

*Speech – Announcement of the 2009 Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award during the Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award Seminar – A New Model of Leadership to Promote Growth and the Environment, August 20, 2009*

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today I have the great pleasure to make the announcement, on behalf of the Swedish Government, of the winner of the 2009 Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award. The award goes to The Helsinki Commission – HELCOM - under the leadership of its Executive Secretary, Dr Anne Christine Brusendorff.

The commitment and efforts of the organisation to improve the Baltic Sea environment have earned HELCOM the 2009 Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award. The motivation of the award committee reads as follow:

*“Under the leadership of its Executive Secretary Anne Christine Brusendorff, HELCOM has taken marine environmental protection to a new level. HELCOM has shown exemplary commitment to improving the Baltic Sea through the adoption of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. The Action Plan takes on the complexity of the issues that need to be addressed in an innovative manner, linking them to ongoing initiatives and forming the backbone of the environmental actions in the coming Baltic Sea Strategy.”*

For the past three decades HELCOM has been working to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution. HELCOM has been striving to improve the marine environment by facilitating intergovernmental co-operation both between the nine countries in the Baltic Sea catchment area and in the European Community.

One of the most important tasks of HELCOM is to make Recommendations on measures to address certain pollution sources or areas of concern. Since the 1980s HELCOM has adopted over 200 Recommendations for the protection of the Baltic Sea. As the governing body of the Helsinki Convention, HELCOM is also responsible for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the Helsinki Convention as well as the implementation of the Recommendations.

In addition, HELCOM's Baltic Sea Action Plan plays a key role in the improvement of the Baltic marine environment and provides a vital stepping stone for further action. The Action Plan builds on an innovative approach based on a clear set of ecological objectives. It is also to be seen as pilot project for other European seas.

Since my participation here last year, I have taken up kayaking in the archipelago. It is really relaxing. Or used to be until I read the Swedish papers earlier this summer, filled with news on how cruise ships are dumping their sewage in the Baltic Sea. Now, I am very careful as to avoid swallowing the water when I accidentally turn my kayak up-side-down, which actually isn't happening too often. I have become rather apt at it. But I was amazed to read that only three ports out of all the ports around the sea, can handle the sewage from the cruise ships. And this far, there has been no incentive to build up this capacity as it is legal to dump sewage in international waters. This has to change. Proper sewage treatment is an essential part of a sustainable development. The Baltic Sea, and all other seas, are our common good that we have a responsibility to protect. Nothings less should be accepted. New international laws are needed and proper sewage and waste water treatment plants for households and industry alike are needed in all countries around the

sea. This is a national as well as an international responsibility we have to face up to.

This is why the Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award is important and plays a role. As the award recognises direct and practical efforts to improve water quality in the Baltic Sea. It thus honours innovations and new methods that protect the Baltic Sea water environment. The award is presented to individuals, companies, organisations and actors in the public sector. Each and everyone of the ten previous awardees are as important and each and every one provide imperative input in the struggle for a clean and healthy Baltic Sea.

Awarding HELCOM, I feel, is highly appropriate since the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is a promising policy instrument which has the potential to give new impetus to the practical implementation of HELCOM's Action Plan by the European Union and the Member States of the EU. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region applies a horizontal approach, integrating different policy areas, not only in the field of the environment, but also in the areas of competitiveness, communications and security. I believe that integrating various policy areas for the common objective of a safe, prosperous and environmentally sustainable Baltic Sea Region is the only way to make further sustainable progress in improving the Baltic Sea as such. HELCOM and its members, are indeed key players in such a strategy. Sweden will seek to adopt this innovative policy instrument during its Presidency of the EU.

Well, I believe it is time for us to listen to the actual awardees, instead of me praising them. In this regard, I would like to invite Dr Brusendorff to join me on the stage to make a few remarks.