



## Baltic 21 Intervention at RIM Geneva

Ms. Anne-Cerise Nilsson, Baltic 21 SOG Chair

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Distinguished conference participants:

Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21 was highlighted as a relevant partnership in the UNECE Belgrade conference and I would like to take this opportunity to share some information about the work on sustainable rural development in our region.

Baltic 21 is about integrating the **three dimensions** of sustainable development **into regional actions**, and it was **founded in 1996** on the high-level political commitment made by Heads of Government of eleven countries plus the European Commission.

Participation in Baltic 21 takes place on an **equal footing with broad stakeholder involvement**. The Senior Officials Group includes government officials and representatives of authorities, business, academia, urban networks and secretariats; it also includes representatives of other organizations in the region, NGOs, and international financing organizations. Some of our members have established close cooperation in different areas with actors in the **Victoria Lake basin in Africa**.

Over the last few years, Baltic 21 has promoted so called **Lighthouse Projects**, which demonstrate sustainable development in practice. So far, Baltic 21 has adopted nine Lighthouse Projects, with budgets ranging from 2 million to 4 million euros. I would like to concentrate on three of these projects as they have a bearing on sustainable rural development. The **Agora** project is about sustainable tourism. Outcomes of this project are an information database as well as recommendations and a checklist for sustainability. The **ASAP** project is about development in rural areas and

has produced recommendations for knowledge management and a handbook as well as eGovernments solutions for local and regional administrations in rural areas. Finally the **Baltic Forest** project has produced an action plan and a net work of model forests in our region, with strong linkages to the international network of model forests that was launched at the Rio Summit in 1992.

Another Lighthouse project is on **capacity building** in the agriculture sector and it will develop a university education in Ecosystem Health and Sustainable Agriculture. Baltic University Programme and Envirovet Baltic cooperate on this.

Baltic 21 was encouraged by a high level meeting in April of last year to work on sustainable rural development. In November we organized a seminar on rural development in order to carry this work forward. We now have a platform of 21 actions in the area of rural sustainable development and one working group on balanced urban-rural development that is expected to come up with some concrete proposals during the spring. At the back of the room you will find the Baltic 21 report that gives some more information about our work and I particular the 21 actions that I just mentioned.

We hope to share our ideas with you here and at CSD in May.

I thank you for your kind attention.