

Speech of Mr **Philipp da Cunha**, MdL  
at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

Final Report of the BSPP Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity

Date and place: 29 August 2023, German Bundestag, Plenary Hall,  
Fourth session, 09:00 -10:15,

Panel discussion: Strengthening climate resilience and biodiversity.

followed by floor contributions and discussion with Ms Ditte Juul Jørgensen (Director General for Energy, European Commission), Ms Lis Lindal Jørgensen , PhD, (Institute of Marine Research, Norway) and Prof Dr Daniela Jacob (Director of Climate Service Center Germany, GERICS).

Honourable President,

Our most esteemed guests,

Dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to present the final report of the BSPP Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity. This report summarises three years of intensive international inter-parliamentary work on issues. This issues will become the defining challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The well-being of future generations will directly depend on the actions that we take or fail to take now!

BSPP Working Groups traditionally deal with matters of **common importance and concern for our Baltic Sea region**. Sustainable Tourism, migration and integration, and maritime safety as the beginning of our working groups.

I suppose we can all agree that the current working group's focus on climate change mitigation with biodiversity protection could not have been more timely and pressing.

A fortnight ago, the World Meteorological Organisation has confirmed that July 2023 was the **hottest** month on record. Sea ice was the lowest on record. The global ocean surface temperature was at a record high. But I suppose that we will hear more about it from Ms Daniela Jacob Climate from the Service Center Germany.

**Climate change impacts are already evident in the Baltic Sea region.** According to the Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Fact Sheet published by HELCOM and Baltic Earth, air temperature increase in the region was larger than the global trend. Water temperature increase in the Baltic Sea has also been higher than average among marginal seas. In addition, ice extent is decreasing and precipitation is rising.

A recent study has shown that the **Arctic region** is warming nearly **four times faster** than the rest of the planet due to the so-called Arctic amplification.

I am sure, Ms Lis Lindal Jørgensen from the Institute of Marine Research in Norway would explain what this means for marine life better than I ever could.

I cannot help and therefore I have to point out that all these changes affect the unique and vulnerable ecosystem of the Baltic Sea. They influence the behaviour of species and have direct and indirect impacts on human activities and even lives.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stressed this year that evidence of adverse effects of global warming make **worldwide climate action more urgent than ever**. Ignoring these obvious challenges and pretending they are not there would not stop wildfires, droughts, storms, floods, and other extreme weather events. Which are already rising and will be even more frequent in the future. Climate change and biodiversity loss are global challenges. No single country or region can master these problems alone.

Therefore **international cooperation**, information exchange and experience sharing are crucial elements of joint climate action.

Cooperation with **local** stakeholders, open communication and awareness raising are no less important. Because implementation largely depends on local “ownership”.

I am very happy and proud to say that in the past three years, our working group has been active on both of these accounts: fostering **experience exchange** amongst the Baltic Sea states and looking into **local best practices**.

For me, this is also the time to thank you. I have to thank the former chair Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby and I want to thank all members of the working group and the parliaments which hosted working group meetings. And also the stakeholders who shared their opinions with us. Thank you!

In **four online and four in-person meetings**, we have addressed a wide range of topics, highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities for climate action in our region. The themes we discussed included carbon sequestration, sustainable fisheries, peatland renaturation, sustainable energies, island habitability, and climate change in the Arctic – just to name a few.

We have spoken with various stakeholders from all across the Baltic Sea: officials, international organisations, entrepreneurs, researchers, civil society and – last but certainly not least – youth representatives. In addition, we have conducted two intergovernmental surveys. One on the current and planned climate and biodiversity protection legislation in the Baltic Sea states. And one on the impact of the war in Ukraine on climate policy goals and their implementation.

The final report offers a **unique and comprehensive overview** of the knowledge, experiences, best practices, as well as existing policies and projects in the region.

The working Group's final recommendations combine and condense this wealth of knowledge into a set of **25 focussed, far-reaching, but also pragmatic political recommendations**. These recommendations were consensually agreed at our final meeting in Gdansk in May this year. They were integrated into the resolution which, I hope, the conference would unanimously adopt later today.

Until then, I am looking forward to the insights and discussions from this panel.

Thank you for your attention and I give the floor back to the Chair.