

Mr Aleksi Randell
Vice President, Union of the Baltic Cities
Chairman, City Executive Board of Turku

EUROPEAN MARITIME POLICY CONFERENCE OF THE BALTIC SEA AREA
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Dear friends and colleagues,

It is indeed a great pleasure to participate here in this Conference dealing with issues which are of greatest importance for the Baltic Sea Region. Here, the goal of an integrated, comprehensive maritime policy for the European Union has probably even greater importance than in many other regions of Europe.

Union of the Baltic Cities, which I have the honour to represent, is naturally very interested in the formulation of future European Maritime Policy. As representative of over 100 cities around the Baltic Sea, it is our goal to formulate common positions and advocate interests of the Baltic Sea Cities towards our national Governments, European organisations as well as other relevant actors.

In order to increase the effectiveness of our lobbying work towards the European Union, the UBC is about to open, at the beginning of October, its own UBC antenna in Brussels. It will be based in the Stockholm Region office, steered in close cooperation with the existing representations of UBC member cities in Brussels. We look forward to a close coordination with other Baltic Sea organisations and good cooperation with the EU.

Dear friends,

The UBC adopted, after a thorough consultation process, in its June meeting in Sankt Petersburg, a Maritime Logistics Policy Paper. The aim is to address future challenges of the growing maritime transport sector in the Baltic Sea Region, concentrating on those issues that are within the scope of influence of our member cities. We are pleased to note, that the office of the European Commission President, Mr Barroso, has appreciated the conclusions of this policy paper.

Now, after the publication in June of a Green paper on the future European maritime policy, it is quite natural that the UBC has started to formulate its own position on the Green Book. This

will be delivered to the Commission sometimes at the end of the year or beginning of 2007. Already, several member cities, including Turku and St. Petersburg, have expressed their keen interest in the formulation of such position paper. We are naturally open to coordinate our work in this respect with other regional organisations, as we have done earlier, too.

The preparation and publication of the Green Book have already achieved one of their key goals, namely led to an intensified debate across sectoral barriers on the future maritime policy. This conference is again another example of that.

Dear friends,

The City of Turku hosted on 20-21 July this year the first Baltic Sea consultation conference on the Green Paper, which was published just weeks before. Many of you, including Commissioner Joe Borg, participated in this event which was related to the Finnish EU Presidency. The expert opinions, as well as lively discussion centred around several themes, ranging from the need to protect the Baltic Sea from pollution and devastating oil spills, safety of the cruise and other ships to economic development of coastal regions and tourism. The presentations as well as a summary of the discussions are available in the internet address: www.turku.fi/

As a summary of the Turku conference, I would like to raise a few issues we feel are important:

1. Need for holistic Maritime Policy

As Commissioner Borg noted in Turku, there is an increasing international trend to move towards the development of comprehensive policies and tools to cover related subjects in a holistic way. The European maritime policy is one of these processes, where a holistic approach is needed, indeed. As maritime policy covers issues in many sectors, and decisions on many levels - from local to European and global – and involves a great number of stakeholders in public and private sectors, a mutually agreed framework and direction would be of great importance.

A common maritime policy would create great added value especially in areas such as environmental issues, promotion of regional competitiveness and entrepreneurship as well as research and development efforts.

The new maritime policy should not automatically lead to new administrative structures, but we should first make use of existing international, regional and national structures through better coordination and cooperation.

2. Role and special characteristics of the Baltic Sea Region

Within the overall European maritime policy, there is need to recognise the special characteristics of various maritime regions., including the Baltic Sea Region. We, in the UBC feel, that our region should attain in the EU policies the same emphasis as, for example, the Mediterranean or the Atlantic Ocean regions. After all, one third of the EU member states are also Baltic Sea states. The policies of related to the Northern Dimension and Baltic Sea should be formulated so that they enhance each others.

3. Environment and sustainable development

The importance of marine conservation must now, more than ever, be emphasized. We see the drawing up of EU maritime policy as a key move towards supporting the protection and conservation of the marine environment. The future of the Baltic Sea is in the balance. In addition to EU member countries, this issue has also direct implications for our neighbour, Russia. The importance of this issue to the coastal UBC cities is compounded by the extreme vulnerability of the shallow sea and archipelago regions.

The influence of the maritime policy also extends to our coastal and inland areas. Developing a more sustainable basis for the use of coastal areas creates a foundation for the development of coastal towns, increased tourism and improved living satisfaction and living opportunities in these areas. For the UBC member cities and other coastal towns, the importance of the European maritime policy vision is self-evident, yet still often easily overlooked.

4. Promoting research and training in the Baltic Sea Region

In order to compete successfully, Europe has to move faster in the direction of the Lisbon agenda. Some of the most successful countries in this respect are in the Baltic Sea Region.

It is important to promote cooperation among research and educational institutions in our region. Existing networks, such as the Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN), coordinated by the University of Turku and having nearly 40 member universities, offer great potential in this respect. Cooperation between universities, educational institutions and cities should be actively promoted.

In order to stay competitive and innovative, the maritime sectors need to attract skilled and devoted workforce. As a practical example, we are in Turku now exploring the possibility of establishing a special upper secondary school programme with curricular specialization in maritime issues. The companies in maritime cluster have warmly welcomed the idea.

Aker Finnyards –shipyard in Turku, where the biggest and most luxurious cruise ships in the world are constructed, coordinates – on behalf of Euroyards – the Intership project, aiming at improving the competitiveness of EU:s shipbuilding industry. This programme is funded from the EU´s 6th framework programme. Use of similar funding instruments including the 7th Framework programme has to be secured also in the future.

5. Importance of maritime cluster

The maritime cluster of Turku and Finland´s south-western coast is remarkably strong, not only in the Baltic Sea context but also internationally. It provides work, directly and indirectly, for about 17 000 persons and the turnover of about 400 companies in this cluster totalled in 2005 some 4 billion euro.

Therefore, Turku, jointly and in close cooperation with various maritime partners, has submitted to Finnish Government an application to nominate the Turku Maritime Cluster as a National Cluster of Expertise. We are delighted that the proposal has been well received.

However, the establishment of a marine cluster of expertise is a move needed not only by Finland or the Baltic Sea region, but by Europe as a whole. The reality of the global economy is such that the European maritime industry's customers are increasingly located outside Europe. Establishment of an integrated maritime cluster and examination of the factors influenc-

ing the cluster's performance will enable us to put our expertise to more and more effective use.

6. Logistics /maritime transport

Shipping and cruise industry are two branches which have considerable future potential and are very important with the respect of to the competitiveness of Europe. As maritime transport is environmentally a most friendly way to move goods and environmental issues are today a crucial matter to all Europeans, we should encourage the development of maritime logistics and transport. Environmental and logistics issues should therefore be seen as parallel steps towards a common goal – the wellbeing and prosperity of us Europeans- rather than being opponents to each other. UBC cities are quite aware how vulnerable the seas are, especially our own Baltic Sea, but a balance between commercial activity and nature can be found if both aspects are incorporated in the maritime policy and its implementation. Here I must refer what I said about the 7th frame work programme; Europe needs efficient financial instruments as well as high quality research and development if we want to match the challenge how to combine environmental, safety and commercial aspects.

7. Conclusions

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have stated some aspects which UBC considers crucial in the preparation of the new European Maritime policy. To end my address I want to stress that the Union of the Baltic Cities and its members cities not only set demands, but are willing to positively and actively contribute to the European Maritime Policy process and its implementation. One example of our commitment is the "Towards Excellence in European Maritime Economy" seminar that the city of Turku organises on October 22nd in Brussels. Special emphasis in this seminar lays on maritime clusters as a key element in promoting the European Union's competitiveness and future maritime policy. I wish all the interested parties welcome to this seminar to continue our dialogue.

Thank you.