

# FIRST SESSION

**Vision 2030: Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region,  
Safe and Prosperous Development – Common Effective  
and Sustainable Solutions for the Future**



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Mr President, Honourable Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, thank you very much for this opportunity to say a few words about cooperation in our region seen from a Norwegian perspective. We look forward to taking on our responsibilities as presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States as of next summer. But – as I hope you will appreciate – it would be premature for me to enter into any concrete aspects of our priorities for that presidency, since we are so far only in the very early stages of preparations. I will therefore limit myself to a few more general considerations regarding regional cooperation in our area.

Regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea area has been and remains very important. One of the characteristics of this cooperation is the broad and varied network of different cooperation structures. Norway participates in most of these cooperation structures, from the CBSS and the Northern Dimension, to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council and the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation. Very important is of course also our membership in the European Economic Area, which in our region includes eight EU member states and two EFTA states and represents a very important framework for our economic relations.

In 2010, our Heads of State and Government adopted in their Vilnius Declaration a vision for the development of our region by 2020. As has been shown in an interesting report commissioned this summer by the Lithuanian presidency of the CBSS, looking at the present situation up against this vision, much has in fact been achieved. But the report also underlines that there is clearly room for strengthening our cooperation in many areas. We should therefore use the different cooperation formats and structures to their full potential.

The reform process within the CBSS, following the Vision Group report and the Stockholm Declaration from 2018, was successfully concluded at the Ministerial meeting in May this year. In this process, it has been underlined that we need to strengthen efficiency, and not least that we need to improve synergies between the different cooperation structures. In respect of synergies, the CBSS secretariat has now received a very clear mandate, and that is an interesting and useful element. The governments obviously also carry a strong responsibility to follow up. We furthermore believe that the parliamentary dimension of our regional cooperation, represented in particular by you here in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, plays a very valuable role. Your discussions, your assessments and your inputs to the work of the governments contribute to defining objectives and challenges as well as possible ways forward.

Finally, let me conclude by underlining that Norway considers the interplay between political dialogue and practical cooperation to be an essential dimension of our regional cooperation. This is an important experience from many years of our active participation in different cooperation

formats in our region, and this will also be important for Norway when we are to serve as presidency of the CBSS from next year. With the CBSS we have a very useful platform for political dialogue about the challenges we face and the objectives that we want to achieve together. The CBSS itself as well as the other regional formats offer structures for practical cooperation. It is for all of us together to make the best use of the tools that we here have at our disposal.

Thank you very much for your attention.

