

SECOND SESSION

**Vision 2030: Safeguarding our Environment,
Seas and Oceans for Future Generations**



Mr. Peter Stein
BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions,
Member of the German Bundestag

Speech of Mr Peter Stein
at the Digital 29th BSPC on 24 August 2020

Peter Stein began by thanking the BSPC for having held the role of Rapporteur for sea-dumped ammunitions since November of the preceding year, as had also been decided in Oslo. He went on to note that during his work on this topic, he had realized quite clearly that there was rather little information available on the subject. Accordingly, he had decided to report on this topic at the 29th BSPC.

He offered his gratitude for the support he had received and the help from the nation states in putting this report together, in response to the resolution of the 28th BSPC. A statement had been made as a result. Mr Stein further thanked the Geomar Institute in Kiel, the Fraunhofer Institute and the State Assembly of Schleswig-Holstein, Bodo Bahr and the HELCOM. They had made it possible for the report to grow to such an estimable size. He noted that it was an interim report, adding that they could be proud of the fact that the resolution of the 28th BSPC had triggered a dynamism in the issue. They could make use of this dynamic movement which had triggered a number of developments.

Mr Stein wished to address three of those. The first was the EU Interreg project DAIMON which had been concluded very successfully. The project had been extended into a sequel, DAIMON 2, as well as the Soft Merge programme of HELCOM. Unfortunately, in the attempts to remove ammunitions from the sea floor, 18 pilot whales had been killed in the Baltic Sea. That had led to a severe media response. As such, the public was being confronted with this issue to a certain extent, although not as much as one might wish. At the moment, ammunitions on the sea floor were very much an issue for experts and specialists, but it needed to find a broader basis in the public's awareness. Happily, there was the situation that they still had time to look at the issues. In interviews, Mr Stein would say, "The work ahead of us will take 20 years to complete, but we better assume it will take 100 years." In terms of technology and trained staff, they had to become more efficient and faster.

Mr Stein thanked Commissioner Sinkevičius for his speech, especially with regard to the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan. He would appreciate it if the issue of sea-dumped ammunitions could be included in that plan along with aiming for an improvement of the entire environmental status of the Baltic Sea.

The speaker suggested that they all work together through the good connections they had established and to move even closer together. One instance in which they should progress together was data standardization. A standardized input of data into an expert group would be very helpful. He could imagine an expert panel as an outlier of the DAIMON expert group. He mentioned very interesting approaches using bio-indicators. Unfortunately, they were increasingly seeing toxins leaking from the ammunitions, particularly TNT. It had become detectable in fish and mussel stocks. On the other hand, mussels could serve as a bio-indicator and provide a monitoring function through their intake of the toxins. Comprehensive monitoring, well beyond such bio-indicators, was required. Technological approaches were equally required, all feeding into a standardized contribution to

expert panels as he had suggested earlier. In addition, if so much understanding and research had been brought together in international cooperation, the question was whether to launch a concerted approach to tackling this problem. One problem here was the historical responsibility, which was perceived differently in various nations; moreover, each country approached the issue individually, dealing with the responsibilities in divergent manners as well as the legal status. In other words, the nations sharing the Baltic Sea did not have a joint approach of how to deal with the topic. In that regard, Mr Stein suggested a voluntary donation fund for the group of experts. For this fund, Mr Stein proposed 500 million euros as the target sum. While it could be under the auspices of the EU, in the speaker's estimate, the HELCOM would be better suited.

Moreover, Mr Stein proposed focusing far more on the capacities of the private and maritime industries. If they were to only use state organisations, he did not believe they could succeed in resolving the problem. He believed that potentials in terms of new technologies and their development could be harnessed through cooperation with the private maritime industry. The proposed fund along with the expert group could call for tenders regularly, allowing maritime companies established in the Baltic Sea to access this value chain. Mr Stein noted that the way the BSPC had been dealing with the issue had been truly exemplary. He imagined that, starting from the current resolution of the 29th BSPC, the Baltic Sea could become a pioneer and model for how to resolve the problem of sea-dumped ammunitions all over the world.

He cautioned that this approach also meant having to deal with sunken ships and ghost nets in particular. Mr Stein noted that he had been quite shocked to hear that there were up to ten thousand ghost nets and sections of fishing nets simply floating around the sea, causing negative impacts on the fauna. That was an adjacent problem that had to be resolved along the dumped ammunitions.

In summary, Mr Stein mentioned how pleased he was that they had made progress and joined forces. Commissioner Sinkevičius had said that they were living a common dream – the dream of a clean Baltic Sea. Mr Stein noted that this was also a shared duty.

Finally, the speaker pointed out that he was a German who could live this dream and duty, 30 years after the peaceful revolution in the former eastern part of his country. In that regard, he wished their Belarusian friends that they should also have such a peaceful development, without outside intervention, and that democracy should emerge from this process. When it came to preserving the environment, Mr Stein went on, the Belarusian people were indeed part of the peoples around the Baltic Sea.

With that, Mr Stein concluded his contribution.