



Baltic 21 Intervention at Belgrade Ministerial

Ms. Anne-Cerise Nilsson, Baltic 21 SOG Chair

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Distinguished conference participants:

Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21 would like to share some information about the work in our region.

We can now witness **increased cooperation** in the Baltic Sea Region between the regional organizations, and we have also taken initiatives to extend to more countries.

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. The implementation of Baltic 21 focuses on the sectors of agriculture, energy, fisheries, forests, industry, tourism, transport, education and spatial planning.

Participation in Baltic 21 takes place on an **equal footing**. 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.

Baltic 21 is in a very **dynamic phase of project development**. It has **developed 21 actions**, all of which have firm commitments from one or more of our members to implement the Baltic Sea Action Plan. In this regard, the emphasis for Baltic 21 is on **sustainable rural development** and tackling land-based pollution that results in the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. To this end

we are also inviting Mediterranean, Ukrainian and Belarussian partners, hoping to further develop actions on this topic by learning from these regions as well.

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. These projects cover marine litter, integrated coastal zone management, sustainable tourism and forestry as well as urban transport. In order to build on the successes of these Lighthouse Projects, Baltic 21 is developing strategic projects in the fields of bio-energy, balanced urban-rural development, education and sustainable innovations with a broad range of partners in the Baltic Sea Region. By concentrating on these themes, we hope to add to our region's progress, competitiveness and capacity for sustainable development, as well as the public's awareness.

I thank you for your kind attention.