Fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”
Kiev, Ukraine, 21-23 May 2003

Item 7: Environmental Partnerships in the UNECE Region: (a) Environment Strategy for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

STATEMENT BY MR. VALDIS BISTERS,
CHAIRMAN OF THE BALTIC 21

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

Baltic 21 is honored to participate in this Conference and address issues on environmental strategy and partnerships. Both these issues are important components in our work and we have learnt many valuable lessons from more than five years of our cooperation for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. I believe that some of these lessons are of relevance to our discussion here, today. Let me focus on just two of them.

As soon as this event is over the time will come to focus efforts on timely actions to ensure effective follow-up and implementation of outcomes of this conference. I would like to stress the importance of increased attention to cooperation and partnerships between subregions, as well as to the involvement of sub-regional organizations in the efforts to attain globally and regionally agreed goals and objectives. Building relevant partnerships that can be replicated to deliver tangible results needs to be further encouraged and supported.

As many of you may remember, discussions at the Regional Implementation Forums of CSD-11 emphasized the need to promote a fruitful exchange of experiences and to catalyze actions that will advance implementation of sustainable development. Subregional cooperation provides an opportunity to effectively address shared environmental problems. Consistent with this, I strongly believe that regional commissions should better utilize expertise existing in sub-regional organizations. Mechanisms should be developed to encourage and promote exchange of expertise among relevant sub-regional forums. Baltic 21 has started to develop such cooperation with the Mediterranean Region for this purpose.

Second.
Let me focus on one important aspect of strategy, namely high-level political support and commitment. Baltic 21 enjoys a blessing of being initiated by the Heads of Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs from all 11 countries in the Baltic Sea Region. However, the driving force for the development of Baltic 21 Action programme and implementation have been Ministers of Environment. What I would like to strongly emphasize is throughout the process of the implementation of our action program, it has become more and more clear that crucial importance, and in fact a precondition for success in this type of work, is the involvement and commitment of sector ministers and their support for integration of environmental considerations into the development of key economic sectors. While noting with attentiveness the section dealing with this matter, I would like to stress the importance of ensuring effective follow-up by the respective sectoral ministers of actions that will be agreed by the Ministers of the Environment.

Thank you for your attention.