

UBC, „Building Smart Cities in the Baltic Sea Region”,

Gdynia, 27-30 October 2015

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure to take part in this very important and timely conference - who would not like to take part in “Building smart Cities in the Baltic Sea Region”?!

On behalf of the Polish presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States allow me to express my gratitude for being granted this opportunity to update you on current CBSS activities, in particular the plans and priorities of the Polish CBSS Presidency. I would also like to make reference to some important CBSS activities and their relevance for UBC.

Definitely, it is a challenging and thought-provoking time for the Baltic Sea region. Nevertheless, despite the uneven economic development, our region becomes more and more integrated and prosperous. Its potential is steadily growing, thus strengthening its position and attractiveness, also globally. In the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis **smart utilization** of new growth perspectives stemming from innovative macro-regional approach to Baltic cooperation, globalization, European integration, and last but not least, increasing accessibility of the Arctic, **is the main challenge currently to be faced. To find solutions to this challenges Cities should and are playing an important role!**

The Polish presidency occurs in difficult political conditions. The region has been negatively influenced by the development from outside, especially by the situation in Ukraine. Its implications put to the test the up-to-date achievements of Baltic cooperation, as well as regional

confidence and mutual understanding. Disagreements about global political issues should not stop us from regional cooperation.

It is of utmost importance that the Baltic Sea region remains prosperous, stable and secure - an important component of the European security system. Enhanced cooperation between the Baltic Sea region and other, especially neighboring regions is of utmost importance in strengthening its position as a role model of regional cooperation, and in sharing good practices with others. Again also in this area, cities and their partnerships play an important role!

The main objective of the Polish CBSS presidency is to secure successful continuation of the CBSS mission through practical implementation of its new long-term priorities: Sustainable and Prosperous Region, Regional Identity, and Safe and Secure Region.

The CBSS remains the key international organization in the Baltic Sea region playing the core role as a forum for all multilateral intergovernmental cooperation. It should continue as a platform for political and policy dialogue guided by a commonly agreed vision for the region. The CBSS is also a useful platform for intergovernmental coordination with and monitoring of regional development strategies and formats, and offers practical implementation support.

The Baltic Sea region enjoys a very well developed cooperation system. All organizations and formats proved to be useful. Each delivers a specific added value benefiting the whole region. Nevertheless, there is a room for more regional coherence and synergy, coordination through common goals, documents and meetings. In our opinion, due to the CBSS' potential and institutional capabilities it should enhance its close cooperation with other organizations and formats in the region, such as the Northern Dimension, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Nordic Council of Ministers, Barents Euro Arctic Council, Arctic Council and of course UBC. This could be done, for example by establishing a structured

dialog, sharing good services and expertise, thus contributing to the better division of labor, improved regional management and performance without creating new institutions and additional costs.

It is also important to continue the process of strengthening the CBSS' project implementation capability. There are areas and activities where the CBSS is the most suitable to take the lead. The discussion on the future of the Project Support Facility – the CBSS' financial instrument – will be crucial in this respect.

The main strength of the Baltic Sea region comes from the endless multitude of historical, social, economic and cultural backgrounds and traditions that create an enormously intricate fabric of the present of the region, a unique combination of features that some would like to call “**the Balticness**”.

‘Synergy in diversity’ is the motto of the Polish CBSS presidency. We would like to take up the challenge of seeking practical possibilities for improving regional synergy and coherence through applying a macro regional perspective which allows better identifying and utilizing the totality of the region's potential. Ideally, the ultimate goal of our common endeavor should be a **creation of a common Baltic space** based on achievements of regional cooperation, integration, and eradication of all still existing hindrances and bottlenecks hampering daily lives of our citizens.

Having this in mind the Polish CBSS presidency wants to continue efforts on making all regional cooperation formats work well together. In this sense it is a good thing that Poland simultaneously with the CBSS chairs also the National Coordinators of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

We will pursue synergy through joint meetings on issues of common importance, improving transparency and coordination. Whenever possible such meetings should focus on specific fields and problems to

solve. As a start, we will have a joint meeting between the National Coordinators of the EU Strategy for the BSR, and the Committee of Senior Officials in the margins of the Ministerial Session of the Ministers of Culture. Another example is the planned joint meeting between CBSS Baltic 21, the Arctic Council and relevant EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Areas back-to-back with the CSO in Warsaw on 28 October this year. A third is the planned meeting of stakeholders in the field of civil security in Northern Europe in Stockholm on 2-3 December this year. A similar stakeholder meeting with youth organizations may take place next spring, and we shall then of course take care to invite also representatives of the UBC Youth Conference.

The Polish CBSS Chair will focus on three areas that are important, perfectly address the CBSS new long term priorities, and respond to current needs of the region. They are **Sustainability, Creativity, and Safety**.

Under **‘Sustainability’**, which corresponds with the CBSS long-term priority “Sustainable and Prosperous Region” we want to pursue a new agenda for sustainable development in the BSR in areas where the CBSS is active, such as climate change, regional implementation of the recently decided UN Sustainable Development Goals, development of the BSR Maritime Transport System, diversifying Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency, increased cooperation in Science, Research and Innovation, and in Tourism. Amongst activities I can mention the 8th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum with ministerial level participation in Gdansk-Malbork, on 22-23 September this year. The Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation will have a conference on Public Private Partnerships in the energy sector on 17 November in Warsaw. We also plan a meeting with the Baltic Science Network, a new CBSS initiative to increase regional science cooperation.

As you can see from this list, cities are amongst the most exposed in these areas and the UBC - previously through its Environment Commission Secretariat and currently through the Sustainable Cities Commission - has been one of the most important members and a very good cooperation partner for CBSS Baltic 21, the sustainability and climate cooperation platform of the CBSS.

There are some very positive results with five of our cities being among the top ten European Green Cities according to the Siemens Green City Index and we have a high share of production and consumption of renewable energy.

We have on the other hand some challenges, like the rapid increase in automobile density or the annual average population change in the region showing the diverse pattern of both growing and shrinking around the Baltic Sea and related the issue of labor mobility, youth employment, vocational education and training.

Therefore the CBSS welcomes the new UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2015-2020 “Stairway towards Sustainable Baltic Cities”, that will be hopefully adopted at this Conference.

Under **‘Creativity’** which is an expression of the CBSS long-term priority “Regional Identity” we want to establish Culture as a driving force for social and economic development in the region. We believe it is in the culture sector, or with culture as a complement to other parts of the economy, many of the jobs in the future shall be created. We launched this part of the Presidency already with a Ministerial Session on Culture on 16 September in Gdansk, followed by an Expert Conference on Culture as a tool for social and economic growth of the region, combined with a meeting of all key cultural organizations present in the region, on 16-17 September.

‘Safety’, finally, refers to the CBSS long-term priority “Safe and secure region”. It is obvious that many communities in the Baltic Sea region face similar risks. Therefore, raising awareness and enhancing

prevention is of outmost importance. In many cases however the best new practices are learned through transnational cooperation. The Baltic Sea region has several transnational networks of cities, regions and other local actors that are natural networks for developing transnational awareness raising, prevention strategies, urban safety and safe community approaches. In CBSS we focus on Civil Protection in the Baltic Sea Region, enhancing the cooperation potential of civil protection services through e.g. improved interoperability, and improved environmental monitoring through exchange of radiological data. In the human dimension of this field, several regional activities are planned to continue the fight against trafficking in human being, and improve protection of children. A new challenge for many in the region and here in particular cities is the issue of migration as we can see in the daily news. It is important to build what one could call the infrastructure of migration governance and here again the exchange of good practices is an excellent tool for capacity building.

The CBSS remains the core element of the Baltic Sea cooperation network. Due to the current situation, it is not in a position to fully exploit its unique potential stemming from the Baltic summits and foreign ministers' meetings, which should provide strategic orientation and political guidance.

As the CBSS presidency Poland will concentrate on practical implementation of the Council's long term priorities securing the continuation and progress of the Baltic Sea cooperation. But at the same time we see the need for an in-depth reflection on the future of the Baltic Sea cooperation in the dynamically changing regional and global environment. Poland would be ready to offer good services in this respect if the CBSS Member States wish so.

I thank you again for the opportunity to present Polish Presidency plans and look forward to a good dialogue and cooperation between the CBSS and the UBC during this Conference and elsewhere over the

next months. Let us work together in an even closer collaboration and better exchange of information between our working bodies for the benefit of the Baltic Sea Region and its cities. If we are to improve this region and its cities further, both our fora must work hard toward a common goal.

Thank You for Your attention and I wish you a fruitful debate!