Mr chair, dear friends,

   What better location to address the status of the Baltic Sea than in Åland, an island that is surrounded by the sea.

   My report on eutrophication was published last year at the BSPC conference. I didn’t have a chance to present it at the time, as at the exactly same time I was giving birth. So now both my daughter and my report are turning one year old.

   Unfortunately the topic of eutrophication is still timely, it hasn’t been solved within the year. Therefore I am happy to present it now with some additional information.

   The report concentrates in
   o   distributing existing information on the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea
   o   introducing the latest research data as a topic of discussion
   o   introducing the latest interaction from HELCOM meetings and other events concerning the condition of the Baltic Sea
   o   underlining some hot topics that should be addressed and presenting a few possible solutions for consideration

What we know for sure:
   -          A clean sea is an important piece of the ecological puzzle. The Baltic Sea is one of the most vulnerable and polluted seas in the world.
   -          Eutrophication is the main cause of the Baltic Sea’s challenging status. It is mainly caused by nitrogen and phosphorus loads from land-based sources.
   - Agriculture is the main source of nutrients that cause eutrophication. Agriculture should be seen as the key to effective solutions. Nutrient loads cound be reduced in ways that would in fact benefit farmars through better harvests.
   -          In addition to eutrophication, the condition of the Baltic Sea involves several other major challenges. For example climate change, toxic substances and marine litter are making the problems we already have worse.
   -         Main message of my Report: Despite all the strategies, programmes, commitments and funding within the Baltic Sea Region since the 1980s, the status of the Baltic Sea still remains alarming,
   - Eutrophication is not only an environmental question, but an economical and social question too.  It has been calculated, that decreasing eutrophication would bring economic benefits for the region worth of 3,6 billion euros. The benefits are greatly bigger than the costs of reducing nutrient load. Water pollution can in fact be regarded as an external cost, which requires action from the governments concerned.
   -          Repairing the damage is a complex task and it takes time. The results may become visible only after a long period of time. This needs to be taken into account when evaluating strategies.
   -          Our work towards creating a healthier Baltic Sea lacks implementation and targeting. Actions have resulted in only limited progress and investments have not been as effective as hoped.
   -          The HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report from 2018 shows that the eutrophication status has changed only little since the previous holistic assessment in 2010. Almost all of the open sea is still affected by eutrophication. Around 12% of the sea is considered in the category of poorest eutrophication status. Maximum allowable Inputs are still exceeded in 6/7 sub-basins for phosphorus and in 4/7 sub-basins for nitrogen
   -          There is still potential to reduce nutrient input.
   -          This years HELCOM Ministerial meeting agreed to strengthen the implementation of the Action Plan and decided that the plan will be updated by 2021.
   -          The ministerial meeting also agreed on elaborating a Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy by 2020, which aims at reduced nutrient inputs.

It is a good thing that the Baltic Sea Action Plan is now being updated.

However, there is a risk that, once the process is open, pressure will mount to modify the targets as well. In my opinion, the BSPC should take a strong stand on ambitious targets –The HELCOM targets should remain ambitious, even more ambitious as the current ones. After the targets are set, implementation is the key.

I would also shortly like to mention the work of Nordic Council as the new Nordic Environment and Climate Action Program 2019-2024 has a strong focus on the wellbeing of the sea. One of the main themes of the program is the Seas and Coasts. The new action plan has been negotiated among countries and the program is to be adopted in the Nordic Council meeting in October.

I believe in the potential of Circular economy: it has huge potential to decrease eutrophication. It is not about repairing damage that has already been done. Programmes and strategies would still be needed in order to reduce the eutrophication of the sea. However, circular economy could lead to the adoption of a lifestyle that no longer causes pollution and damage. Circular economy also has hundreds of billions of market potential.

  I am continuing my work from the basis of the report published last year. At the moment I am writing an academic version as a master’s thesis for my second master’s degree which I am doing at the moment in futures studies. If I have the chance to continue as the rapporteur for BSPC, I would be happy to present the final outcomes of my report next year.

   -          We have witnessed one of the worst summers in long time regarding the amount of blue-green algae in the bodies of water. This has brought up more discussion and on a higher level than I can remember within the ten years I have been worked with these issues. We just heard the president of Finland stress the issue: we can not leave the sea to future generations in this conditions. Actions are needed know.

   -          Much work still lies ahead of us in ensuring that our children have the opportunity to enjoy and sustainably benefit from the Baltic Sea that unites us all.