of greater interest was the event the foundation had held in mid-August on the removal of sea-dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance. Delegates from the BSPP had joined the foundation with many other experts to acquire more information on this difficult issue. The foundation was also highly interested in ensuring that people became aware of just how important it was to remove sea-dumped munitions if they were to keep the Baltic Sea protected from this massive danger for their future. The job of removing sea-dumped munitions would only be successful if all the Baltic Sea region states got involved in removing these munitions and unexploded ordnance from the seabed. There had been a great deal of progress in the field of removing dumped munitions and unex-

ploded ordnance, Mr SELLERING pointed out. There was also a clear understanding of where they were to be found, in terms of the mapping of these munitions on the seabed. But to be successful, serious progress had to be made on technological ways of tackling the problem. He believed that cooperation between the Baltic Sea states in this technology of how best to remove sea-dumped munitions was important. Mr SELLERING emphasised his appeal to the parliamentarians, adding that he welcomed contacts from them.

Session chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** thanked Mr SELLERING for his very interesting statements. She yielded the floor to the representatives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum.

Address by Ms Kamila Ciok, Poland, and Mr Liviu Pintilie, Estonia, Representatives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum

Mr **Liviu Pintilie** explained that he was a Romanian resident in Estonia. Together with Kamila Ciok, on behalf of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, they were going to present some of the forum's recommendations. There had been a very large pool of drafts and ideas to discuss. Different arguments and very discussions had been held between the participants. In the end, they had decided that the recommendations needed to be very practical and very strong-worded. They had to be solid rather than vague ideas



Ms Kamila Ciok, Poland, and Mr Liviu Pintilie, Estonia, Representatives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum

and applied right away. He noted that the forum itself had been very interesting; the discussions had been very civic. Mr Pintilie felt that this had been the ideal place for each of them to express their opinions. He hoped that in the future, similar events would be organised.

Moving on to the recommendations, he began with the first concerning innovation. The forum called on the governments in the Baltic Sea region, the CBSS and the EU to implement methods of nature-friendly farming and actively phase out the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers by local farmers as well as allocate funds to researching less hazardous alternatives. All of that should be done in collaboration with think tanks and expert organisations to make sure that the policies were well connected to science. It was their conviction that this recommendation included many aspects of life – soil, sea, vegetation, fauna and public health – and that the use of pesticides and fertilisers entailed all these domains of life, with possible long-term consequences. The use of hazardous substances in this field could affect not only the environment but also human life and eventually offered no clear advantage in the long term. Secondly, they called for support for sustainable innovation in green energy, to reduce the use of non-renewable sources of energy and support innovation to make urban life more sustainable by enhancing green transportation solutions. Again, this should be done in collaboration with science. It was the forum's belief that all these recommendations and ideas had to be implemented in relation with science and scientific research. As for the Baltic Sea region, they had come to the conclusion that there was a great potential. To an extent, it was already exploiting this potential, but the forum believed there was room for improvement. Here, Mr Pintilie pointed at the Baltic countries and Poland.

Next, he spoke about the circular economy. Another idea was to develop and implement policies and regulations around fishing and other industries, together with companies in power which were harming the biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, to align them with the needs according to the IPCC report and the Paris Agreement. Directing attention to a provided chart, Mr Pintilie said that by 2019, the excess from fishing had already reached an exceeding level. The forum had been aware that fishing was a delicate subject, especially in the Baltic Sea region. It was a problem because even the Baltic Sea had issues with oxygen level. Therefore, it had to be ensured that the quotas for fishing did not exceed the maximum levels. Otherwise, very bad consequences would ensue in the long term, and eutrophication would engender the growth of algal blooms again. The second recommendation regarding the circular

economy was to promote the building of facilities from recycled materials, to develop regulations regarding the re-use of construction materials, to establish plans for the re-use of materials as a prerequisite for demolition permits as part of the effort of finding sustainable supply lines along the Baltic Sea and to introduce public bail systems for plastic bottles in the Baltic Sea region. Mr Pintilie underlined that the forum was aware that a lot of countries around the Baltic Sea were already taking steps towards this. The idea was to find solutions to establish the perfect balance between human utility and sustainability as well as the preservation of nature.

Ms **Kamila Ciok** took over and said she was honoured to be among those who cared and showed respect. Being part of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum had opened dialogue and expressed the young people's need to take active participation in the processes of helping the global village. She remembered two years earlier meeting a man at UNESCO World Heritage site Petra in Jordan. He had been an old man, full of peace and kindness. They had had tea at his house there. She remembered asking him why he had stayed when all people from his village had been moved outside Petra and been provided with running water and electricity. He had looked at Ms Ciok and said, "Kamila, I was born here. I wanted to live freely, happy and with understanding of my roots. I had my vision of life, and that was my priority." The speaker asked all of the attendees what their vision of life was, together with nature, what their priorities as a society were regarding being part of the ecosystem. She wondered what they needed to do to balance their life with nature. Conventions, agreements and plans were supposed to be the platform where ideas were made and what they needed as a civilisation was created in a way that made progress, improving the state they were facing at this moment. Their task was to work on them in a productive manner, taking into account all voices and signs left behind now. To do that, they had to develop new and strengthen existing multinational cooperation, such as HELCOM. It was necessary to employ an ecosystem approach to manage human activities at sea and on land, acting to promote land-sea interaction and policy integration to reduce land abuse and eutrophication. They needed to support and encourage sustainability through nature-based solutions across all different sectors of the economy in the Baltic Sea region. The forum understood that sustainable food systems were the ones based on nature, promoting local and healthy food, mitigating the impact associated with international trade and supporting local farmers.

Ms Ciok implored her listeners to not misunderstand her words. They were not about pushing the responsibility or who to blame,

they were about moving forward and forgiveness, building their future on the shoulders of their past mistakes and successes. They were about taking the lessons seriously and having them on their minds, being rational, being emotional, thinking with heart, thinking with brain – these were not separate things, she insisted, but complementary elements of existence, of understanding what had to be done together. The young generation were striving for cooperation, inclusivity, empathy and being engaged in the decision-making process. They were not afraid of speaking their minds. Instead, they were taking seriously what they were seeking. They were worried. That being said, they were ready to act, Ms Ciok said. They had hope in all of them as human beings, as facilitators of innovative and inclusive change. Finally, the young people had hope in all who cared about nature as the roots of everyday life. She asked the attendees to understand that absolute freedom did not mean worrying about what was going to happen tomorrow but be happy about what one had done today. That was their mission as young people, she said, this was their choice. This was their biggest chance to make it possible.

Chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** thanked both of them. Their proposals were quite interesting and professional. She was confident that these would become part of the working programme of the BSPC in the years to come. These were good solutions, important and valuable ideas.

*Address by Ms Liz Mattson, MP of Åland,
Vice-Chair of BSPC Working Group CCB*

Ms **Liz Mattson** noted that Åland was an autonomous part of Finland, with autonomy and its own flag. The island was located in the middle of the Baltic Sea. The ocean around them had great importance for everyone living there. Together with all of the attendees, they had an obligation to manage the challenges around the sea, the environment and climate for the future. The summer of 2018 had been the driest since 1955 in Åland and had had much greater consequences for their local agriculture. Moreover, the summer had been an unusually hot one. It was not only on land that temperatures had been higher than usual but also in the ocean. An academic biological research station and other researchers had investigated the sea around Åland. This year, the research station had reported



Ms Liz Mattson, MP of Åland, Vice-Chair of BSPC Working Group CCB

two marine heatwaves in the surrounding sea. The last one, in July, had been the longest measured since measurements had begun in 2005. When the hot water had come to Åland early this year, they had noticed a larger number of liquid algae in the water. The warm water also affected fish, especially species such as salmon and cod which thrived best in waters below 20 °C. The Ålanders had always lived together with the sea. Their surrounding sea made the autumn long and mild. Therefore, Åland was well suited for food production. Fishing had also always been a part of life. The island produced a variety of foods that were exported to nearby regions. Food production was an important industry for Åland. Climate change was not only affecting the sea but also the forests which were another significant part of income for the island. In 2019, Åland had been hit by Alfreda, the worst storm in northern climes. Long, dry periods were interspersed with heavy rainfalls along with great quantities of pests affecting the harvests.

The small autonomous society was a perfect platform for innovation and testing new technologies, Ms Mattson explained. In recent years, they had for example worked extensively with circular systems and collaborated with farmers to reduce emissions and have more cultivation without leaching as well as a smart water supply. Biogas and other effective energy supplies were also on the agenda. In Åland, she believed they had many good examples of how to use the common agripolicy programme to engage and involve citizens in the local work for the environment. Climate work was long-term and took time before concrete results would become visible. There was more than one example in Åland where they could see ongoing climate work, and local involvement around cleaner water had actu-

ally yielded results. People in that summer had documented cleaner water in different places around the island than they had seen in many years and had moreover noticed seaweed that had once again begun to thrive in the natural marine environment. This was only an observation by local people rather than research. Nevertheless, it gave some hope at least, Ms Mattson underlined.

The countries in the Baltic Sea region had a great shared responsibility for the sea, biodiversity and climate. They had to respect and cooperate with nature. Together, they had to create innovation and legislation providing long-term concrete results for the Baltic Sea region. The latest IPCC report and all the information about climate change that the working group of the BSPC had been given by experts were alarming and gloomy in many ways. To deal with the challenges around climate change and biodiversity, it was necessary to find new possibilities to cooperate and exchange innovation and knowledge with each other. Ms Mattson was sure that there was a lot that countries and regions could learn from each other by sharing their best practices. Cooperation and innovation always drove change and development. Each human was important in the work for the climate and had a responsibility for change. It was required to speed up the work on climate change, and the speaker emphasised that only together could they make a big difference.

Chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** voiced her gratitude, noting that this had been an interesting and inspiring contribution. She further thanked Ms Mattson for her work in her capacity as a vice-chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity. The chairwoman moved on to introduce the next speaker, Dr Vadim Sivkov.

Address by Dr Vadim V. Sivkov, Director of the Atlantic Branch of the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Science and the Federal State Budgetary Institution of Science, Kaliningrad region

Dr **Vadim Sivkov** spoke about recent occurrences in the Russian Federation in the context of the carbon test sites in the Kaliningrad region. He believed this was relatively new information and not particularly well known outside the area. He noted that he repre-



Dr Vadim V. Sivkov, Director of the Atlantic Branch of the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Science and the Federal State Budgetary Institution of Science, Kaliningrad region

sented the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Science as well as the Immanuel Kant Baltic University. His speech concerned the problem of greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon test site for sequestration in the Kaliningrad region. The demands of the international community set out in the Paris Agreement on emission reduction involved significant financial and regulatory instruments, including emission quotas. Although these gases were well mixed, as had been mentioned before, and their impact on the climate was worldwide, their original sources were strictly linked to the economies of specific countries. Consequently, monetisation including quotas and taxes would be targeted to reflect this. These international agreements were scheduled to start coming into force from 2023 on. The main indicator in assessing the gas emissions in countries would be the net emissions. There was a difference between the emission and the removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, the speaker pointed out, adding that the assessment or inventory of climate-active emissions by each country became a problem of reliably quantifying anthropogenic and natural sources and sinks of greenhouse gases. Quantitative method of a “carbon economy” had to be developed to produce robust economic estimates based on an inventory of climate-active gases to develop an efficient and cost-effective strategy for reducing their emissions and increasing their removal from the atmosphere, i.e., their sequestration.

In this context, with the need to increase the efficiency of scientific and technical activities in the field of the environment to develop climate change-related measures, the ministry of science and higher

education of the Russian Federation had issued Order No. 74 on 5 February 2021, On Test Sites for the Development for Testing of Carbon Control Technologies. Said order proscribed the implementation of a pilot project to establish what were called carbon test sites in the Russian Federation. In the context of the need to increase the efficacy of this, the National Action Plan for the First Phase of the Adaptation to Climate Change for the period of up to 2022 had been approved by a decree of the Russian government on 25 December 2019. That decree of 5 February 2021 on establishing test sites and developing carbon control technologies was the subject of his address to the BSPC Conference.

Dr Siskov presented a slide enumerating the key elements of the Paris Agreement. He moved on to showing a map of the Kaliningrad oblast area, with two spots highlighting the locations of the two test sites, both named – because of their shapes – “carbon polygons”. One site was at sea, the other on land. He explained that the carbon test sites in Kaliningrad were the only ones on the list identified by the Russian ministry of science and higher education and were located at the heart of Europe. He pointed to the land site in the Kaliningrad region, noting the sea-located one as well. Dr Siskov stated that these were in the Baltic Sea basin and thus had to be of interest to the BSPC Conference as a result of their location alone. He said that all of these carbon sequestration sites had a test quality management in the sense that they would involve youth. Therefore, they had been identified by the Russian ministry of science and higher education. The test site’s location at the heart of Europe was important because the European Union had the most stringent requirements for the production of greenhouse gas emissions. Thus, being sited in the Russian Federation was important. Dr Siskov pointed out that the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad had been designated the operator of the Kaliningrad carbon test site programme together with the Atlantic branch of the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Science, which was also located in Kaliningrad. The onshore Kaliningrad carbon test site was located in the central part of the Kaliningrad region within the Wittgirren peat bog, which is considered by the regional authorities as an experimental area for secondary bog formation to increase carbon sequestration and capture from the atmosphere. To date, pre-studies of the ecological state of the peat bog had been carried out. A concept for the restoration of the natural bog ecosystem had been developed, and mapping had already been carried out. Presently, the site was being constructed. Dr Siskov noted that all this had taken place in the course of one year. Accordingly, there was a great deal of progress being made. He presented a slide showing two pictures of the peat bog site

in Wittgirren, one showing circular tents and parked motor homes on a clearing within a forest area while the other featured several expedition members investigating the bog ground.

As for the offshore site, it was located in the territorial waters of the Russian Federation to the west of the coast of the Kaliningrad region. There were two sectors of the Baltic Sea in Russian waters, one around the Leningrad region near St Petersburg and the other just off Kaliningrad. A slide showed a number of images from the marine test site, one of them displaying a sailboat near a buoy, another a project sign on a boat, and the third showed researchers in a laboratory setting. The offshore carbon sequestration testing site was in the Baltic Sea for two reasons, Dr Siskov explained. One was that, in the context of the carbon agenda, the Baltic Sea was a unique basin. It was a transboundary sea with a high anthropogenic load. The level of water eutrophication was unprecedentedly high and as a consequence, the rates of primary bioproduction – or photosynthesis – were high. Therefore, as had been mentioned by Ms Schulze at the start of the session, the Baltic Sea on a global scale was clearly at the highest range of absorption or sequestration of carbon dioxide, one of the major greenhouse gases. Nevertheless, as Ms Schulze had said, the Baltic Sea was paying a very high price for that. That was almost a contradiction, Dr Siskov explained: What was good for planet earth as a whole, namely the higher-level sequestration of carbon dioxide by the Baltic Sea, was not a good thing for the Baltic Sea itself. He presented a slide illustrating eutrophication and algae bloom in the Baltic Sea, with the location of their offshore site marked. Said location had been chosen because of presence on the seabed of one of the largest areas of sediment in the Baltic Sea, saturated with greenhouse hydrocarbon gases, mainly methane (CH₄). That, he added, was causing the high levels of eutrophication there. These were two factors in one which served as the reason for the selection of the location.

Thanks to the BFU's cooperation with his institute, initial measurements of key environmental parameters of the offshore site had begun as early as April 2021. Dr Siskov pointed out that this was only two months after the decree had been issued. The first measurement results confirmed the representative nature of the surveyed area. Precise monitoring measurements of the flows of major climate-active gases were planned for the near future. The offshore site would be provided with a remote monitoring system based on the use of satellites and unmanned platforms equipped with the necessary sensor instrumentation. Experimental assessments of the uptake potential of the marine ecosystem would be conducted to evaluate their sequestration potential under various natural and

anthropogenic conditions. Standardized measuring instrumentation requirements would be substantiated and developed for further adaptation at other offshore sites at other locations throughout the country. The successful operation of the carbon test sites in the Kaliningrad region would contribute to integrating the national programme for monitoring climate-active gases into the national observation and research programmes. Dr Siskov pointed out that there were numerous such programmes in place. Therefore, it was necessary to have sound figures, and monitoring had to be developed and maintained. As a result, the Kant University in cooperation with his institute as well as other leading scientific institutions – including some from abroad – would be creating a new level of expertise and consolidating knowledge from different fields. What they would be looking at was collating knowledge from fields of climatology, meteorology, oceanology, numerical modelling, measurement technology, machine learning etc. by adapting existing and developing new master and PhD programmes as well as new educational formats related to the test sites themselves. At Kant University, they already had a master's programme entitled Geoecology of the Ocean and Coastal Territories. One of the educational formats at the university was known as the “floating university” where young people, schools and university students were brought together, and the lectures were held on board their scientific vessel. The speaker reiterated that the Baltic Sea basin around Russia was unique in its composition. There was a high level of research being carried out on the Baltic Sea, with one of the largest fleets of research vessels in the world.

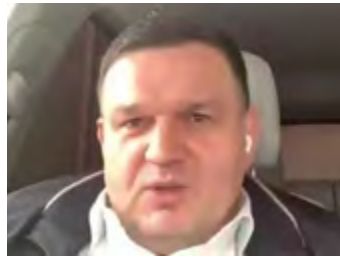
Dr Siskov noted that he had very much appreciated what he had heard from the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum earlier on. He invited the youth forum participants to come along to one of the university's research programmes that they had established on the “floating university”. This programme had been running for four years, and before the pandemic, there had been a lot of students and teachers from European universities visiting them. These days, they had been forced to put all of this collaboration on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their European colleagues were not able to join them at this point. Hopefully, that would change in the future so that Europeans could join the “floating university” once again.

Session chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** thanked Dr Siskov for his very interesting speech. She believed all of her colleagues were interested in this invitation as well because this was a programme directly

linked to an environmental aspect of the Baltic Sea, one that they had been researching for a number of years now in various contexts. It was Ms Pivnenko's view that the BSPC would want to invite not just the Parliamentary Youth Forum to get involved but also any other colleagues who would like to do so. The chairwoman wished Dr Siskov every success because this was a very important and interesting type of work, and it was also crucial that progress was made in these endeavours. On behalf of the parliament of the Russian State Federation, she said that – where necessary – they would be very glad to support Dr Siskov and offer help in various ways where they could.

With that, she announced that they had heard all of the speakers on their list for this session and opened the floor for comments, remarks or questions.

Mr **Sergey Perminov**, Member of the Council of the Russian Federation, congratulated Mr Erwin Sellering and thanked him for his very clear statement around biodiversity and preserving the special status of the Baltic Sea. His colleagues had focused on this

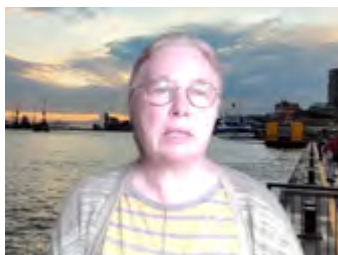


issue for a long time. Mr Perminov was very grateful. His side had worked together with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on various strategic projects, particularly around environmental safety which was such an important issue. They had collaborated closely with their colleagues in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for many, many years on questions of this nature and had had very good experience with them, not least when it came to fostering populations of new types of fish and new types of plants as well. He reiterated his gratitude and asked Mr Sellering to relay his best regards to State Prime Minister Manuela Schwesig. Mr Perminov added that the Russian energy industry was among the top five in the world when it came to mitigating carbon footprints. In other words, Russia had excellent equipment which had been installed to mitigate carbon emissions, leading to a very small carbon footprint. They had laid pipes and re-used existing pipes in order to absorb carbon better. He was quick to assure that this did not mean Russia had achieved all of their goals but that they had to continue working on this matter. His colleagues from the Leningrad region, though, were very active in this regard. Mr Perminov emphasised that the Russian Federation had very ambitious environmental programmes that they had put in place and did not want to stay fifth in the world. Rather, they wanted to get even better in their ranking for having a low carbon

footprint. It was his view that Ms Pivnenko and her colleagues in the Senate as well as all of them considered this issue very important.

Chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** commented that they certainly wanted to give the planet back to the young people the way they had received it. She thanked Mr Perminov very much.

Ms **Ulrike Sparr**, MP Hamburg, noted that she had listened to the very interesting presentation from Russia. The projects Dr Siskov had mentioned made sense, and she added that Mecklenburg-Vorpommern had instituted similar projects, based in Hamburg. She wondered what was done in order to make sure that the swamps and moors remained as they were in spite of hot summers and not enough rain. She asked what options Dr Siskov saw in that regard. Secondly, Ms Sparr wondered if it would not be better to give up fossil fuels altogether or reduce their use.



Dr **Vadim Sivkov** conceded that he was not prepared to give an answer in terms of what might or would happen to the bogs and marshland. He did say that their investigations at the site had only started this year, and they were researching the moors. This was a new field of research for them. Economists would have to give answers or comment on the situation, he expected, and the same went for the exploitation of mineral resources. That was not his field, he pointed out. As he saw the situation, fossil fuels would continue to have to be used in the next centuries.



Mr **Sergey Perminov** commented that Russia would keep the marshlands safe. They had identified protected areas. This could be found all over the Russian Federation. Certain preserves and protective measures for the bogs were in place. The laws pertaining to the ecology and the protection of nature were among the strictest in Europe, he assured. As far as renewable energy was concerned or giving up fossil fuels, that was not an ecological or political question, rather this was a technological question. Even the greenest technology constituted a major risk with respect to its recycling and its disposal. He clarified he was talking about rare earths in this respect. The

European Green Deal implied an investment of one billion euros, but they were still trying to find alternative options in order to do away with fossil fuels altogether. Accordingly, it was still necessary to use the energy balance currently in place. Of course, in the future, they would have to make use of the infrastructure which was available for the energy grid, for the transmission of energy, for the use of energy like wind parks, hydrogen offshore sites. Mr Perminov was certain this would be the future. At the present day, they were not in a situation to replace fossil fuels completely. In July 2021, one tonne of coal had become more expensive in terms of the shares price at the Amsterdam Stock Exchange. However, it was necessary to work on this transition, and they required the capacities and the technological setting for that. A key goal was reducing their carbon footprint. That was certainly what all of them had to think about. It was impossible to give up fossil fuels over night because electricity did not just come from the plug in the wall. All of them knew that this was an economic chain, and it was necessary to deal with the technological tasks. Otherwise, the transition to green energy would not work. Mr Perminov concluded by emphasising that this would not happen overnight.

Session chairwoman **Valentina Pivnenko** commented that Senator Perminov was speaking to the Conference from his car as he was currently travelling in central Russia, towards Moscow.

Mr **Jonas Faergeman** from Denmark spoke on the transition from fossil fuels to green energy. He conceded that it could not happen overnight. He doubted that anyone was suggesting this. However, he insisted that the changeover to green energy was



very much possible. That could not only be seen in developed countries but also in what used to be called underdeveloped countries. India was currently the only country in the world so far that was on par with the Paris Agreement goals. They had just leapfrogged some technologies to go straight to green energy. There were huts made of clay and grass in the Saharan countries which had solar panels attached to their huts. He insisted that the issue had nothing to do with money. It was cheaper. Instead, it was all about political will. Saying that we could not from fossil fuels to green energy only showed a lack of legislative and political power as well as, he emphasised, a lack of competency. Of course, it took time, and he further conceded that the better prepared one was, the faster the transition could be implemented. Furthermore, the transition had to be just.

That was one of the three pillars in the European Green Deal. He appreciated that. But he again insisted that of course, they could go for green energy, and it was cheaper and more efficient. It was only lack of will that prevented it.

State Secretary **Anders Mankler** of Sweden wished to offer a couple of quick words before the end of the session. To begin with, to keep future climate change and its effects to a minimum, it was necessary to simultaneously increase and intensify mitigation



measures against climate change, including of course the transition to green energy. It was also necessary to increase adaptation efforts by strengthening natural ecosystems and systems to ensure resilience. Furthermore, climate risks had to be reduced. In this context, Mr Mankler mentioned that the Swedish government wanted to make greater use of nature-based solutions in order to preserve biological diversity and to contribute to solving various environmental and climate issues. Basically, and finally, the state secretary pointed out that the world was facing great challenges. Despite the tragedies from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it had also highlighted their ability to adapt. They now knew that they had the capacity to change. They should use that to transform their way of living to one that was in line with reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Actions on sustainable water management, reducing climate change, increasing climate change mitigation needed to be the backbone of the ongoing recovery from the pandemic.

As there were no further remarks or questions, session chairwoman Ms **Valentina Pivnenko** said that this session had indeed been a very interesting one as well as very constructive. She felt there had been a lot of proposals that had to be taken into account in the BSPC's future work. As such, the chairwoman thanked all of the participants of this session and very much hoped that their work would be continued in this fruitful manner within the framework of the working group that had been mentioned on this day and in the extended format of said working group. Moreover, she was grateful for the orientation they had received on climate change and environment and voiced her hope that the respective efforts would prove successful.

With that, session chairwoman Ms Pivnenko concluded the third session of the BSPC Conference.

CEREMONIAL SESSION in Honour of the 30th BSPC

*Former Presidents together with youth representative:
Baltic Sea Parliamentary Cooperation yesterday,
today and tomorrow*



Moderators: Ms Carola Veit, President of the Hamburg State Parliament, Former President of the BSPC

Mr Jörgen Pettersson, MP Åland and Former President of the BSPC

Session moderator Ms **Carola Veit**, President of the Hamburg State Parliament, announced that she would be taking over the floor for the next session. She warmly welcomed everyone to the ceremonial session in honour of the 30th BSPC. The BSPC had again proved that they were able to prepare and hold a fruitful conference at a high level, even if digital. This stood in a very long tradition of over 30 years – a remarkable time, keeping in mind that they were talking about an international political meeting, joining national and regional parliaments of partly different political orientation. Not to forget, they had never missed one of their conferences nor any of the committee meetings in-between. That showed how serious the BSPC was about their work. That was only one thing that was really different in this year, as it was also the first time that a BSPC host was chairing the organisation for more than one year. Ms Veit thanked Mr Niemi for that, adding that all of them were looking forward to meeting under the president's hospitality in the following summer.

She reiterated her welcome to this session and noted that she herself had been president of the BSPC from 2017 to 2018. Afterwards, she had served as the vice-chair of the BSPC Working Group on Migration and Immigration and had continued as Rapporteur in this field since then. She announced that she would share hosting this panel with her esteemed colleague, Mr Jörgen Pettersson from the Åland islands. Ms Veit commented that both of them were a well-rehearsed team in this respect as they had led several venues together, with Mr Pettersson adding a special point of view to their meetings. She mentioned this to illustrate the cooperation of the BSPC, which was a very familial one, despite all seriousness and the struggle for respected positions on how to meet the challenges in the Baltic Sea region and beyond. Ms Veit noted that Mr Pettersson was actually on the move, voicing her hope that this would all work out in terms of technology.

Session moderator Mr **Jörgen Pettersson**, MP Åland and former President of the BSPC thanked Ms Veit for this introduction which reminded him of the familiar atmosphere she and all of them had managed to create. The need for this was more important than ever in a time of crisis. Thanks to digital achievements, it was possible to stay in contact even though times were challenging. He pointed out that, on the one hand, digital events had the disadvantage that one could not meet each other directly but, on the other, sometimes had the advantage of being able to attend a conference even under unusual circumstances. For example, Mr Pettersson noted that he was currently at the Mariehamn airport, for the first time in a year and a half, waiting for a plane to Copenhagen for an important maritime conference. It would not have been possible for him to attend both events as part of an on-site conference.

Mr Pettersson explained that he was a member of the Åland parliament and had been president of the BSPC from 2017 to 2018. That had been a year never to forget, and it had been the first time that Åland had held the presidency of the BSPC. He still remembered every detail of their conference in Mariehamn and thanked everyone who had attended that. Together with his esteemed colleague, Mr Jochen Schulte of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, he had also been BSPC Rapporteur on Maritime Affairs for many years now. Mr Schulte, he added, would present their joint report later on that day. Mr Pettersson urged his audience to listen to that report and read it as well as it was full of useful and vital information about a business branch that was creating trade, contacts, peace and prosperity all over the world.

That was one of the achievements in their parliamentary cooperation, and that was why the role of the BSPC was getting stronger every year. They did not just move at the surface but dealt in-depth with complex issues. Together with experts in working groups and through rapporteurs and observers in other institutions, based on intense discussions with experts from science, business, society and politics, the BSPC derived their recommendations for action to give to governments. Mr Pettersson liked the idea of the BSPC as a think tank for policies, aiming towards a better and cleaner future for all of them, surrounding the Baltic Sea. He could only underline what Ms Veit had just said. Despite all the intensive cooperation and contact, they had been and always were aware that everyone of them was a human being, that they were facing similar or the same challenges, that they represented the interests of the people who had elected them in their countries and across countries and within the framework of a temporary mandate as MPs. So, this strengthened the understanding among each other because they were partly in similar situations and brought these experiences into their discussions. That was precisely why an additional perspective and legitimacy also characterised the deliberations among parliamentarians. That added a different basis to their deliberative results. Therefore, they had to always keep this in mind and strengthen the parliamentary dimension in the entire Baltic Sea region. The BSPC, Mr Pettersson emphasised, stood for hope, peace, knowledge and a strong belief in the future of democracy and the Baltic Sea that united all of them in their daily work. The speaker offered his gratitude for friendship and insight and returned the screen to Ms Veit to introduce the round table participants.

Ms **Carola Veit** explained that they would reflect on the past and the future in this round table ceremonial session together with their colleagues. All of these had once been presidents of the BSPC, with the exception of the representative of the young generation. The first in this digital round to give the audience an impression of his presidency and experience with the BSPC was her esteemed colleague, Prof Jānis Vucāns. He not only had long-standing experience in the BSPC's work but had also been president of the Baltic Assembly, partly at the same time as his BSPC presidency and afterwards for a second round. In other words, he was very much experienced, Ms Veit pointed out, adding that she had received the presidential baton from Prof Vucāns five years earlier in Riga. There, the BSPC had impressively celebrated their 25th anniversary under his presidency.

Address by Prof Jānis Vucāns, MP, Former President of the BSPC as well as Vice-President and former President of the Baltic Assembly



Prof Jānis Vucāns, MP, Former President of the BSPC as well as Vice-President and former President of the Baltic Assembly

Prof **Jānis Vucāns** explained that it was a great privilege and honour for him to participate in this ceremonial session, together with such experienced colleagues as Ms Veit, Mr Pettersson, Mr Franz Thönnies, Ms Valentina Pivnenko, Ms Christina Gestrin and also a representative of the youth parliament, Mr Jonas Faergeman. There had been a lot of political changes in 1991, the famous year which had been written from both ends. Therefore, now in this year, they were celebrating a number of 30-year anniversaries – not only for states but also for international organisations established in this year. That applied not only to the BSPC but also to the Baltic Assembly and other organisations. If one looked at the homepage of the BSPC, one saw that the organisation had been established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea region. The aim of the BSPC then had been – and still was to this day – to raise the awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea region. Moreover, the goal was to promote and drive various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environment as well as the social and economic development of the Baltic Sea region. Another aim of the BSPC had been and still was to strive towards enhancing the visibility of the Baltic Sea region and its issues in a wider European context.

Looking towards the future, the professor went on, he had to think about the way the BSPC had been set up so far and whether it had fulfilled the tasks that had led to the creation of the BSPC thirty

years earlier. Another aspect for consideration was whether it was time to adjust these tasks themselves because this day, they lived in a world that had changed significantly during those 30 years. All of these changes had already been talked about and discussed at the present conference and also at the Parliamentary Youth Forum on the preceding Saturday. This environment of changes had been very well marked by several speakers, including BSPC Vice-President Johannes Schraps, Mr Perminov and others. For more than ten years, Mr Vucāns had been given the opportunity to be involved not only in the work of the BSPC, but he had also been one of the leaders of the Baltic Assembly. Moreover, he had had the ability to follow other interparliamentary organisations and how they were operating and changing, like the Nordic Council, the Benelux Parliament, PABSEC and others of its kind. That had also given him cause for reflections.

Of course, each of the participants represented their country and its parliament, but the purpose of why they had gathered in the BSPC forum was to seek opportunities for cooperation, understanding and to create a vision for the future of the Baltic Sea region. If necessary, they had sought to bring these new aspects to life in the legislation of their countries. He thought that this aspect of regionally coordinated legislation – that they as parliamentarians should pay more attention to – was very crucial. Years ago, during the Latvian presidency, Mr Vucāns had had the honour of leading their organisation, analysing the reports provided by governments on the issues raised by the BSPC. They had made the experience that the quest for information by the governments should be as concise as possible. Questions should be asked as accurately as possible so that equally accurate answers could be obtained. He thought that the situation in this area had improved in recent years, thanks to the experience and the broad knowledge horizons of the BSPC Secretary General Bodo Bahr. Prof Vucāns offered his special gratitude to Mr Bahr. There were a lot of other issues he could speak about, but he had decided to leave the floor for other colleagues. Prof Vucāns wished all of them good feelings during those days.

Session moderator **Carola Veit** thanked Prof Vucāns for his contribution and reflecting on reports and the way the BSPC was addressing their governments, noting that they had been working on this and had improved their procedure. She asked the professor if one topic was more and more affecting almost every discussion, namely climate change which had become more serious.

Prof **Jānis Vucāns** confirmed this, adding that climate change was a very, very important topic. Moreover, they had already heard a lot

about this at the Conference. To his mind, the climate programme – in a very wide sense – included the circular economy, energetic aspects and other concerns; it had to be on the agenda for the BSPC. But their main partner in this endeavour was the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). At the Conference, they had heard that universities were prepared to participate in research in the fields related to climate change. That was very important, he underlined. He further supported that their work had to be enhanced with respect to climate change but also to take a deeper look at how research in this field could be stimulated. The reason for that was that research was the foundation for everything in this regard.

Mr **Jörgen Pettersson** thanked both Ms Veit and Prof Vucāns for a great start to an inspirational afternoon. He singled out Prof Vucāns as one of the veterans in the BSPC, and he himself had learned a lot from said veteran. He thanked Mr Vucāns for attending this session and moved on to another veteran in the BSPC, Ms Valentina Pivnenko. She had become a dear friend over the years. They had shared ice cream in Moscow, had had serious discussions and had laughed a lot. Mr Pettersson always thought about the enthusiasm and knowledge that Ms Pivnenko had brought to the table. He was happy that she would also share with them her long-standing experience in the work of the BSPC, even in the last days of her election campaign at the present. Valentina Pivnenko had been head of the delegation to the BSPC from the Russian State Duma for ages, although she was not very old, he added. She had been the BSPC president ten years earlier, from 2011 – 2012, and had chaired their Conference in St Petersburg at that time. Mr Pettersson asked Ms Pivnenko about her experience in the BSPC, what had been particularly important during her presidency and the whole time she had been engaged in this work. He noted that she had also participated as BSPC president in the 9th Baltic Sea State Summit of the Heads of Government 2012 in Stralsund. Knowing that Ms Pivnenko had loads of things to share, he yielded the screen to her.

Address by Valentina Pivnenko, MP, State Duma of the Russian Federation, Former President of the BSPC

Ms **Valentina Pivnenko** began by expressing her gratitude to her colleagues for the fact that they had been able to work together for so many years under such good conditions with such good contacts and cooperation, trying to understand one another so well. She had started working in the BSPC when she had been in Karelia, the head



Valentina Pivnenko, MP, State Duma of the Russian Federation, Former President of the BSPC

of the state embassy there. That, she conceded, was going back a bit. Then there was the Baltic Parliamentary Delegation which didn't just have representatives of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation but also lots of regional parliaments, such as the Karelia Republic – where she was from and from where she was speaking. Others were the legislative assembly Mr Shandalovich was representing, along with Kaliningrad and St Petersburg. Those were the representative regions. The experience of her parliamentary delegations had been very important training for the international community.

30 years of the BSPC had now passed. Since 1991, there had been so many changes – not least in her country. The Soviet Union had collapsed, and Russia had become a state in its own right during this time. The parliament of the Russian Federation had been elected as had been the State Duma and the Federation Assembly. These developments had been intrinsically linked with these changes. They had been working on strategies for the Baltic Sea region – there had been the EU Strategy for their partners, while for the Russian side, it had been the Strategy for the North-Eastern Federal Region. These two strategies had not been contradictions in terms. In certain ways, they had very much augmented one another. That was what they were implementing because of their constitution and their participation had always been based on who had been elected. Of course, they had always focused on the issues that they were trying to solve – sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region had been very important, as had been the prosperity of the inhabitants living on its shores, pressing questions of the environment, maritime transport. It had not just been about protecting the environment but also protecting their sea and the regions on its shores.

Although they had often held different opinions within the BSPC, represented different positions and sometimes had understood each other more and sometimes less, Ms Pivnenko considered it remarkable that throughout the whole time, they had retained this parliamentary stability, this understanding one another and support for one another – listening to one another. This had really been there from the beginning. Ms Pivnenko emphasised that in 2012, when she had been president of the BSPC, there had been an important “training time”, so to speak. There had been eleven heads of state of the Baltic Sea region who had discussed a very important agenda, and she as president of their Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference had been representing the organisation at that event. Topics had concerned energy industries as well as their security and development. Moreover, the question of the aging demographics in Europe had been debated – all important issues that had remained vital and had not disappeared from the agenda. What had surprised Ms Pivnenko the most then had been the good, constructive relationships of the heads of state and government of the Baltic Sea states, both towards their parliamentary organisation and towards the Russian Federation as well. She highlighted this because at that time, the question of dissolving the visa regime between the EU and the Russian Federation had been in the air. Chancellor Merkel at the time had put this issue on the agenda. It had not even been the initiative of the Russian side but that of industry – not just from Germany but from other countries as well. Since 2014, though, she was afraid that relations had deteriorated in this regard.

There was no acceptance for the fact that Crimea was now Russian again, as had been mentioned earlier at the Conference. Ms Pivnenko noted that, from the point of view of a Russian parliamentarian, she wished to make the following comments: They had not forgotten that sixty years earlier, Mr Khrushchev, who had been the head communist of the Soviet Union, had just given away a section of Russian territory to Ukraine. No-one had minded at the time. No-one had ratified this document which would have been necessary to make it legal, and the majority of the Russian-speaking population had carried out a referendum when the Soviet Union had dissolved. The question of the referendum had been about the return of Crimea to the Russian Federation, and for various political reasons, this had been rejected at the time. Talking so much about democracy and democratic processes at this Conference, Ms Pivnenko challenged them to ask themselves what democracy was. Actually, democracy was the will of the people. The will of the people had to be expressed. When the parliament of Crimea had spoken in favour of joining Russia, that hadn't just happened out of the blue, Ms Pivnenko stated. Her side felt that what had happened had

been based on the law. By the constitution of the Russian Federation, Crimea would remain Russian, always. For them, there was a line under this development. It was no longer up for discussion. In 2008, at the parliamentary conference in Poland, Russia had been accused of triggering a military conflict with Georgia, even attacking Georgia at that time. Back then, Ms Pivnenko had said that the situation had not been as it had been presented. Three years later, international institutions had confirmed that Russia had not attacked Georgia in this conflict. No-one had actually gone to the trouble of apologising to Russia about this. Now they were talking about Belarus, and Ms Pivnenko reminded her colleagues that more than fifteen years earlier, the BSPC had discussed on their agenda whether or not they should invite Belarus to join the BSPC, at least as an observer. This had always been rejected. Now, they were trying to teach Belarus democracy, but it was an independent country. Regarding Ukraine, Ms Pivnenko said that her colleagues might not like it, but they were honest people. If Russia had waged a war in Ukraine, then she called on her colleagues to think of Syria. Russia would have created order there, the way they had done in Syria. With conviction, she insisted that time would tell that Russia had been on the right side of history and that would clarify their different views. She thought that they would achieve a consensus then. The speaker further believed that this would be good for their nations, for their peoples. They would work together again and support one another again.

Ms Pivnenko underlined that all of them were doomed to keep the peace and to try to protect their people and the world from things like COVID-19 and all of the other challenges that they were facing, the ones they were discussing on their agenda and in their resolutions. These were not just approved by the Baltic Sea states. They were another example of the cooperation that they had with other countries, for example the Black Sea states were also interested in working together with the Baltic Sea parliamentarians because all of them were confronting similar problems. Who, if not the parliamentarians, could go on to think about the safety of their children and posterity, the generations to come, their nations – to ensure that they had peace and stability and could make progress and solve the problems that they had been elected to solve.

Ms Pivnenko went on to note that, in Germany, there was an election coming up. She noted that she was aware that Mr Schraps was running as candidate. The speaker herself was running as well as was her colleague Mr Elissan Shandalovich, who was sitting next to her. They had to stand the test ahead of them, but they also had to continue their work, and they could not allow a standstill. The trouble was that

sometimes, there was sunny weather, sometimes cloudy weather, but the sunshine would always come through the clouds in the end, she reminded her audience. Ms Pivnenko hoped that the sun would always shine on the Baltic Sea states, that they would always have sunny weather and would not have to go through the climate-related meteorological dramas that had been experienced recently. She further hoped that they would be able to meet in person again, go for a beer and discuss everything the way they always had.

Mr **Jörgen Pettersson** thanked Ms Pivnenko, mentioning that it was interesting to listen to her. He noted that there was one thing that had become clear to him over the years of working for the BSPC: Democracy always meant that there were different views on different things.

Ms **Carola Veit** joined Mr Pettersson in thanking Ms Pivnenko. This had been a good example of controversial positions that did not necessarily lead to conflicts in this organisation. They could dare talk about almost everything of concern to them which Ms Veit considered a great treasure. She wished the best to everyone running for new mandates in their respective parliaments.

She announced the next guest, somebody who had been active in the BSPC for the longest time among the BSPC presidents: Franz Thönnies. He had been the head of the delegation of the German Bundestag to the BSPC for almost two decades, having held the BSPC presidency from 2006 – 2007 and also having been highly active in the BSPC during his time as parliamentary state secretary. He had been chair of a working group and BSPC Rapporteur. Ms Veit noted that Mr Thönnies had asked her to join the BSPC 10 years ago. He had told her that this cooperation was characterised by trust, mutual understanding, long-standing friendships, mutual human appreciation and, very appropriately, cheerfulness and working together. He had been right, she pointed out as that was what one found at the BSPC. She went on to explain that Mr Thönnies was still active in the organisation that had been fully implemented during his time at the BSPC: the Baltic Sea Labour Forum. Many still remembered his keynote address five years earlier in Riga at the 25th anniversary of the BSPC but also his personal farewell words in Hamburg in 2017. As all her colleagues, Ms Veit was looking forward to Mr Thönnies' review of the BSPC's work.

*Address by Mr Franz Thönnnes,
Former President of the BSPC*



Mr Franz Thönnnes, Former President of the BSPC

Mr **Franz Thönnnes** thanked Ms Veit, Mr Pettersson as well as the entire Standing Committee for inviting him to come and speak, allowing him to be involved in the 30th BSPC anniversary session. It was a wonderful anniversary, but he hastened to add that it wasn't the only anniversary that they were able to celebrate on that day. As Ms Veit had rightly mentioned, the Baltic Sea Labour Forum was in fact celebrating its ten-year anniversary. Both of these institutions were the result of their very sustainable cooperation. That, really, was what they should be celebrating on this day, the fact that after 30 years of political common ground, political differences and occasionally political eruptions, they were still together and were still working towards good neighbourliness in the Baltic Sea region and a good and prosperous future of the Baltic Sea region.

Listening to Ms Pivnenko's speak earlier on, Mr Thönnnes wished to focus on the Baltic Sea region in his area. He also wanted to talk about the conflicts that they'd had.

Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, on 7-9 January 1991 representatives of the national and regional parliaments in all countries bordering the Baltic met in Helsinki for the first time on the invitation of the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, Kalevi Sorsa. The parliamentarians at that time had decided they wished to resolve conflicts peacefully and did not want armed conflicts of any kind but rather preserve the sovereignty of the territories. This was what had kept Europe stable and had maintained the peace in Europe. Mr Thönnnes believed the BSPC should stick to that approach:

Despite the various challenges the member parliaments were facing, they should not seek for any new ways of dealing with one another. Mutual conversation was what had kept the BSPC together.

Belarus was an example of this process as the BSPC had discussed the sustainability of progress with Belarusian parliamentarians regarding them joining the BSPC. As a result of those conversations, the BSPC had decided against accepting Belarus as a BSPC member or observer. They had listened to a lot of statements about progress but could not tell if said progress had truly been sustainable. Unfortunately, the BSPC had been right to reject Belarus: Progress had not proved sustainable. The situation in Belarus had developed in such a way that one could hardly talk about a democracy there. There had been falsified elections, and it truly was the case that in the Belarusian system, only one person mattered, and civil resistance had been combatted violently. That was not acceptable for the BSPC.

Mr Thönnies went on to mention that they sometimes took different views in the BSPC. That would always be the case. Nevertheless, they had focussed on their work. He believed they could be proud of what they had achieved. He was thinking of the fact that the BSPC had been talking about climate protection far in advance of many others. It was down to the BSPC, in his view, that maritime shipping in the Baltic Sea was safer than it had been. The BSPC had been among the first – particularly Ms Christine Gestrin – to pursue the aim of having a clean Baltic Sea. They had succeeded in reducing pollution in the Baltic Sea. They had called for clearer regulations on dumping into the Baltic Sea from passenger ships. All of this had been implemented by this point. The BSPC had worked within the EU Baltic Sea Strategy to set demarcation lines. One could almost say the Baltic Sea parliamentarians could take the credit for there being an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as there had been since 2009. Many forms of cooperation and of doing business – the companies, the trade unions, the universities were twinned with one another. As an example, he mentioned St Petersburg where the BSPC had in 2012 concluded a guarantee for young people, declaring that after finishing school, they did not have to be unemployed for a long time. Instead, they should receive a training place. That was something that the European Parliament and the Commission had confirmed as well in 2016. The BSPC had said that they needed a Baltic Sea Youth Forum. At this very conference, representatives from that forum were integrated into the process.

Moreover, it was quite appropriate to refer to the example of the Baltic Sea Labour Forum. That had to do with the priority areas of

Mr Thönnnes' own working life and was proof for him that parliamentarians in the BSPC could indeed get things going internationally. In 2007, the BSPC had had a working group on Labour and Social Security. They had been discussing people living in one country and commuting across the border to another, and they had been speaking about the problems of the youth in the Baltic Sea area. Afterwards, in 2009, the Baltic Sea Labour Network had been put into place, as a result of that working group. In 2011 then, the Baltic Sea Labour Forum had emerged from this – an institution with 30 member organisations, 17 trade unions, 11 employers' associations, international organisations. This work was being continued. They had spoken about youth unemployment, people commuting across borders. The high point in his view had occurred in 2016 when the BSPC had passed on recommendations to the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). For the first time in the history of the CBSS, the BSPC had been invited to speak with the labour ministers. The Baltic Sea parliamentarians had been present at this table, and they had concluded agreements on how they could work together better in the area of employment, particularly in combatting youth unemployment, and labour market research – even addressing the question of what demographic change meant for the labour market, for employment and for their lives as people were growing older. Projects springing from that meeting were doing work in the areas of lifelong learning, working actively into old age, and carrying out research. These were some of the things that the Baltic Sea Labour Forum was looking into. Mr Thönnnes pointed out that this was an example of working on the details in order to affect the bigger picture. The conference and the participants of the BSPC had been invited to take part in government meetings on an equal footing, he underlined again, just as Ms Pivnenko had mentioned regarding Stralsund.

All of this was showing to Mr Thönnnes that parliamentarians could achieve something. He told the attendees, when they got home and someone asked them what they had done at the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, they could answer what the BSPC had achieved. They knew what they had done and what work they had put into it. This could give them strength for the future as well. Here, he referred to Prof Jānis Vucāns who had said that the first thing they had needed to achieve in the Baltic Sea region was peace, the next was constant dialogue – talking to one another about their problems -, and the third was ensuring that the environment around them was safer. That was the basis of life around the Baltic Sea. In that regard, the work of the BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Ammunitions, Mr Peter Stein, was important, for everyone who was involved in removing sea-dumped ammunitions and

unexploded ordnance on the seabed. Then there was the youth who were involved, creating perspectives – because it was their future that had to be protected right at this point. Climate protection was important as well. Equally of value was involving NGOs. That could be achieved through working groups, so they did not have to deal with that at the conferences that much. Mr Thönnnes believed that this forum of the Baltic Sea parliamentarians was exemplary for many regions in the world, and he thought that the sustainability of the peace that they had enjoyed in the area was associated with their work in the BSPC. Every single one of the parliamentarians could be proud of that. What was important was that what they decided here was something that they had to take home and got their governments to implement. That meant not only their own parliamentary group but also in collaboration with others that they were working with, despite possible opposition. It was not enough to just agree with everything at the conference and then wait until Secretary General Bodo Bahr's declaration arrived, declaring how far they had got with implementation. Mr Thönnnes insisted that anyone in support of the final resolution of a conference was committing to taking it home and working towards fulfilling it when they got there. That was parliamentarianism as it lived and breathed.

Mr Thönnnes said thank you to anyone who had helped them – including all of the secretary generals. Looking back to his time, he wished to thank Bodo Bahr but also all the presidents. In addition, he offered his gratitude to the CBSS, adding that without Ms Daria Akhutina, they wouldn't have been able to make such progress regarding the Baltic Sea Labour Forum. Without the support of Mr Bernd Hemingway, for example, that would also not have been possible. Mr Thönnnes believed it became clear that the BSPC could not do it on their own, and for that reason, he said thank you again. He pointed out that some countries believed they could solve all their problems on their own, within their borders. Mr Thönnnes was cautious not to mention a name but intimated that it was often associated with the word "first" following it. That, he underlined, was not the way forward. He was convinced of the need to work together, to collaborate, and that was what could be found in organisations like the BSPC.

They needed each other in this world, he emphasised. Otherwise, they would not make much progress.

He thanked his audience, noting that they might have brought something from the past into the present and would carry it on to the future. With that, he concluded his presentation.

Session Moderator **Carola Veit** thanked him for his warm words and taking his listeners through the past 30 years again, reviewing it. She noted that all of them felt a little bit praised by his words, repeating her gratitude to Mr Thönnies for his work.

She went on to introduce the contribution by the former BSPC president, Ms Christina Gestrin, who had also taken part in the Conference in Mariehamn in 2018 as an expert. Ms Veit noted that the organisers had not been certain if they could manage all the contributions in their available time. Therefore they had asked Ms Gestrin to provide a video message which was then presented.

*Video Message by Ms Christina Gestrin,
Former BSPC President*

Ms **Christina Gestrin** began by thanking the BSPC for inviting her to speak at the ceremonial session in honour of the 30th BSPC. Ten years earlier, they had celebrated the 20th anniversary in Helsinki, and she had had the privilege of chairing the BSPC for three years between 2008 and at the Conference in Helsinki in 2011. After that, she had taken part in the BSPC activities as rapporteur on eutrophication, as an observer to HELCOM and as a representative of the Finnish parliament in Standing Committee meetings until 2015 when her last term as parliamentarian had ended.

During the period when she had been involved in the BSPC's work, quite a few special working groups had been established, focusing on solving common challenges among the Baltic Sea countries. They had



Ms Christina Gestrin, Former BSPC President

had working groups on maritime safety, eutrophication, energy efficiency and climate change as well as civil security and trafficking, just to mention a few. These issues were still highly topical to this day in the Baltic Sea region, Ms Gestrin underlined. Long-term political actions, persistence and patience were necessary qualities for the work of the BSPC. She was grateful that she had had the opportunity to influence the regional development in the BSPC, through the organisation, and for the time together with the BSPC family. Through the work of the Standing Committee, she had learned a lot about people and politics in all parts of the Baltic Sea region. She had believed then – and still did so today – that an important dimension of the work of the BSPC was to get to know each other and deepen their understanding of each other's cultures and political lives.

Ten years earlier, at that BSPC Conference, the overall opinion had been that quite remarkable developments had taken place in the Baltic Sea region since the first Conference in Helsinki in 1991. The most promising changes had been in the areas of peace, democracy and in environmental cooperation. However, it had been stated by the parliamentarians that a lot of challenges remained. The positive development of the cooperation in the Baltic Sea region had continued for more than twenty years. In 2014, diplomatic and political crises had followed after the Russian annexation of Crimea with implications on the political, economic and environmental collaboration in the region. The challenges in the Baltic Sea region, Ms Gestrin explained, were complex and had different consequences for different countries. Parliamentarians had a task and mandate from the people to meet the challenges of their region. That was exactly why a forum like the BSPC was so important and especially during politically difficult times. Despite the deep crises and conflicts between parts of the Baltic Sea region – that they, unfortunately, were still experiencing to this day –, the BSPC had managed to provide an arena where parliamentarians had continued to meet and discuss all sorts of sensitive issues.

Ms Gestrin stated her conviction that the BSPC would continue to play an important role as promoter of democratic values and constructive political processes and for a sustainable development in the region for the benefit of the Baltic Sea region and its citizens for many years yet to come. She wished the BSPC and each one of the attendees all the best in the future.

Ms **Carola Veit** thanked Ms Gestrin for these insights, noting that Ms Gestrin had been the first BSPC president that Ms Veit had

come to know in 2011. As early as back then, it had been completely normal for a woman to chair the BSPC. That had been normal and would always remain a normal part of their work together.

She noted that Mr Pettersson had had to board the plane to Copenhagen and said his good-byes off screen. Ms Veit thanked him for the co-moderation and his personal input from his BSPC presidency.

She announced that they would now like to hear and integrate into this panel the voice of the youth, finally getting into the future side. Among them was Mr Jonas Faergeman from Denmark who had already contributed to earlier sessions. He had taken part in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum on the previous Saturday. That had been a back-to-back event to the present Conference. Ms Veit noted that Mr Faergeman had already told them that there had been very exciting discussions about fundamental issues and challenges at the forum. She asked him if he as a representative of the forum had any special expectations of the parliamentarians for the future and what opportunities he saw to get involved in the BSPC work in the future.

*Address by Mr Jonas Faergeman, Representative of
the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum*

Mr **Jonas Faergeman** said that it was always fun to be part of a conference that celebrated a great number of years, more years than he



*Mr Jonas Faergeman, Representative of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary
Youth Forum*

had existed. He noted that he was only in his twenties even though he had the hair of a fifty-five-year old, but that was just genes; he could not help that.

Regarding what had been discussed at the Youth Forum on Saturday, most of that had already been explained very well by Ms Ciok and Mr Pintilie in an earlier session. Therefore, he would instead add something to that because there had been several sessions at the forum and finish by proposing a general consensus of the youth that he felt confident in claiming. First, a session had considered digitisation and respective safety. The aspect discussed the most had been social media and the way that it was being used today, not only on a personal but also on a political level. Special emphasis had been given to the latter. Social media had also been mentioned by several parliamentarians and panellists at the Conference. Unfortunately, he opined, it had been mentioned as a tool for politicians to act as a politician; basically, the politicians' understanding of social media was that of a politician. That was completely fine as it was a tool that they used. However, this proved a lack of a broader understanding of what social media entailed for the general public and the negatives that this brought with it. He suggested that any parliamentarian listening to him right now and who cared about social media should confer with experts in the field and lead with that knowledge. Specifically, the young people at the forum had talked about polarisation being a greater issue in social media. People who did not have to look the person they disagreed with in the face had a tendency to probably be a little bit more aggressive and adamant about their disagreement. There had been a significant increase in groups which had this idea of in-groups and out-groups – essentially that if you did not belong to the group that one side had created, you were not only in a different group but just wrong. Emotionally, the others were not just wrong but also bad persons. This not only extended to a way of conducting oneself on a social level between people but also in political groups. Politicians were not solely responsible for this, but they should be aware of the fanbase that they had. In Mr Faergeman's personal opinion, this was a fair way of describing how some politicians ran their jobs.

Aside from this major focus, the forum had considered a general idea of what young people would want. It was an interesting aspect to him as this was not the first conference of its kind that he had attended. He had also participated in one in Åland in 2018 and in the COP a few times before, always speaking on behalf of the youth which he took much pleasure in. Unfortunately, he was always asked this question and gave the same answer every time. The young people just wanted politicians to do their job. They had already

been elected to do specific things. If they were unable to do those things, people would try to elect better people – if not run for themselves. It was somewhat sad that they were supposed to think that now the youth had uncovered the general issues that had been known about for decades. He was not saying this to talk down to his listeners as that would not only be wrong *per se* but also because he was aware of the competencies of his audience. Nevertheless, there was the issue of politicians acting as if they had only now woken up to the idea of what the youth – or the public – wanted. There was this idea now that the youth had been more integrated than it had ever been, which he conceded was partly true. The issue was that there should be more to it than just participation. The young people of today were screaming the same things that the young people before them had been screaming – and probably people older than them. These were not just youth issues. They were told that now things would change with the 2050 agreements – or the 2030 goals.

He said he was addressing the politicians – who had been in this field for a long time – very humbly but also sternly. In 1987, there had been the first environmental reports that did not end up doing anything. Then there had been the Kyoto Protocol in the 1990s which hadn't ended up doing anything either. In the 2000s, there had been the first COPs. These did not do anything, either. Now, there was the Paris Agreement, and he noted that the Baltic Sea region was not living up to it the best. That didn't do anything. Now, there was the promise that within the next ten or nine years, most of those problems would be solved. Mr Faergeman reiterated that he had been asked what the youth wanted. What they wanted were simply the things that they had been promised since before they had been born. They were very much eager to help and also competent and able to help, but the biggest part was for politicians to simply deliver what they had promised. He further underlined how important it was to act very aggressively when it came to climate change. It was not only damaging the young people's future but the future of the human species and the way that they saw history as well as the way they were acting as people.

Session Moderator **Carola Veit** thanked Mr Faergeman for putting this into clear words again, as he had done before. In her view, it was the best way to talk to politicians because they would not get the message otherwise. She thanked him for reminding them once more of their obligations to take on the young people's demands and that this was a task that had to be accomplished. Ms Veit noted that he had mentioned earlier that politicians had proved with the

response to the COVID-19 pandemic that they could tackle serious problems quickly. The question was why there was no response of similar speed to climate change. She further pointed out that Mr Faergeman and his fellow representatives had done an excellent job of elaborating recommendations for their negotiations. The parliamentarians would of course look at the results and take them into account in their future work. As Mr Thönnies had said, it was the duty of parliamentarians to bring these issues to their respective governments and also enforce their execution rather than simply writing them down. The contribution by Mr Faergeman was very fruitful for the BSPC.

Now they were coming to the end of the ceremonial session. She thanked all participants for their insights and reflections as well as suggestions for the future. Ms Veit invited anyone interested in learning more about their work to read the BSPC publication on 30 years of their work that had been published on this day. In this regard, she voiced her gratitude to Secretary General Bodo Bahr for bringing all of that information together. It was a reflection of the past that was worth taking the time to look at. The publication contained a lot of valuable information and reflections on the parliamentary dimension of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region in the past, the present and hopefully the future as well.

With that, she brought the ceremonial session in honour of the 30th anniversary of the BSPC to an end.

FOURTH SESSION

Addresses and Reports



Chair: Mr Jarosław Wałęsa, MP, Poland

Session chair Mr **Jarosław Wałęsa**, MP from Poland, thanked Ms Veit and opened the fourth session of this very intense schedule. He noted he was honoured to be a chair in this digital discussion, adding that this was his first time doing so. There was a challenging task ahead of them with many interesting speakers. He introduced the first speaker, Mr Pedro Roque, Vice-President and President Emeritus of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM). Mr Wałęsa said that the wide participation of the PAM at the BSPC Conference underlined how much of their cooperation had intensified in the recent past. As mentioned in the opening statement, both organisations had agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that autumn, and that would further deepen the cooperation between them.

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

Mr **Pedro Roque** said it was a pleasure for him to address the BSPC on this day on behalf of the PAM. He thanked President Pyry Niemi and Secretary General Bodo Bahr for inviting the parliamentary assembly he represented once again to this event. The BSPC



Mr Pedro Roque, Vice-President and President Emeritus of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

and the PAM shared a history of collaboration, and the latter appreciated the active participation of the former's delegates in their conferences in recent months and years. He strongly believed that inter-regional parliamentary exchange was very helpful to get a variety of beneficial perspectives and implement global legislative practices that could help them face common challenges. In this regard, he wished to commend their organisations for having finalised a just Memorandum of Understanding which they hoped to sign in person at the next opportunity, probably at the upcoming PAM Bureau meeting in Rome the following November.

Mr Roque said that the COVID-19 crisis had put unprecedented pressures on their societies. Due to the vaccination process, at last, they were seeing the first signs of improvement. According to the latest figures of the OECD, international trade had reached a new height in the past months. This was encouraging, he underlined. However, vital segments of their economies, such as the tourist sector, were still far from fully recovered. They, as parliamentarians, had the essential role of assisting their governments towards effective strategies and corrective actions. At the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, they had been successful in creating synergies and opportunities for a more prosperous and sustainable future for all. Most recently, their assembly had joined forces with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkish-speaking Countries, TURKPA, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, PABSEC, to organise a high-level conference on building a resilient economic recovery. Three key elements had emerged from this meeting. It was necessary to implement an effective vaccine roll-out also through international solidarity. Financial cooperation

had to be instituted faster. Finally, their investments had to be directed towards a green and digital transition of their economies. Next October, they would meet again in Antalya to resume this conversation, and he was looking forward to the contributions from the BSPC on that occasion.

Climate change had become a reality, Mr Roque pointed out, much faster than all scenarios had predicted. They had also seen the tragic images of floods and summer wildfires across Europe and North Africa. Resolute full-scale political commitments could not wait any longer. Through this year, climate action had been a crucial element of their activities. They had produced two sets of policy recommendations at their last plenary session, one on environmental governance and one on green recovery strategies. The PAM had contributed to the G20 session on energy and climate, and they had strengthened their cooperation with the United Nations Environmental Programme. Currently, the PAM were in full preparation to bring the voice of their parliaments to the upcoming COP26 in Glasgow. Mr Roque was happy to see that their partner parliamentarians in the Baltic Sea region were likewise committed to addressing climate change. The Mediterranean also remained an epicentre for mass flows of economic migrants and asylum seekers. The Afghan crisis, he cautioned, would expand the scope of this emergency. He strongly believed that their interparliamentary work could contribute to effectively responding to these challenges.

Mr **Jarosław Wałęsa** thanked Mr Roque very much for his statement and moved on to the next speaker, Secretary General Hajiyev of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC). As the BSPC President Pyry Niemi had already mentioned in his opening statement, the BSPC had enjoyed a particularly close relationship with PABSEC for many years which had been clearly underscored by two joint meetings of the organisations' Standing Committees in the course of which a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed. As such, Mr Wałęsa welcomed Prof Hajiyev to the Conference.

Address by Mr Asaf Hajiyeu, PABSEC Secretary General

Mr **Asaf Hajiyeu** said it was an honour and privilege for him to address the BSPC. He relayed the regards from PABSEC to the BSPC, congratulating the latter on their thirty-year anniversary and wishing them good health. In 2023, PABSEC would celebrate its own thirties anniversary, and he hoped the BSPC would join their celebration.

Mr Hajiyeu noted the significance of the regional inter-parliamentary organizations in world politics and underlined that the parliamentary component of interstate relations is becoming an increasingly important factor in resolving urgent problems. The PABSEC Secretary General informed about the current activities of the PABSEC and welcomed the strengthening of cooperation between the PABSEC and the BSPC also through the joint events. Mr. Hajiyeu furthermore spoke about the very topical problem of refugees, which became a concern for the European countries, especially today, in the context of the events in Afghanistan. There were 80 million refugees in the world at the present, meaning that of every-one hundred people in the world, one of them was a refugee. In the Black Sea region, in countries like Turkey or Azerbaijan, there was one refugee to every ten people, Mr Hajiyeu pointed out. The most recent situation in Afghanistan would create another wave of refugees. There were several ways of protection from this issue, for instance to build big walls and say, Okay, you can solve your problems by yourselves. That, though, was not a feasible solution because these people were victims of wars between different groups and different political movements. So, altogether, he believed that all par-



Mr Asaf Hajiyeu, PABSEC Secretary General

liamentary assemblies should jointly prepare some legislation to institute normal standard lives for people who would arrive in their region – but also those who would not come to their region. This was a very crucial problem for all of Europe. From the Black Sea region, the refugees were moving in different directions. During the last years, Turkey had received four million refugees. To this day, the damage to the world economy by the refugee problem was estimated at 500 billion dollars. That, he underlined, equalled half a trillion dollars and asked his audience if they could imagine a sum like that. He said that in the 21st century, people should not be abandoned to their fate and expressed the hope that all countries in the world, including the countries of the Black Sea and Baltic regions, unite their capabilities and efforts for the solution of that urgent matter.

He ended by wishing all of them peace, security and prosperity. The Black Sea and the Baltic Sea areas should not be divided as each region's prosperity depended on the other. He wished all the attendees good health and success.

Mr **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked Mr Hajiyev very much for his speech, adding that had been very important and interesting.

He moved on to the next speaker, Ambassador Poznański of the CBSS Secretariat. Mr Wałęsa was happy that the BSPC had been working more and more closely with the CBSS Secretariat for many years, for which reason he was delighted to see the CBSS Secretariat participate in this BSPC Conference.

*Address by Ambassador Grzegorz Marek Poznański,
Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea
States Secretariat*

Ambassador **Grzegorz Poznański** gave his wholehearted congratulations on the 30th anniversary of the Baltic parliamentary cooperation. In the CBSS, they would celebrate 30 years in the coming year. He hoped that that would be another good occasion to celebrate. As had been mentioned many times on that day, the BSPC and the CBSS partnership was very strong. They inspired each other and worked with each other. Parliamentarians, governments, local authorities, international organisations, civil society, academia,



Ambassador Grzegorz Marek Poznański, Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat

industry and youth – they were all responsible for the future of the Baltic Sea region. And they all had important roles to play. As mentioned by the previous CBSS chair Lithuania and current chair Norway, namely through the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the CBSS Ministerial Meeting had adopted in June the Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030, the so-called Vilnius II Declaration. The CBSS Action Plan for the years 2021 and 2025 had also been endorsed. It was clear that current challenges could not wait. In that regard, he listed as examples building a climate-resilient, sustainable and prosperous region, building a safer and more secure region and nurturing their specific regional identity – which should help them in being united in dealing with these challenges.

Science-based policies were indispensable along with well informed and involved societies and citizens in order to have a democracy that really worked. A democracy which efficiently dealt with the challenges mentioned above. The CBSS was working with the scientific communities around their region, especially with the Baltic Science Network, and through the implementation of the CBSS science research and innovation agenda. Moreover, they were conducting many educational projects. They also worked hard, together with their partners such as the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) or the Union of the Baltic Cities, on localising broad policies and strategies, making them work at the subregional and local levels. The CBSS was proud to assist the youth voice in being heard, here in the BSPC and in other Baltic forums. Ambassador Poznański was very happy that the CBSS Youth Platform had proved once again to be an important tool in making the young people's voice strong and further mobilising the governments to

take concrete actions. Only together, all countries and regions around the Baltic Sea, politicians, experts, scientists, local activists, youth and many others, could be built collaboration and trust. These, he emphasised, were so necessary to be efficient *vis-à-vis* current challenges. The coming decade, by 2030, had to be the decade of action. Now was the time to act, and it was necessary to act together to make this region a better place to live for future generations.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa** thanked the ambassador for his speech as well as for the great and close cooperation from the CBSS side for the BSPC work, in particular regarding the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum on the previous Saturday.

He moved on to the next speaker, representing another close collaboration of the BSPC, namely with the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation. In the BSPC resolution of the present year, they also supported a special concern of the BSSSC in their cultural field. The next speaker was Mr Mieczysław Struk, the chairman of the BSSSC, who was also the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship. He had not been able to attend in person but had provided a video message.

Video Message by Mr Mieczysław Struk, Chairman of the Baltic Sea States Subregional, Cooperation, BSSSC, Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship

Mr **Mieczysław Struk** thanked President Niemi for inviting the BSSSC to speak at this honourable gathering. It was a great pleasure to be here for the second time in his capacity as the chairman of the BSPC's partner organisation. The BSSSC was a network intended to voice the interests of the regions as well as to debate and lobby for issues most urgent to them. It supported and initiated bottom-up cooperation and organised activities against the background of the European Union's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, the Northern Dimension European Green Deal and Next Generation EU. An important recovery facility to mention just the key policies and visions. The BSSSC also planned to take an active part in the conference on the future of Europe, to be an important part of this region.



Mr Mieczysław Struk, Chairman of the Baltic Sea States Subregional, Cooperation, BSSSC, Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship

In the previous year, he had mentioned a few of the challenges all of them were facing these days and which still occupied their daily attention. Now, he could only repeat and strongly advocate for even stronger engagement and togetherness on all governance levels in their Baltic Sea family. These challenges did not get easier or less complicated – just the opposite. Having a nearly 30-year history behind them, the BSSSC could see what had already been accomplished and how much still needed to be done to maintain the very basic democratic value rooted in the Baltic Sea region and Europe as it was now. Public health and security, economic challenges, the climate crisis, migration – those had a much greater impact than they could have imagined even a few years earlier. Similarly, the long-standing problem of ammunition, sunken ships and chemical weapons abandoned in the Baltic Sea during the Second World War, contemporary issues of water and waste management, over-production, aging societies, digitalisation, all sorts of cyber threats and most of all a distinct decrease in social trust in traditional democratic mechanisms – they all called for an even more active and concerted approach. It was necessary to further develop the civil society and act together to stop social disruption, the spread of fake news, decrease populism intra- and internationally as well as revert the loss of trust in science and logic.

To address those challenges successfully, it was necessary to follow good governance principles: the rule of law and transparency, accountability and consensus. They needed solidarity in all aspects, with those in need, with future generations and with nature. That was the core of what the BSSSC stood for. They had a lot in common with the cornerstones of the current work of the BSPC, such

as a focus on democracy, strong cooperation as well as environmental sustainability and youth involvement. The BSSSC believed in a continuous dialogue between generations of the BSR, especially listening to the voices of the youth as they were at the core of social and political change and the key to any region's future economic success. Their most important event, the big BSSSC annual Conference, would be held this year in a hybrid form on 7 and 8 October 2021, in the course of which they would focus on cooperation for a more sustainable Baltic Sea region and new opportunities ahead of them. They would discuss the role of the regions and cities as drivers of the green and digital transition and the developments within the programmes financing the support of sustainable cross-border Baltic cooperation and the green transformation. They would also showcase the best ideas and examples of such cooperation. This would be done in the areas of culture and sustainability, supporting green business, green mobility and transport as well as the ecological situation of the Baltic Sea. In that respect, Mr Struk cordially invited his friends from the BSPC to that conference and reiterated his gratitude for being invited as BSSSC representative to join the 30th BSPC.

On such an important anniversary, he wished the BSPC 30 more conferences and many more, with close cooperation and neighbourliness in the BSR. He also passed along warm wishes from all BSSSC regions to keep up the great work done so far, being a forum for political dialogue between Baltic Sea region parliamentarians, to continue raising awareness and further being a force to support the sustainable, environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea region. They had so much in common as partner organisations, and he was very happy to acknowledge that their values and goals were shared to such a great extent. Mr Struk sincerely hoped their further cooperation would be a great example of the values they stood for and would be a vital part of the future of the Baltic Sea region.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa** emphasised Mr Struk's contribution as a great message.

He introduced the next speaker, Mr Jari Nakhanen, the President of the Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR).

Address by Mr Jari Nakhanen, President of the Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR)

Mr **Jari Nakhanen** thanked the BSPC on behalf of the Baltic Sea Commission for their kind invitation to attend this important event. He had very much appreciated the contributions and inspiring exchanges he had heard on this day. They illustrated the significant contribution the BSPC had provided for the development of the Baltic Sea region over the years. He congratulated the BSPC for their long-standing and successful parliamentary cooperation over 30 years. Mr Nakhanen wished them all the best for the years ahead. A couple of days later, the Baltic Sea Commission would also celebrate its 25-year anniversary of its original cooperation. They had been working since 1996.

Close political dialogue between local, regional and national actors was crucial to achieving this common cause. The numerous challenges that the Baltic Sea region was going through indeed required cooperation and open dialogue between all stakeholders. That was why he was delighted to be among the attendees of the Conference on this day. A few weeks earlier, the CPMR's Executive Committee had also been very pleased to discuss Baltic Sea issues and future cooperation with BSPC President Niemi. This year, the Baltic Sea Commission had focused on contributing to the EU Green Deal agenda by fostering a lot of solutions in different sectors. He wished to offer a glimpse at concrete examples of their policy work which they believed required strong, multi-level cooperation. Firstly, promoting a sustainable new economy in the Baltic Sea region. The



Mr Jari Nakhanen, President of the Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR)

Baltic Sea was under a great deal of pressure, and a sustainable green economy would help to improve the status through promoting sustainable fishing and green energy engines for boats. Mr Nakhanen pointed out that most of the CPMR's members had coastal regions which had taken an active role in the development of the new EU sustainable blue economy, engaging directly with both the European Parliament and the European Commission. Secondly, promoting connectivity within the Baltic Sea region. It was important to develop good transport infrastructure and ensure further accessibility for all regions, including the most peripheral. The organisation's members were therefore following closely the implementation of the regulation by the European Union which was an opportunity to further connect the Baltic Sea region. Thirdly, facilitating cross-border cooperation. The border closures due to the pandemic had been hard for people living in border regions, with negative side effects. It was important to preserve a strong cross-border cooperation, even in these troubled times. The new Interreg programme was under preparation, Mr Nakhanen noted, and should focus on the people-to-people projects as trust had been harmed these past months. Fourthly, promoting a sustainable and healthy Baltic Sea region. The fight against climate change was the top priority. By implementing and sharing information on feasible solutions to promote sustainable development, the CPMR was working towards the future. They hoped for future synergy with the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity to exchange more knowledge and develop joined solutions.

The key policy area that required ambitious and close cooperation between the region and the member states was the Arctic. He pointed out that what happened in the Arctic did not stay there but affected all parts of the Baltic Sea region, the EU and the whole world. That was something that was occasionally forgotten. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission was following closely the development of the new EU Arctic Policy, expected to be finished by the end of the current year. The Finnish contribution to the sustainable recovery of the Baltic Sea region was a key priority. The Next Generation EU Recovery Plan for Europe was a major opportunity for the Baltic Sea region and the EU as a whole to recover from the current crisis and create the conditions for sustainable, inclusive competitiveness.

Mr Nakhanen concluded by saying that that the member regions for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission were looking forward to deepening their cooperation with the BSPC. Together, as other stakeholders had presented at the Conference, they foresaw great things for the Baltic Sea region and its citizens, ensuring no territory was left behind.

Mr **Jarosław Wałęsa** voiced his gratitude to Mr Nakhanen and moved on to the very important subject of cooperation with the NGOs and civil society. First, there was Mr Anders Bergström, representing the Baltic Sea NGO Network.

Address by Anders Bergström, Baltic Sea NGO Network, Policy Area Coordinator, PA Education, Science and Social Affairs

Mr **Anders Bergström** thanked the BSPC for the invitation to speak at the Conference. He began by congratulating the BSPC on its 30-year anniversary. This was a truly sustainable cooperation between parliaments and parliamentarians, an important foundation for successfully addressing their common societal challenges. In fact, with today's complex societal challenges, they needed each other more than ever before in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region. He was not just talking about the most obvious challenges – the climate-related ones – but also social challenges related to the integration of migrants, trafficking, young people unable to enter the labour market, the aging population, just to give a few examples. There was also another reason why they needed each other, and that was that opportunities were better addressed jointly. Instead of competing internally, they could join forces, develop products and services that they could compete with together on the global markets. The great asset of the Baltic Sea region was the skills and competences of their citizens. Another asset was the entrepreneurial



Mr Anders Bergström, Baltic Sea NGO Network, Policy Area Coordinator, PA Education, Science and Social Affairs

mindset and ability to adjust to change. Together, they could develop targeted solutions to these challenges, instead of struggling on their own in their countries, regions or cities. Together, they could make better use of their resources.

Now, he conceded, his listeners might say: This sounds good but how do we do this in practice? How could collaboration be boosted in the Baltic Sea region? One answer, Mr Bergström explained, had already been mentioned on this day, i.e., the macro-regional strategies, with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, an integrated framework for collaboration and a laboratory where new collaborative approaches were developed and practiced, where stakeholders were invited to cross-sectorial, transnational and multi-level formats to co-create solutions to the challenges and make better use of their opportunities. The strategies were important for all stakeholders, both from the EU members and neighbouring countries. These strategies – now numbering four in Europe – had proved to work, but more needed to be done to further develop them and to make them sustainable. Collaboration had to be invested in, not the least in building the institutional capacity for international collaboration. Financial resources were also important. Transnational cooperation did not have to be expensive, but today, far too little of their budgets were used for something so important when addressing their challenges and making best use of their opportunities.

In that regard, he addressed where civil society organisations fit into this Baltic Sea landscape of transnational collaboration. Some had already been part of this collaboration for many years, some wanted to take part but could not find the entrance. Most of them lacked the needed financial support. Today's funding was mostly tailor-made for the public sector. The Baltic Sea NGO Network had offered support to non-governmental organisations for twenty years with contacts, with capacity-building and as a platform for dialogue between civil society organisations and policymakers. After those twenty years, it was high time to reform the Baltic Sea NGO Network, and this reform process was now taking place, focusing on providing tailor-made support to those civil society organisations that wanted to be part of cooperating in targeted solutions for societal charges, offering capacity building, guidance when searching for suitable frameworks for them to join and jointly push for financial support to the non-governmental organisations that wanted to contribute with their competencies to societal development. Wider participation in transnational cooperation was important, Mr Bergström emphasised, and the Baltic Sea NGO Network was here to help. They aimed at presenting the reformed Baltic Sea NGO Network towards the end of the year.

Finally, the speaker addressed what parliamentarians could do more to support transnational collaboration and civil society involvement. The political support was needed on all levels, national, regional and local. To push for more transnational collaboration, helping to change mindsets, increasing the awareness that they needed each other across borders and that these days, there were excellent possibilities for collaboration with their neighbours. What was needed was making better use of the opportunities, including investing in Baltic Sea region collaboration, to make transnational collaboration an integrated part of strategic development in cities, in regions and in their countries. That included valuable contributions from the civil society organisations. The Baltic Sea NGO Network with its members was looking forward to continuing working with the BSPC.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked Mr Bergström for his very interesting information.

He moved on to the next speaker, Ms Ulla Karin Nurm, Director of the Secretariat of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being, with the mission to enhance collaboration and support knowledge to tackle challenges in health and social well-being in the region.

Address by Ms Ulla Karin Nurm, NDPHS Secretariat

Ms **Ulla Karin Nurm** offered her gratitude for the invitation to this BSPC Anniversary Conference. The opportunity to follow the BSPC's important work was highly valued in their partnership, and they were always happy to participate. The issues that the Conference had addressed on this day were dear to the hearts of the NDPHS. The COVID-19 pandemic had shown that intense cooperation was the only way to contain it. Nobody was safe until everyone was safe, she underlined. When talking about media, the most pressing need from health professionals was to address the misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines. In some countries, their concern was that it had significantly delayed the progress with vaccination.

The topic that she would like to focus on in her address was climate change and biodiversity, specifically its impact on human health. She had to say that the impact of climate change on health had not been sufficiently recognised and discussed, to put it mildly. Ms Nurm was



Ms Ulla Karin Nurm, NDPHS Secretariat

very happy that the NDPHS's partner, the World Health Organization, had succeeded in bringing the climate change and health debate for the first time ever to the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, that would be held in Glasgow this fall. Climate change – or more precisely, the climate emergency – was affecting health in increasingly obvious ways. Heat waves posed health risks for many patient groups and older people. The natural disasters that had been observed recently this summer were killing people and destroying infrastructure, calling for crisis management plans and strengthening of health infrastructure. The disease patterns were changing. This, Ms Nurm noted, was a concern for public health. For example, ticks had moved higher up north, and therefore lyme disease was now a risk for populations who had previously been safe from it. With warm temperatures and more unpredictable weather patterns, the ticks were showing up in places that had once been thought to be too cold for them to survive. Moreover, ticks were twice as likely to be infected with two or more pathogens these days, exposing bite victims to multiple diseases from a single bite.

These were very obvious impacts, and there were processes like the loss of biodiversity due to climate change that might not immediately make one think of a health impact. Yet the impact was there, and it was significant. Ms Nurm provided one example, namely a healthy diet which was a cornerstone of good health and directly depended on that biodiversity. Seasonal, local diets were good for health and good for the planet. But the loss of biodiversity was reducing the availability of healthy and sustainable dietary choices. For example, the Baltic Sea was extremely overfished, and some of the fish species were unsafe for consumption due to high levels of mercury and other harmful substances. Ms Nurm noted that she

could continue with these examples, but her time was limited. Therefore, she suggested that those interested in learning more about the topic should read the highly informative report by the World Health Organization titled *Connecting Global Priorities, Biodiversity and Human Health*:

Coming to the end, she said she would like to share two thoughts on the way forward. First, she believed that in order to tackle climate change, they really had to step out of their silos and cooperate cross-sectorally. Health was part of the solution and a powerful motivating factor for action. Health was moreover created in sectors other than healthcare. Second, she believed they were long past the point where GDP was the main indicator of success. In Ms Nurm's opinion, thorough success meant a sustainable and inclusive society, with equal opportunities for good health and well-being for all, leaving no one behind. She wished all the listeners to stay healthy.

Chair **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked Ms Nurm for her remarks and the information.

The next speaker was Ms Anna Mannfalk, from the region Skåne in Sweden, responsible for the public sector and civic society and NGOs. She was the Vice Chair of Region Skåne Health Care Committee.

Address by Ms Anna Mannfalk, Vice-Chair of Region Skåne Health Care Committee

Ms **Anna Mannfalk** noted that she was picking up where Mr Bergström had left off. The region Skåne was at the forefront, with a structured mutual agreement to ensure that local non-profit organisations had the opportunity to establish and develop their operations. Together, they were striving towards the goals of their regional development strategy. Ms Mannfalk had the honour to be the chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Agreement, which also involved regional representatives of the Swedish government. She cherished this mission and thanked the BSPC for the possibility to address all of them on this day. She further appreciated that their work was mentioned in the BSPC's final report.

The important and outstanding work of the NGOs in her region could be classified in three categories: The first was the forming of



*Ms Anna Mannfalk, Vice-Chair of Region
Skåne Health Care Committee*

opinions. The art of communication and reaching isolated communities – sometimes in the centre of a big city – with information was often done better by the NGOs than official authorities. Many groups had experience of hostile and corrupt authorities, and the lack of trust reflected how information was received. The local football club, church, the Red Cross, the LGBT organisations or shelters for the homeless had gained that trust and could therefore communicate more easily. One of the region's programmes emphasised cooperation with civil society organisations in order to facilitate social networking and language training among other things. Lately, they had been able to reach communities with information on the COVID-19 disease and promote vaccination through these channels.

The second category was providing services. A number of organisations was providing regular healthcare services. The city mission of Malmö employed a trained nurse who could offer examinations and when needed follow persons through further medical care. Others offered support for persons with mental issues and facilitated contacts with psychiatric care or social authorities. These services were mostly financed through what the region called the IUPs, non-profit public partnerships, which gave most partners a longer planning horizon than yearly grants. They also explored the opportunity to use the possibility for targeting NGOs in the European Rules for Public Procurement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination of homeless people and migrants without proper documentation had been performed by the NGOs.

The third category was innovation. All of them knew that the NGOs were more innovative and quicker to action than large

organisations like the region Skåne. This had been evident in 2015 when NGOs had met immigrants at train stations and had opened shelters as tens of thousands of migrants had been crossing the borders to Sweden in Skåne. When the COVID-19 disease had struck Europe and the rest of the world, the situation had been quite different. The tools that were normally used for prices, food and shelter had been ruled out due to fear of spreading the virus. A majority of the volunteers had themselves been of an age where they should have isolated themselves and stayed safe at home. On top of that, several governments had closed borders, trapping people. Being part of a common job market with Copenhagen, this had had consequences for Skåne. During the spring of 2020, the non-profit organisations had had to find new ways to be able to continue their activities. The region Skåne had inquired early on if needs had been met in order to start a digital tool for social physical or cultural activities and had been able to help finance some of those. Now it was necessary to find new ways to break isolation.

She went on to speak about their other challenges for the future. Skåne had a relatively young population but a lower employment rate than other urban regions in Sweden. This led to segregation and polarisation. They were involved in projects aiming to test new models for cooperation, enabling NGOs to take part in the planning and implementation of operations leading to social sustainability. This was handled in cooperation with Mr Anders Bergström's organisation, the Baltic Sea NGO Network. Through joint efforts, they could attract more knowledge, greater funding and hopefully reach better results together.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked her very much for her statement and moved on to three important reports by BSPC rapporteurs. These were to be presented by the respective rapporteurs. The first concerned sea-dumped munitions, presented by Mr Peter Stein.

Address by Mr Peter Stein, BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions

Mr **Peter Stein** congratulated all of those present on the BSPC's 30th anniversary from the Bundestag as well. For him, it was his 9th year that he'd had the honour of being a member of the BSPC. It



Mr Peter Stein, BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions

did indeed feel like a very special family, and he was very much looking forward to the time when they could meet in person rather than virtually. Mr Stein noted that he had presented an interim report on sea-dumped munitions in the previous year. Since he was concluding his work now with the final report, he was cautioning his listeners that they should not consider his submission as too final because it was the beginning of trying to reach a solution. He believed it was important to emphasise that there was not a great deal of time left to get going, but it was not yet too late to tackle this challenge, together. Mr Stein underlined that they would not just be removing the unexploded ordnance and dumped munitions on the seabed but also the traces of a war that Germany was still regretting, and he hoped they could continue their commitment to never have a war again in the Baltic Sea region. The best way of doing that was to keep on maintaining the peace as they had been.

The world needed role models, and it was part of his report – his wish – for the way that the Baltic Sea states were dealing with the removal of sea-dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance on the seabed would become exemplary as a region. Mr Stein mentioned that he had sent out a questionnaire to the regional assemblies. In that respect, he thanked Secretary General Bodo Bahr for helping him with what actually was quite an unusual step to conduct, i.e., a survey of this kind. His goal had been to motivate the parliamentarians to think about their skill sets and capacities in their own regions but also to get a sense of their interests. After all, the task ahead was about bundling their capacities to solve this problem of sea-dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance. That was what the job was about.

He reiterated that his work might look like a final report, but the emphasis was on the word “report” rather than the term “final” because it was very much the beginning of the process. The Baltic Sea region would do well to take a strategic approach, as they had to let their voices be heard in terms of the European Maritime Strategy. There were two meetings in that regard coming up, one was Diamond II in September when they would be presenting their report, and the other was the Kiel Munitions Clearance Week which would take place the following week. 20 October would see the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on revising the Baltic Sea Action Plan. These were all aspects that the BSPC had already influenced by engaging with this issue at all. Mr Stein thanked Minister Roth and Ms Pivnenko because both had spoken clearly about the challenge that was facing all of them and that they all shared in terms of dealing with the environment and protecting the biotope of the Baltic Sea. What mattered was the emphasis on working together and ensuring that the Baltic Sea would never again experience war.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked Mr Stein for his submission and his work. The next rapporteur, Ms Veit, would speak on migration and integration.

Address by Ms Carola Veit, BSPC Rapporteur on Migration and Integration

Ms **Carola Veit** began by noting that the BSPC Working Group on Migration and Integration had ended the year before, after three years of comprehensive work on the topic. Therefore, this was her first year of providing a regular report as a rapporteur.

Perusing the answers of the governments of the Baltic Sea region in this field to the 29th BSPC Resolution, it could be concluded that most BSPC member states had pursued their regional migration and integration plans and projects. She provided some examples: The Norwegian government had launched a new integration strategy, called Integration Through Knowledge. Germany had been revising its national action plan on integration and the participatory process. In Latvia, the cabinet of ministers had adopted the guidelines for the development of a cohesive and active society, with one task being the promotion of foreign citizens. In February, Lithuania had renewed its action plan for the integration of foreigners into



Ms Carola Veit, BSPC Rapporteur on Migration and Integration

society. One best practice example had already been highlighted, namely the projects of the region Skåne in Sweden.

An important aspect was the destiny of unaccompanied child migrants. In that respect, Ms Veit mentioned Russia's cooperation on migration issues in the Baltic Sea region that was continuing through the CBSS Anti-Trafficking Task Force. The interaction on this issue had also been carried out within the framework of the Council's Expert Group on Children at Risk. Of course, they had to take note of the already criticised move by Belarus. Lithuania and Poland saw Lukashenka's regime of sending migrants across the border as part of a "hybrid war", disregarding human rights, peace and democracy, using people as means of political pressure in response to EU sanctions imposed upon Belarus. Against this background, Ms Veit touched on the issue of the EU protecting its external borders, but a general European approach to sharing the burden of migration was needed as well. This had also been illustrated by PABSEC as well.

For one aspect, she returned to Sweden's answer to the previous year's resolution. The Swedish government had pointed out that when it came to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on integration, it was becoming more and more evident that the pandemic would have a disproportionately negative effect on the integration of migrants and refugees. This in particular concerned labour market outcomes but also increased risks of being exposed to COVID-19, segregation and increased vulnerability. One of many difficulties was the accessibility of digital devices. Ms Veit noted a German study which had been published in April of 2021 had come to the same conclusion. One year of COVID-19 had affected almost every

aspect of society, economy and politics. Migrants, refugees and their integration had stayed under the radar in the public debate. Therefore, there was a severe impact of the pandemic on every aspect of migration, related to politics, health, housing, education as well as the labour market. Ms Veit believed that this applied in similar fashion to the whole of the Baltic Sea region.

In conclusion, there were many reasons to continue sharing their best practices and strive for better inclusion and social cohesion as well as for sharing the task of migration.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked Ms Veit very much for her report. He moved on to the final rapporteur who would speak about maritime policy, Mr Jochen Schulte.

Address by Mr Jochen Schulte, BSPC Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy

Mr **Jochen Schulte** began by thanking Mr Jörgen Pettersson for his valuable input and continuous commitment to the integrated maritime policy. This year's report was dedicated to providing an overview of events, innovations and legislative developments and actions in the field of integrated maritime policy. Their main focus was on blue growth, energy infrastructure and environmental aspects of maritime policy. Unfortunately, it was impossible to overlook the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There had been lockdowns imposed by governments and further containment measures. Consequently, international merchant and cruise shipping had faced insurmountable obstacles. Within the Baltic Sea region, the total number of cruise guests had decreased by 99 per cent in 2020, compared to 2019, and the total number of calls had decreased by 96 per cent. Because of outbreaks of COVID-19 infections among port crews, several terminals at important industrial harbours needed to be closed, such as for instance China's second-largest port.

The pandemic had shown that maritime transport remained an important economic factor in the global economy. The industry as a whole of maritime shipping remained a profitable business for those involved. The pandemic – contrary to what had been expected – had led to an extreme boom because the existing number of con-



Mr Jochen Schulte, BSPC Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy

tainers had been limited, and in connection with the pandemic and the lockdown, there had been a huge growth – particularly in online retail. Therefore, freight rates on the most important shipping routes had increased. In fact, according to the Financial Times, Mr Schulte noted, freight rates on the crucial routes between China and Europe had tripled, in some cases even quadrupled, from around the turn of the year 2020 to 2021. Cargo prices of international shipping had risen by 46 per cent in the first half of 2021.

The general situation in terms of maritime transport against this background on the one hand was a challenge but on the other offered opportunities. The Baltic Sea region, the BSPC and the CBSS could play an important role in this context by offering solutions for the future. Maritime stakeholders were already in the process of achieving a green transition in maritime transport. It could be seen that the major manufacturers of maritime engines were shifting to more sustainable replacement fuels for fossil fuels, including LNG but also others. This would further lead to customers ordering ships having to pay higher prices for freight, but this was better for the environment and was therefore a meaningful approach. Naturally, in this respect, harbours played an important role in the Baltic Sea region, and these could be a model for green solutions and further economic growth as well. What was important was, however, that despite all of the different views – not least political views – they had, that they were facing the challenges together. They could only be solved or dealt with together. It was necessary to bear in mind that until the end of this century, one could expect temperatures to increase such that the Baltic Sea region could see a rise of the water level by one metre. If one further assumed that the temperature fluctuations would continue to

increase intensely, then more natural disasters would occur while biodiversity would be affected through many different species dying out. Therefore, maritime shipping had to come up with an environmental and economic solution to this urgent issue and diverse political views.

Session chairman **Jarosław Wałęsa**, thanked Mr Schulte for his comments and statements. Unfortunately, there was no more time for additional remarks or questions. With that, he thanked everyone for their contributions. He believed that these had been very informative and had underlined how much more work there was ahead of them. Mr Wałęsa closed the fourth session and returned the screen to the BSPC president.

CLOSING SESSION



Chair: Mr Pyry Niemi, President of the BSPC 2020-2022

BSPC President **Pyry Niemi** thanked Mr Wałęsa and all other speakers for their great contributions in the preceding session. He opened the closing session of the digital 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. First off, he invited the attendees to adopt the Resolution of the 30th Annual Conference. As always, he reminded everyone that they could only decide by unanimous consent. However, there was one matter that he would like to address beforehand. The members of the working group had already informed the attendees about the respective details at this Conference. The Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity, chaired by Mr Niemi's colleague Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, had presented an excellent and very substantial interim report. Their calls for action had fed into the Resolution of this day. Unfortunately, the working group had so far only been able to hold digital sessions, due to pandemic-related restrictions. It would hold another digital session this autumn but would only be able to start on-site sessions in the coming year. In addition, this day's contributions to topics had once again made clear how complex and comprehensive the issue was. That was why the working group – also against the background that the next annual conference was planned to be held on 12 – 14 June 2022 – had unanimously proposed extending the working group's mandate for another year. The group would then present the final report during the 32nd Annual Conference in 2023 in Berlin. Since the working group had been established by the annual conference, it seemed best for the BSPC to also decide on the mandate for the extension.

Therefore, President Niemi asked the Conference if they agreed to extend the mandate of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity for another year and that the working group would submit its final report to the Conference in 2023.

President Niemi saw only agreement and no opposition. Therefore, the matter was decided.

The 30th BSPC decided to extend the mandate of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity for another year to last until the 32nd Conference in 2023.

President Niemi thanked the attendees for their consent and wished Ms Tenfjord-Toftby as well as the whole working group continued great success in their important work. He was very optimistic and confident that the group would achieve further excellent results. In that, he underlined “excellent results”.

Moving on to the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, he offered many thanks to all the delegations for their constructive proposals and hard work in the BSPC’s digital drafting committee. As always, it had not been an easy feat to find an agreement, but it had been worth it to the end. The president was very proud to have again succeeded and proved that they could bring such complex negotiations to an excellent result online. He noted that everyone had received a copy of the draft resolution. It had found unanimous agreement by the members of the Drafting Committee, and now the Conference would decide whether to adopt it.

President Niemi asked if everyone could agree to the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

There were only positive responses and none against adoption nor abstentions. Therefore, the Resolution was adopted, he announced.

The 30th BSPC *unanimously adopted the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.*

President Niemi hoped that the content of this resolution would be acted on by their governments and other institutions around the Baltic Sea.

He moved on to the last part of the 30th BSPC. At this point, the BSPC had regularly passed the baton from one president to the next. This time, the decision had been made to extend the Swedish presidency until the end of the 31st BSPC. That would be held in

Stockholm from 12 – 14 June 2022. Therefore, Mr Niemi took the opportunity to thank everyone again for agreeing to this. He further thanked the BSPC for the confidence shown in the Swedish side to continue with this vital task. Mr Niemi said that he would continue to exercise the function of the BSPC President diligently and with dedication. Accordingly, the usual passing of the baton at this point was not necessary. In a rather light-hearted moment, he said he was passing the baton from his one hand into his other hand.

They had reached the end of the Digital 30th Conference, President Niemi announced. It had been shorter and different, and he believed all of them were missing their informal in-person talks. However, the BSPC had shown once more this year that they could have excellency in an outstanding cooperation. They had again underlined the importance of parliamentary cooperation and further strengthened the parliamentary dimension of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. On this day, based on their intensive preparatory work, they had reinforced the contents of their work, made progress in fundamental issues and deepened the cooperation with their partners at all levels. They had shown that they could intensify their cooperation, regardless of external circumstances, even when having to resort to digital possibilities instead of direct encounters. Furthermore, they had continued to optimise these possibilities. They had delved in the Standing Committee, seminars, the working group and Conference with crucial questions of democracy and their values. They had deepened fundamental and significant issues of the future. They had appreciated the value of their thirty years of cooperation and what the BSPC had achieved so far. They had intensively involved the young generation in their discussions and deliberations and had tried to gear their decisions to the needs of the next generation as well. It was important to the BSPC and the parliamentarians to involve the young people even more in their decision-making policies.

President Niemi thanked the representatives of government, civil society, academia and all the institutions involved for their intensive cooperation in the preparation and this day's holding of the Conference. He was grateful for all those who had contributed on this day for their excellent contributions and their outstanding dedication and commitment. Furthermore, he thanked the interpreters who had once again done an outstanding job under challenging conditions and had made a valuable contribution to facilitating understanding among all of them. Mr Niemi thanked all delegates, the chairs of their sessions and the professional conference systems team.

On this day, they had had high quality input. They had listened, reflected, discussed, negotiated and decided on far-reaching demands to improve the situation in fundamental areas. It was up to the parliamentarians to ensure that their calls for action were implemented, contributing to an even better future in the Baltic Sea region. To this end, he wished all of them determination, courage, skill, foresight and sustainable assertiveness. They had the content for a vision until 2030. Now, it was a matter of turning it into reality. What had been achieved so far, what had been deepened on this day and what had been planned for the future was worth all their efforts, President Niemi emphasised. The BSPC would include the results of this day's conference in their publication on 30 years of the BSPC. In addition to the version published on the website, a printed copy of the 30-year anniversary brochure would be sent to the members, with contributions by the presidents of the member parliaments.

President Niemi very much looked forward to seeing all of them again in the coming year, at the latest from 12 – 14 June 2022, at the 31st BSPC, and to welcome them directly and personally to his hometown Stockholm in Sweden, at the Riksdag. Until then, he wished them health, strength and success in all endeavours.

With that, BSPC President **Pyy Niemi** declared the digital 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference closed.

List of Participants

Kingdom of Sweden

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

Member Parliaments and Parliamentary Organizations

Åland Parliament

3. **Wille Valve**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
4. **Jessy Eckerman**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
5. **Liz Mattsson**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
6. **Simon Pāvāls**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
7. **Jesper Josefsson**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
8. **Jörgen Pettersson**, *Member of the Åland Parliament*
9. **Sten Eriksson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Åland Parliament*

Baltic Assembly

10. **Andrius Kupčinskas**, *President of the Baltic Assembly, Lithuania*
11. **Agnija Antanoviča**, *Senior Consultant, Baltic Assembly Secretariat*
12. **Rovena Berga**, *Baltic Assembly Secretariat*

Bremen

13. **Antje Grotheer**, *Vice President of the State Parliament of Bremen*
14. **Ute Reimers-Bruns**, *Member of the State Parliament of Bremen*

Denmark

15. **Christian Juhl**, *Member of the Danish Parliament*
16. **Karin Gaardsted**, *Member of the Danish Parliament*
17. **Kamilla Kjelgaard**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Danish Parliament*

European Parliament

18. **Aušra Rakšelytė**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the European Parliament*

Finland

19. **Sakari Puisto**, *Member of the Parliament of Finland*
20. **Riitta Mäkinen**, *Member of the Parliament of Finland*
21. **Mai Kivelä**, *Member of the Parliament of Finland*
22. **Mika Laaksonen**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Parliament of Finland*

Germany

23. **Johannes Schraps**, *Vice President of the BSPC, Member of the German Bundestag*
24. **Peter Stein**, *Member of the German Bundestag*
25. **Petra Nicolaisen**, *Member of the German Bundestag*
26. **Enrico Komning**, *Member of the German Bundestag*
27. **Katalin Zádor**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German Bundestag*
28. **Pia-Sophie Brandenburg**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German Bundestag*
29. **Lynda Lawrence**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German Bundestag*
30. **Friederike Fritz**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German Bundestag*
31. **Aleksandra Tryapitsyna**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German Bundestag*
32. **Kristina van Deest**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the German Bundestag*

Hamburg

33. **Carola Veit**, *President of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
34. **Danial Ilkhanipour**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
35. **Dagmar Wiedemann**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
36. **Alske Freter**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
37. **Ulrike Sparr**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
38. **David Erkalp**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
39. **Dr Carola Ensslen**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
40. **Stephan Jersch**, *Member of the State Parliament of Hamburg*
41. **Johannes Düwel**, *Director of the Parliament of Hamburg*
42. **Friederike Lünzmann**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Parliament of Hamburg*
43. **Barbara Ketelhut**, *Press officer of the Parliament of Hamburg*

Iceland

- 44. **Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé**, *Member of the Parliament of Iceland*
- 45. **Helgi Thorsteinsson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of Parliament of Iceland*

Kaliningrad

- 46. **Evgeny Mishin**, *Member of the Parliament of the Kaliningrad Regional Duma*
- 47. **Marina Prozorova**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Kaliningrad Regional Duma*

Karelia

- 48. **48. Elissan Vladimirovich Shandalovich**, *Chairman of the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Karelia*

Latvia

- 49. **Arvils Ašeradens**, *Member of the Parliament of Latvia*
- 50. **Jānis Vucāns**, *Member of the Parliament of Latvia and Former President of the BSPC*
- 51. **Iveta Benhena-Bēkena**, *Member of the Parliament of Latvia*
- 52. **Ingrīda Sticenko**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Parliament of Latvia*

Leningrad

- 53. **Sergei Bebenin**, *Chairman of the Leningrad Region Legislative Assembly TBC*
- 54. **Nikolay Pustotin**, *Vice-Chairman of the Leningrad Region Legislative Assembly TBC*
- 55. **Iurii Terentev**, *Member of the Leningrad Region Legislative Assembly TBC*
- 56. **Maxim Gindin**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Parliament of Leningrad*

Lithuania

- 57. **57. Renata Godfrey**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Parliament of Lithuania*

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

- 58. **Beate Schlupp**, *Vice President of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*

- 59. **Philipp da Cunha**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 60. **Dirk Friedriszik**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 61. **Karsten Kolbe**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 62. **Nikolaus Kramer**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 63. **Jochen Schulte**, *Member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 64. **Georg Strätker**, *Secretary to the Delegation of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- 65. **Evgeniya Bakalova**, *Secretary to the Delegation of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*

Nordic Council

- 66. **Michael Tetzschner**, *Member of the Parliament of Norway and the Nordic Council*
- 67. **Kristina Háfoss**, *Secretary General of the Nordic Council*
- 68. **Arne Fogt Bergby**, *Senior Adviser of the Nordic Council*

Norway

- 69. **Jorodd Asphjell**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament TBC*
- 70. **Ulf Leirstein**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament TBC*
- 71. **Ove Trellevik**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament TBC*
- 72. **Torhild Bransdal**, *Member of the Norwegian Parliament TBC*
- 73. **Thomas Fraser**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Norwegian Parliament*

Poland

- 74. **Jarosław Wałęsa**, *Member of the Sejm Parliament of Poland*
- 75. **Kacper Płażyński**, *Member of the Sejm Parliament of Poland*
- 76. **Jerzy Materna**, *Member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*
- 77. **Grzegorz Matusiak**, *Member of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*
- 78. **Sławomir Rybicki**, *Senator of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*
- 79. **Piotr Koperski**, *Secretary of the Delegation for International and European Union Affairs*

*Russian Federation**Council of the Federation*

- 80. **Sergey Perminov**, *Member of the Council of the Federation*
- 81. **Elena Bibikova**, *Councilor of the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the Council of the Federation*
- 82. **Anna Zhiltsova**, *Councilor of the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the Council of the Federation*

State Duma

- 83. **Valentina Pivnenko**, *Member of the State Duma and Former President of the BSPC*
- 84. **Oleg Nilov**, *Member of the State Duma*
- 85. **Alexey Veller**, *Member of the State Duma*
- 86. **Sergey Karseka**, *Deputy Head of the Department of International Relations*
- 87. **Yulia Guskova**, *Secretary of the Delegation of International Relations*

Saint Petersburg

- 88. **Dmitry Tugov**, *Member of the Delegation of Saint Petersburg Legislative Assembly*
- 89. **Nikolai Polevikov**, *Secretary of the Delegation of Saint Petersburg Legislative Assembly*

Schleswig-Holstein

- 90. **Hartmut Hamerich**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 91. **Regina Poersch**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 92. **Stephan Holowaty**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 93. **Bernd Voß**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 94. **Jette Waldinger-Thiering**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 95. **Joschka Knuth**, *Member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*
- 96. **Mareike Watolla**, *Secretary of the Delegation for International Affairs of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*

Sweden

- 97. **Pyrö Niemi**, *President of the BSPC, Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 98. **Cecilie Tenfjord Toftby**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 99. **Pernilla Stålhammar**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 100. **Aron Emilsson**, *Member of the Swedish Parliament*
- 101. **Ingvar Mattsson**, *Secretary-General of the Swedish Parliament*
- 102. **Anna-Karin Hedström**, *Head of the International Department*
- 103. **Johanna Ingvarsson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Swedish Parliament*
- 104. **Dan Alvarsson**, *Secretary of the Delegation of the Swedish Parliament*

*BSPC and Observers**Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference*

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

Baltic Sea NGO Network

- 106. **Ole Meldgaard**, *Baltic Sea NGO Network Denmark*
- 107. **Honoratė BNN Muhanzi**, *CEO of Baltic Sea NGO Network Norway*
- 108. **Kirsten Rytter**, *Baltic Sea NGO Network Norway*
- 109. **Anders Bergström**, *Norden Association Sweden*
- 110. **Felix Schartner-Giertta**, *Norden Association Sweden*

Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN)

- 111. **Kari Hyppönen**, *President of the BSRUN*
- 112. **Andreas Zaby**, *Vice-President of the BSRUN*
- 113. **Dmitry Vasilenko**, *Vice-President of the BSRUN*

Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC)

- 114. **Mieczysław Struk**, *Chairman of the BSSSC*
- 115. **Monika Pochroń-Frankowska**, *Deputy Director of Chancellery of the Marshal for International and Interregional Cooperation of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, Secretariat of the BSSSC*
- 116. **Agata Birecka**, *Secretariat of the BSSSC*

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum

- 117. **Liviu Pintilie**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2021, Estonia*
- 118. **Kamila Ciok**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2021, Poland*
- 119. **Jonas Færgeman**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2021, Denmark*

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

- 120. **Grzegorz Marek Poznański**, *Director General of the CBSS Secretariat*
- 121. **Bernd Hemingway**, *Deputy Director General of the CBSS Secretariat*
- 122. **Daria Akhutina**, *Senior Adviser for Sustainable & Prosperous Region*
- 123. **Thorvaldur David Kristjansson**, *Senior Adviser Regional Identity*
- 124. **Aline Mayr**, *Project Coordinator for Regional Identity*
- 125. **Paulina Ek**, *Media & Communication Team Leader*
- 126. **Silvija Marcinkeviciute**, *Media & Communication Officer*
- 127. **Ligia Broström**, *Senior Administrative Officer*
- 128. **Vendela Gebbie**, *CBSS Secretariat*

CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

- 129. **Jari Nakhanen**, *President of the CPMR BSC*
- 130. **Lucille Ehrhart**, *Executive Secretary*

Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS)

- 131. **Maksimillian Selyutin**, *Head of the Department for International Relations*

Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS)

- 132. **Ülla-Karin Nurm**, *Director*
- 133. **Silvija Geistarte**, *Senior Adviser*

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)

- 134. **Margareta Cederfelt**, *President of the OSCE PA*

Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)

135. **Prof Asaf Hajiyev**, Secretary General of the PABSEC
 136. **Miltiadis Makrygiannis**, Deputy Secretary General of the PABSEC

Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

137. **Hon Pedro Roque**, Vice President and President Emeritus of the PAM
 138. **Amb. Sergio Piazzzi**, Secretary General of the PAM
 139. **Vladimir Kirushev**, Deputy to the Secretary General of the PAM
 140. **Irene Pasqua**, Program Officer of the PAM
 141. **Giacomo Bogo**, Researcher of the PAM

Parliamentary Association of the North-West Russia (PANWR)

142. **Natalia Vedischeva**, Chair of the Standing Committee on Inter-parliamentary cooperation and Vice-Speaker of the Murmansk Regional Duma

Skåne Regional County Council

143. **Annika Annerby Jansson**, President, Region Skåne
 144. **Lennart Pettersson**, Vice President, Region Skåne
 145. **Ewa Pihl Krabbe**, Vice President, Region Skåne
 146. **Anna Mannfalk**, Vice Chair of Region Skåne Health Care Committee
 147. **Maria Lindbom**, Senior Advisor, Region Skåne

Former Presidents of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

148. **Franz Thönnies**, Former President of the BSPC, Germany
 149. **Christina Gestrin**, Former President of the BSPC, Finland, Video message

Executive

Ministries

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

150. **H.E. Ine Eriksen Søreide**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, CBSS Presidency
 151. **Olav Berstad**, Senior Adviser

152. **Hanne Brusletto**, *Minister Counsellor*
153. **Snøfrid Byrløkken Emterud**, *Counsellor*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lithuania

154. **Arnoldas Pranckevičius**, *Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania*

Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany

155. **H.E. Svenja Schulze**, *Federal Minister, HELCOM Chair, Video message*

Federal Foreign Office, Germany

156. **H.E. Michael Roth**, *State Minister for Europe, Video Message*
157. **Maurice Gajan**, *Advisor for Baltic Sea Policy*

Ministry for Environment and Climate, Sweden

158. **Anders Mankler**, *State Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate, Sweden*
159. **Micael Hagman**, *Deputy Director*
160. **Andrea Josephson**, *Desk Officer*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland

161. **Helena Tuuri**, *Ambassador for Baltic Sea Affairs*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia

162. **Alexey Ivanov**, *Head of Section*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

163. **Eva Ekmehag**, *Senior Advisor*
164. **Jonas Norling**, *Deputy Director Arctic Affairs*

Embassies to the Kingdom of Sweden in Stockholm

Embassy of Finland

165. **H. E. Liisa Talonpoika**, *Ambassador of Finland to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Embassy of Latvia

166. **H. E. Mārgers Krams**, *Ambassador of Latvia to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Embassy of Lithuania

167. **H. E. Giedrius Čekuolis**, *Ambassador of Lithuania to the Kingdom of Sweden*
 168. **Donatas Butkus**, *Counsellor at the Embassy of Lithuania to the Kingdom of Sweden*
 169. **Deimante Telycenaite**, *Intern at the Embassy of Lithuania to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Embassy of Norway

170. **Kirsten Hammelbo**, *Embassy of Norway to the Kingdom of Sweden*

Experts

171. **Erik Halkjaer**, *President of the board of the Swedish section of Reporters without borders*
 172. **Prof Dr Jeanette Hofmann**, *Weizenbaum Institute Berlin*
 173. **Erwin SELLERING**, *Chairman of the Executive Board of the Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection and former Prime-Minister of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
 174. **Katja Enderlein**, *Manager of MEDIGREIF Parkklinik & digitization ambassador of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
 175. **Dr Vadim Sivkov**, *Director of the Atlantic branch of the Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Kaliningrad*

*Other Participants**Interpreters*

176. **Catherine Johnson**
 177. **Astrid Geese**
 178. **Martina Würzburg**
 179. **Gyda Thurow**
 180. **Aleksei Repin**
 181. **Margarita Höckner**
 182. **Elena Buggeskova**
 183. **Stein Larsen**
 184. **Piotr Krasnowolski**
 185. **Aleksander Jakimovicz**

BSPC Secretariat Support

- 186. **Malgorzata Ludwiczek**
- 187. **Marc Hertel**
- 188. **Gildo Kweton**
- 189. **Roman Kweton**
- 190. **Jördis Palme**

Technical Support - Professional Conference Systems (PCS)

- 191. **Nils Fuchs**, *technical moderator*
- 192. **Sebastian Meyer**, *technical moderator*

Speakers

- **Dr Andreas Norlén**, *Speaker of the Riksdag*
- **Ann Linde**, *Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden*
- **Pyry Niemi**, *MP of Sweden, President of the BSPC*
- **Ine Eriksen Søreide**, *Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway*
- **Michael Roth**, *MP and State Minister for Europe, German Presidency 2022–2023 of the CBSS*
- **Margareta Cederfelt**, *President of the OSCE PA*
- **Prof Dr Jeanette Hofmann**, *Weizenbaum Institute Berlin*
- **Oleg Nilov**, *Member of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*
- **Erik Halkjaer**, *President of the board of the Swedish section of Reporters without borders*
- **Arnoldas Pranckevičius**, *Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania*
- **Svenja Schulze**, *Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany*
- **Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby**, *MP of Sweden, Chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity*
- **Anders Mankler**, *State Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate, Sweden*
- **Erwin Sellering**, *Chairman of the Executive Board of the Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection and former Prime-Minister of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*
- **Liviu Pintilie**, *Estonia* and **Kamila Ciok**, *Poland, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2021*

- **Liz Mattsson**, *MP of Åland Islands, Vice-Chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity*
- **Dr Vadim V. Sivkov**, *Director of the Atlantic Branch of the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of Russian Academy of Science and the Federal State Budgetary Institution of Science, Kaliningrad region*
- **Prof Jānis Vucāns**, *Former President of the BSPC, Latvia*
- **Valentina Pivnenko**, *Former President of the BSPC, Russia*
- **Franz Thönnies**, *Former President of the BSPC, Germany*
- **Christina Gestrin**, *Former President of the BSPC, Finland*
- **Jonas Færgeman**, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2021, Denmark*
- **Pedro Roque**, *Vice President and President Emeritus of the PAM*
- **Prof Asaf Hajiyev**, *Secretary General of the PABSEC*
- **Ambassador Grzegorz Marek Poznański**, *Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat*
- **Mieczysław Struk**, *Chairman of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, BSSSC, Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship*
- **Jari Nakhanen**, *President of the Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR BSC)*
- **Anders Bergström**, *Baltic Sea NGO Network, Policy Area Coordinator, PA Education, Science and Social Affairs*
- **Anna Mannfalk**, *Vice Chair of Region Skåne Health Care Committee, responsible for cooperation public sector – Civil Society/ NGOs*
- **Peter Stein**, *BSPC Rapporteur on Sea Dumped Munitions*
- **Carola Veit**, *BSPC Rapporteur on Migration and Integration*
- **Jörgen Pettersson**, *BSPC Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime Policy*

PHOTOS





Swedish parliament



Åland delegation



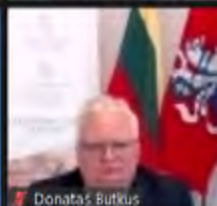
Johannes Schräps



Cetile



Wille valve



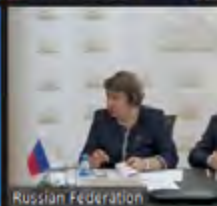
Donatas Butkus



Ole Meldgaard



Liz Mattsson (Åland)



Russian Federation



Antje Grothier



Carola Vert



Kaliningrad Regional Duma



Schleswig-Holsteinischer Landtag



Speaker Andreas Norlen



Carola Ensslen



Mitiadis Makrygiannis



Kolbeinn Öttarsson Proppé, Parliament of Iceland



Grzegorz Marek Polznaniski



Johannes Düvel



Anders Bergström



Daniel Iikhanpour



Silviya Geistarte NDPS Secretariat



Ingrida Sticenko



Anna-Karin Hedström





Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Secretariat
www.bspc.net

BSPC Secretariat
Schlossgartenallee 15
19061 Schwerin
Germany