



STATEMENT BY MRS. ALDA NIKODEMUSA

ON BEHALF OF BALTIC SEA REGION SPATIAL PLANNING INITIATIVE - VISION AND STRATEGIES AROUND THE BALTIC SEA (VASAB)

Ministers, High-level Representatives, Delegates,

It is a great honour to be here at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting and address you on behalf of VASAB which is more than 30 years lasting cooperation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of the Baltic Sea Region countries.

The main VASAB mission is to prepare policy options for the territorial development of the Region, to provide forum for exchange of knowledge as well as promote and participate in cooperation projects to achieve well-integrated, coherent, and sustainable region.

Today, I would like to highlight the close cooperation of VASAB and HELCOM that effectively lasts already 14 years, and which is targeted towards reaching our common goal - careful management of the Baltic Sea as well as implementation of the specific strategies and policies of both organisations.

Last year VASAB Ministers had their Conference in Wismar, Germany. Ministers welcomed the well-established cooperation of VASAB and HELCOM and endorsed the Baltic 'Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030' as a guiding document for the continuation of these joint efforts. The role of VASAB as the Policy area 'Spatial Planning' lead coordinator within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was also acknowledged and regards maritime spatial planning - we do that work jointly with HELCOM.

The new strategic-visionary framework for a vibrant, well-connected and resilient spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region - 'VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040' was endorsed by the VASAB Ministerial Conference. The proposed possible future actions of the co-created Vision also foresee engagement of various stakeholders to implement it. And HELCOM is a very significant player to reach several Vision goals, for example, resilient ecosystems and cooperative sea and land planning systems.

To conclude, VASAB expresses a willingness to continue close cooperation with HELCOM to promote reaching our common goal - sustainable development of the region and healthy and resilient Baltic Sea.

Thank you.