



## **30<sup>TH</sup> BSPC: THIRD SESSION**

Climate change and Biodiversity

Speaker: *Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, MP,*  
*Chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate change and Biodiversity*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends and colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me, as chair of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity, to give you an account of the background and aim of the Working Group, as well as of some of the results so far.

First of all, this summer we have seen countless examples of extreme weather in different parts of the world in form of long-lasting heatwaves, burning forests, flooding and melting icebergs. Climate change is indisputably an ongoing process that we need to adapt to, but even more important, doing our best to counteract and mitigate. As Ms Svenja Schulze so clearly underlined in her video message, the situation for the marine ecosystems is critical, and therefore it was most positive to take part of the German HELCOM Presidency and its focus on biodiversity. In this context, I also think that we all can 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 was launched at the 29<sup>th</sup> Digital Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 24 August 2020. When the Working Group was established it was decided that it should focus on the environmental aspect of climate change and biodiversity as well as on innovation, technology and best practices. The primary outcome of our work will consist of a number of political recommendations on the topic of climate change and biodiversity. By acquiring knowledge from experts, learning from each other and by studying best practice examples of successful projects, I am convinced that the Working Group can 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 the goals is to create closer cooperation in this 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 has not yet been able to meet each other in person. Instead, we have during this first year held three digital

meetings where we have 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.

When it comes to environmental projects on a more local level, there seem to be two important success factors, one is to both inform and involve all parts of the local community in order to gain acceptance and an understanding for the different measures that has to be taken. The other one is that the projects have to be very well funded and given long-lasting financial resources for the required activities and measurements.

At our meeting in November 2020 the Working Group learned that eutrophication still is the largest threat to the Baltic Sea, and that we need to reduce the organic loads on the coastal areas and restore carbon-rich ecosystems to build resilience. We were also told about a project called “ElectriVillage”, a solar- powered hydrogen refuelling station in the Swedish municipality Mariestad, aiming to create a more sustainable society and at the same time develop 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 action for a healthier Baltic Sea. We also learned about the successful project “Living Coast – Regaining good ecological status in coastal areas”, which aimed to reduce nutrient input into the Baltic Sea.

Normally, the Working Groups within the BSPC have a two-year mandate, but because of the fact that we so far have been unable to arrange physical meetings, which in turn have compromised our ability to draw conclusions and go forward, the WG has taken the decision that we would like to prolong the Working Group’s mandate until 2023. This would also mean that we during the coming two years hopefully will be given several opportunities to study best practice examples on location, and that the quality and outcome of our work for that reason will be even better.

When it comes to climate change and biodiversity, it is crucial that we include the perspective of young people. In line with this ambition, a Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum was arranged on August 28. As one part of the Youth Forum, the participants were encouraged to give a number of recommendations aimed to be presented to the Working Group. We will, within the framework of the Working Group, look further into the recommendations and consider how they can be incorporated in our work. I was deeply impressed by both the engagement and the knowledge that was shown by the young participants, and I do hope that this was only the beginning of a more structured collaboration with the younger generation in the future.

The Working Group CCB Interim Report that is now published is an overview of the first results of our work. The primary focus in the report lies on the political recommendations which were elaborated during the meetings and were forwarded to the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. This report should thus be considered a strategic summary of our work so far.

Finally, I would like to thank the two vice-chairs of the working group, Ms Liz Mattsson from the Åland Islands and Mr Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé from Iceland, for their valuable contributions. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the members of the Working Group for your commitment, constructive discussions, and a genuinely pleasant atmosphere.

Thank you very much!