

OPENING

Opening speech on behalf of the President of the Republic of Lithuania



On behalf of **H. E. Mr. Gitanas Nausėda**, President of the Republic of Lithuania,
Mr. Sigitas Mitkus, Adviser to the President on Foreign Policy Issues

**Speech of Mr Sigitas Mitkus,
On Behalf of H. E. Mr Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania,
at the Digital 29th BSPP on 24 August 2020**

Mr Mitkus said it was a great honour and privilege for him to read the opening speech of His Excellency, Mr Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania.

In the president's name, he stated that it was a great privilege to open the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference at this challenging but highly important time for the Baltic Sea region as a whole. On 1 July, Lithuania had taken over the annual rotating presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States from Denmark. In order to meet regional challenges, they had decided to pursue the Green Economy, greater visibility of the region, growth and jobs, people-to-people contacts, environmental issues of the Baltic Sea and the vision of the Baltic Sea until 2030.

But it was very difficult to talk about the agenda of the nation's presidency on this day while all of them had been watching with great concern the developments in Belarus following the presidential election on 9 August. They had seen brutal repression by the Belarusian authorities against peaceful demonstrators and journalists. They had seen testimonies of their released detainees and mass violations of human rights. Thousands had been detained and imprisoned, hundreds tortured, several killed. It mobilised the Belarusian people to aspire to freedom and change in their country. Then thousands and hundreds of thousands of people had spilled into the streets across the country. Their freedom, their free and democratic will should not meet silence. Sanctions against those responsible for violence, repression and falsification of election results must be introduced. All those responsible for torture and brutality must be prosecuted. All countries should establish independence and sovereignty from others, fair and free elections with the presence of international observers, the right of people to protest peacefully, the right of people not to be beaten, tortured and imprisoned.

These are the values that should be defended. The people of the Baltic States – Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians – remembered perfectly well that thirty years ago, they had been looking forward to every word or action of support from the free world. The day before the conference, more than fifty thousand people had joined a human chain stretching from the Lithuanian capital Vilnius to the border with Belarus, stressing their support for the Belarusian people. The people of Belarus had made it clear that the popular vote went to its national leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya. Belarus was now on its way to freedom, just as the Baltic countries had been thirty years earlier, - freedom from fear, lies and manipulation.

Finally, on the vision of the Baltic Sea region, the Lithuanian presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States had already offered an assessment of the implementation of the vision for 2020 which had been adopted ten years before. Said assessment was planned to be followed by a new declaration of a vision for the Baltic Sea region until 2030.

Speaking for the president, Mr Mitkus said that he would like to believe in a free and democratic Belarus.