

PLENARY SESSION ADDRESSES

Mr Mart Viisitamm

Mayor of the City of Pärnu

Mr Per Bødker Andersen

President of the Union of the Baltic Cities

Mr Jüri Ratas

Vice President of the Estonian Parliament

Ambassador Valdis Krastins

Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials, Council of the Baltic Sea States

Mr Alan Lloyd

Vice-President of the Bureau of the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of
the Council of Europe

Mr Uno Aldegren

President of the Relex Commission, Committee of the Regions

Mr Toivo Klaar

Representative of the European Commission, Head of Representation in Estonia

Mr Xosé António Sánchez Bugallo

President of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, Mayor of the City of Santiago
de Compostela

Mr Michel Sudarskis

Secretary General of International Urban Development Association INTA

Mr Mart Viisitamm
Mayor of the City of Pärnu

Honourable UBC President, Mr Per Bødker Andersen, ladies and gentlemen! Distinguished delegates to the General Conference, dear guests!

Hosting the General Conference of Union of the Baltic Cities is a great responsibility and honour for any of its member cities.

Thank you for your trust in us. This is the first time for an Estonian city to organise and host the General Conference.

This indicates that Pärnu has earned its genuine status in the UBC, understood the co-operation network's potential and is willing to contribute to common goals.

Daily management of city life in the 21st century requires more and more decisions based on the experience of international co-operation networks, fresh ideas and initiatives. We have launched a process to create a forward-looking, evolving and sustainable foreign policy in the City of Pärnu which would not be limited to mere chaotic project-based cultural exchanges. We have defined our goals and their implementation methods. These must create a broad basis for Pärnu's international relations in view of Estonia's membership in the EU, the changed developmental environment and our possibilities. I can assure you that this line of work is largely motivated and encouraged by the UBC co-operation network. However, there is more than enough room for development in the area of continued co-operation.

The issues covered by this General Conference are both current and timeless.

Global warming, upkeep and development of cultural traditions and more active involvement of the youth in social life are important topics where we have a role to play and which shape our present and future. Pärnu finds it essential to address all these issues and it has supported the establishment of the UBC Energy Commission.

We have supported and will continue supporting the joint and collaborative efforts among the youth in UBC member cities. We see this as a crucial and forward-looking line of work. We have already involved the youth in decision-making regarding matters related to the City's youth work. A Youth Committee adopting decisions which concern their age-mates has been set up at the City Council. Parallel to the current General Conference in Pärnu, the UBC Youth Conference is held, and it gets our full support. May their discussions be fruitful!

The climate change and energy carriers concern us to an increasing extent. We are trying to determine the causes and foresee the consequences. Constant adaptation to the climate has been the core issue for Earth's life forms throughout millions of years. The civilisation's effects on the climate have been highlighted in the last decades. Thus, there is good reason to think about what we are doing.

Pärnu has enjoyed success in shaping a healthy environment: for example, in the context of restructuring the City's economy, we have terminated or reorganised operations in the last decade in all major boiler plants and companies which exceeded the air pollution limits. Consequently, the atmospheric emissions of CO₂ are kept to the minimum here. This is how Pärnu has become one of the cities with the cleanest air on the shores of the Baltic Sea. The City Development Plan includes the objective to develop Pärnu as a healthy and green city. This requires targeted and strong action. It cannot be achieved alone, and in this context it is hard to overvalue the organisational developments in the UBC.

However, it seems that besides the meteorological peculiarities we should pay attention to psychological aspects which the risks of climate change could bring about in us, our countries and our cities. In this context, I am referring to possibly compromising the population's sense of security and increasing the inner uncertainty of people. Every change and adapting to it requires a certain degree of mobilisation from people, they need to prepare themselves and the others for adjusting to the new environment.

What can the heads of cities and the entire population do in this regard? In addition to the economic, political and legislative measures, it is important to have measures for well-organised notification of the population in the case of hazards. The continuous provision of operational instructions in crisis situations. In the recent years, Pärnu has increasingly experienced the dangers of nature – storm winds and the rising sea level. If the water level in Pärnu rises more than 1.5 meters above the so-called Kronstadt zero, the city population and the entire West Coast will be facing the risk of extensive floods. The January storm in 2005 and the great floods brought about the need to evacuate the population from potential flood areas. We had to act in a situation where the water reached almost chest-level. Once the power supply was cut off and the information did not reach those in need, the people were unable to get operational instructions. These events led us to serious conclusions. Firstly, the system of long-term and constant meteorological monitoring in the country was improved. We are planning to set up a notification system for the whole city. This will be the channel for conveying necessary operational information to the population in critical situations. So we can help the people to act in an organised manner in the case of danger. We launched training programs for rescue teams. We strengthen co-operation between different authorities following all more concerning weather forecasts.

Our task is to identify potential dangers in all situations caused by nature and human activity. It is nice to see that the Union of the Baltic Cities has recognised this practice and line of work in the thematic agenda of its conferences. We are concerned about the Baltic Sea, mostly because of extensive advancement of human activity. This is the reason for the proposal which directly concerns us, the countries and cities around the Baltic Sea: “to set up a discussion for addressing the legislators and governments of our countries and the management bodies of the EU in order to restrict or stop the traffic of single-hull tankers in our back yard – the Baltic Sea”. Just one serious tanker accident would mean a catastrophe for our sea and shores.

We all have our history, our roots give us strength and help to find our way in the hectic world of today. We welcome the fact that the UBC General Conference focuses also on the cultural issues. Cultural exchanges are the driving force for us stand up and be more open. People – driven by their beliefs – are the primary upholders of culture. In Europe, increasing prosperity characterises those cultural cities which make their living because people like to be there. “I like it there!” is one of the main arguments for going somewhere to spend your money. For already a decade, Pärnu has been the Estonian Summer Capital. If Tallinn manages to live up to the title of European Capital of Culture in 2011, then the City of Pärnu will hold the status of summer capital not only in Estonia, but all over Europe. We want the whole Europe to hear the phrase: “I like Pärnu”.

To you, honourable delegates, I recommend a lot of sightseeing in our ancient City of Pärnu, since we expect you to return here. This will give you more reasons to come back!
May the work of the General Conference be meaningful!

Thank you for your time!

Mart Viisitamm
Mayor of Pärnu

Mr Per Bødker Andersen
President of the Union of the Baltic Cities

Dear friends from the Baltic Sea region and other European regions,

Welcome to the General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities in Pärnu! For the ninth time the mayors and city executives, representatives of governments and international organisations and many actors active in the Baltic Sea region and Europe gather to discuss issues important for our citizens.

I would like to warmly welcome our distinguished speakers, namely:

Mr Jüri Ratas, Vice President of the Parliament of Riigikogu – the Parliament of the Republic of Estonia,

Ambassador Valdis Krastins, Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials, Council of the Baltic Sea States,

Sir Alan Lloyd, Vice-President of the Bureau of the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe,

Mr Uno Aldegren, my colleague from the Committee of the Regions, President of RELEX commission, on behalf of the President of the Committee of the Regions, Mayor of Dunkerque, Michel Delebarre who wanted to be today with us but must be in Brussels today at the Cohesion Forum,

Mr Toivo Klaar, representative of the European Commission, Head of Representation in Estonia,

Mr Xosé António Sánchez Bugallo, Mayor of Santiago de Compostela, President of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities - our sister organisation at the Atlantic coast,

And last but not least Mr Michel Sudarskis, Secretary General of International Urban Development Association INTA.

Today we shall debate on the following problems: cities' response to the climate change, culture as driving force for municipal development and involvement of youth in democracy and in the life of the society.

In the recent years the question of how to prevent the climate change and all consequences it implicates has been one of the most often asked at the governmental and international level. However, having climate change and energy policies of the European Union with all their ambitious targets, it is time for local authorities to consider their role in this process. The climate protection needs not only intergovernmental settlements, but also contribution of municipalities and the cities' inhabitants. None of the goals set in the EU's action plan can be met without the commitment of the cities. What exactly they can do to prevent or reduce the consequences of the climate change?

The UBC's one of the main aims has always been the sustainable and environmentally friendly Baltic Sea region. The UBC members have been active in achieving this aim since the beginning taking part in various projects and implementing the UBC Agenda 21 which focuses i.a. on sustainable use of energy and resources and good living environment and nature protection. This is a great basis for further discussions during the Conference. During afternoon workshop we will be analyzing the effectiveness of different tools and actions, such as reduction of CO2 emissions, friendly renewable energy, more efficient use of energy, etc. Variety of voluntary agreements and coalitions aiming at promotion of

green urban policies and eco-management may help to a great extent in reducing of the pollution level. But how does it look like in practice? Do our cities indeed implement new regulations to minimize the negative consequences of the climate change and to ensure as friendly environment for their inhabitants as it is possible? We will also exchange ideas on how to prepare the cities for negative effects of climate change, like the raise of sea level. Do the city strategies anticipate such risks and provide any measures to prevent from it?

The second theme: “Culture as driving force for municipal development” provides the opportunity to present and discuss the new dimension of the urban development policies. Recent analyses show that in comparison with the previous approach based on the belief that the capital and investment are those factors which give an impulse for the city’s development, the current strategies are more people-oriented. Cultural climate of the city, its tolerant, vibrant atmosphere, variety of lifestyles and variety of art-scenes are crucial to attract people. As a result, such cities are the most desirable places to live, consume and do businesses which lead to the establishment of the knowledge economy. An active culture life creates a society of diversity, tolerance and open-mindedness. Culture stimulates growth – this will be a starting point of the vivid discussions.

At the afternoon workshop we will have a chance to exchange experiences connected with inclusion of the cultural perspective into the local development policies and, additionally, with using different promotional tools, for instance, the European Capital of Culture nomination. Many of our members are striving to be a Capital of Culture so today we can exchange know-how on: how to prepare for such competition? What are the benefits for the inhabitants? As the experience of former capital of culture shows, this kind of promotion implicates usually both local and international profits. Diversity of city culture is enriched, new investments and infrastructure appear, and the business community grows, with new businesses established. Additionally, the cities benefit from the development of their trademarks abroad, better city’s recognition, increasing number of international contacts including flow of artists and tourists.

The UBC is going to attract the participants’ attention also to the youth problems. The theme: “Involvement of youth in democracy and in the life of the society” will focus on the question how the economy and society can benefit from the interaction with young people. The UBC is of the opinion that the youth is a valuable resource for the development of cities and the whole Baltic Sea region. The participation of young people brings new dimensions, perspectives and expertise in the municipal work. None of the contemporary challenges and threats is neutral to them. Therefore, increased dialogue and improved communication with this group of citizens should be undoubtedly one of the main tasks of the local authorities. What is more, the activities of local decision-makers should concentrate not only on making the participation possible but first of all on encouraging the youth to take active part in the city’s work. The targeted youth information strategy and feedback from all interested parties seem to be necessary to enhance the debate. The questions on how to convince the young people that they can have a real impact on the city’s policies and how to ensure better access and promotion of youth involvement will be among other important topics discussed by the workshop participants. Organisation of the Youth Conference at the same time as the UBC General Conference will enable the dialogue of the youngsters with the decision-makers.

Dear friends, I wish you fruitful debates and a good time in the beautiful summer town of Pärnu!

Per Bødker Andersen
President of UBC

Mr Jüri Ratas
Vice President of the Estonian Parliament

Excellencies! Honourable President of the Union of Baltic Cities! Dear participants of the 9th General Conference of the Union of Baltic Cities! Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am very happy today to welcome here, in the Hanseatic city of Pärnu, on behalf of the Riigikogu, the parliament of the Republic of Estonia, all the representatives of many Baltic cities who have arrived to the Conference.

Since its formation in 1991, the Union of Baltic Cities has done great work for the closer integration of the Baltic cities into the developments taking place in the European Union.

The main purposes of your organisation are strengthening the cooperation and information exchange between the cities of the Baltic Sea region, standing for the common interests of local governments both at state and international level, and implementing the principles of sustainable development and following the relevant EU requirements to local governments.

Your organisation is constantly growing and currently unites 100 cities.

This shows that the local governments recognise the necessity of this organisation, and find assistance and support for achieving their aims in realising its main purposes and taking part in its work.

The participation of local governments in the work of the Union contributes to the development of democracy and civil society, enables to involve third sector organisations in solving the key problems of society, and – what is the most important – helps to promote progressive experience and initiative in solving various problems of common interest.

The local governments of cities have initiated numerous activities and can also in the future show their initiative in looking for new innovative solutions, for example in solving transport problems, improving the condition of the environment or alleviating social problems.

Friendly competition between cities is very useful here.

As you all know, Tallinn is a candidate for the European Capital of Culture in 2011. But this will not be a monopoly of Tallinn, other towns of Estonia can also take part in it.

Many cities of Europe have shown their support for the initiative of Tallinn for introducing the title of Green Capital of Europe. At present this proposal is being deliberated by the European Commission.

Besides today's conference, the 47th Annual Conference of the Union of Capitals of the European Union (UCEU) will begin tomorrow in Tallinn. This union was created in 1961 to develop cooperation between the capitals of the member states of the European Union and their citizens, discuss the issues concerning the capitals at high level and exchange experience. This year Tallinn had the honour of being the president of the UCEU. At the annual conference, the relations between the capital and the state, and also the capital and its closer surroundings are discussed. Thus we admit that the cooperation of cities has several forms and levels of cooperation.

I am convinced that the local governments of Baltic cities have many more possibilities for planning and carrying out projects of common interest.

I thank the organising committee for giving me the possibility to welcome you at the Conference, and I wish you good luck and success.

Ambassador Valdis Krastins
Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials
of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

Dear Mr. Mart Viisitamm, Dear Mr. Per Bødker Andersen, Dear high-level representatives and guests,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the IX General Conference of the Union of Baltic Cities in my capacity as a Chairman of the CBSS steering body – the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). Certainly not every Chairman of the CBSS CSO was privileged to do so, since the UBC General Conference takes place only once in two years.

We have started Latvian Presidency of the CBSS with a number of important events in mid-September in Riga. Namely, a CBSS High-Level meeting on Higher Education and Science, convened under the heading “For sustainable development and competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region”. There were meetings of the CBSS CSO and the CBSS Working Group on Economic Cooperation. Moreover, we had the honour to host in Riga an International Conference “International Partnership for Innovation: Challenges and Opportunities” – Baltic Dynamics 2007. There are more events in the “pipe-line” for the future.

Reform. The Latvian CBSS Presidency has some important tasks to address during the coming year. I am speaking about reforming of the Organisation in line with the decision of the Council at its 14th session in Malmö on 13th June 2007. The Malmö decision has a very good and timely reasoning behind it. The playfield for regional cooperation has dramatically changed over the recent past – and not only in our region, but also on the European scene and world-wide.

We urgently need a new strategy for the Baltic Sea Region based on agreed priorities to provide us with a long-term vision for our collective future. Obviously, time-wise this process cannot be completed at once; it would take some time to reconsider priorities and accordingly revise the institutional capacity of the CBSS. Other regional initiatives, such as the Northern Dimension policy, and pragmatic interaction between the various stakeholders would be a separate subject for debates. A deeper involvement of the European Commission in the renewed Baltic Sea cooperation will be sought, along with possible sources of funding for regional initiatives and projects.

As a first step, the Member States are invited by mid- October to come up with a list of topics which they think the governments should address and are capable to support materially for the benefit of the region. The agreed scope of priorities will than be considered in a linkage to possible renewed forms of cooperation, including appropriate development of the CBSS Permanent International Secretariat. The first outlines of the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region would be presented to the 7th Baltic Sea States Summit in Riga, 3-4 June 2008. (For your information, the final documents from the Malmö Ministerial meeting are available of the CBSS web-page: www.cbss.org)

Latvian Presidency Programme. Mindful about the main themes of the UBC Conference, today I would like to dwell upon two specific subject matters, which top the list of the Latvian Presidency Programme – namely, Education and Energy. Of course, other valid areas of cooperation will not stay untouched, a lot will be done to continue and to enhance the ongoing activities in the region under the umbrella of the CBSS. More detailed information about the Latvian CBSS priorities you can find in a special leaflet available among the conference documents. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to address them to me personally, or in my absence – to the CBSS Secretariat, represented by Director, Dr. Gabriele Kötschau, and her Deputy, Mr. Phil Saprykin.

Education (to enhance the competitive edge of the BSR on both European and global levels)

- “Balticness” project. Referring to one of the core topics of the day, namely “Culture as driving force for municipal development”, I would like to introduce one of our cross-cutting projects and “calling cards” of the Latvian Presidency – the “Balticness” project. This project is aimed at addressing both educational and cultural dimensions of Baltic Sea Region cooperation. This project intends to promote awareness of the region’s advantages and values through raising the public recognition of Balticness – the competitiveness, creativity, professionalism, skilfulness, dynamics, stability, multiculturalism, and openness of the region and its people. The target group is general public in all 11 Baltic Sea Region countries, particularly in the capitals, Baltic Sea Region cooperation networks, policy makers, public officials, media, academia, students, youth, and artists. The project represents series of public events taking place in all 11 Baltic Sea Region capital/metropolitan cities to promote the notion of the Baltic Sea Region, ‘Balticness’ and the Baltic Sea as a unifying factor for the people living around it. In particular, it includes a travelling photo exhibition “...where the Baltic Sea and Baltic people meet...”, a round-table discussion seminars in the universities on the issues of regional importance and jazz concerts.

As I have noted, the content of the project has a correlation with what the UBC Commissions on Education, Culture and Youth Issues are dealing with. Any possible inputs and ideas coming from the Baltic Cities how to make the Project more successful and visible would be most welcome.

Energy (to promote competitive and free energy market, renewable energy resources and to ensure an efficient consumption of energy);

Energy and Climate Change. I would like to stress that Energy is ranked second on the CBSS priority list. There are several stakeholders dealing with energy issues in the Region, including our partners such, as the BSSSC and, of course, the UBC. As part of the governmental network I should refer to the BASREC (Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation), which consists of relevant national experts from the CBSS Member States. Latvia recently took over the Chairmanship in this working structure.

To recall, the linkage between Energy and Climate Change has been high on the CBSS energy agenda. A special Conference on energy related climate change issues was organised in Saint Petersburg in March 2007 under the auspices of the Swedish CBSS Presidency (the Report is available in the Secretariat). Climate Change has always been important in the BASREC work, first of all in attempts to reduce the greenhouse emissions in the EU countries by at least 20% by 2020. The work on this subject is conducted within a special subsidiary body – the BASREC Testing Ground Committee (TGC) and the Testing Ground Facility (with a capital fund of 35 Meuro). The TGC and the TGF function on the basis of the Testing Ground Agreement for flexible mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, signed by the CBSS Members States in 2003 (however, one country’s final signature is still pending). A Special BASREC Handbook on the Testing Ground for Joint Implementation of projects and Climate cooperation was issued in 2002, and recently was revised as a 3rd edition.

This year Latvia, among others, would focus its activities on promoting renewable energy sources, on developing competitive and free energy market, as well as on coordinating positions of the Member States towards legislative activities of the European Commission. After having studied the Programme of the UBC Commission on Energy, I arrived at a conclusion that the Energy agendas of Governments and Cities have a lot in common, which makes both the BASREC and the UBC Commission natural partners in addressing regional energy challenges.

Civil Security (to promote democratic values and human rights, stability, social security and sustainability);

Efforts in the field of Civil Security will be directed towards developing useful co-operational ties with various stakeholders in the Region (public institutions and NGOs) to support the work of the specialised CBSS working bodies in combating trafficking of human beings and helping children at risk.

Protection of the Baltic Sea sensitive environment will also be high on the agenda. In this connection, we took note of an initiative by two Finnish cities – Helsinki and Turku to improve the state of the Baltic Sea. We fully support this local undertaking and we hope that it would supplement efforts of other “environmental” stakeholders in tackling this problem on a wider scale.

I would like to mention here the "Gotland Initiative" launched by the CBSS in August 2006 and the work of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group on Eutrophication. We also hope that the outcome of the CBSS High-Level meeting on environment and agriculture, held in Stockholm last April, would be taken into account, let alone the HELCOM's draft Baltic Sea Action Plan to be adopted this November in Krakow (Poland).

Relationship with other structures and organisations: The CBSS and the UBC have a well-established and structured cooperation developed over the recent past. It is not only cross-invitations that we benefit from in our bilateral relationship, but also practical cooperation between respective working structures is worthwhile mentioning. I am pleased to recall a series of joint activities between the UBC Commission on Information Society and the former CBSS Group of Senior Officials on Information Society held in the past. This is one of the examples, how the working structure should close in to each other during their daily activities.

The CBSS continues to develop cooperation with its Strategic Partners and Special Participants, hence also of the UBC. The forms and content of interaction with our partner organisations in the Region would be the core theme of our annual consultations with the CBSS Special Participants and Strategic Partners in December 2007, tentatively in Copenhagen. We would invite our partners, including, of course, the UBC to re-examine our current scheme of relationship with the view to identify more effective tools of practical and hands-on cooperation for the future.

In this context, I would like point out two issues that need to be addressed jointly with our partner organisations: 1) developing stronger links with the EU, namely, the European Commission and 2) identifying our role and place within the new Northern Dimension policy framework.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to give my statement. I am looking forward to a result-oriented cooperation between the UBC and the CBSS.

Thank you for your attention!

Mr Alan Lloyd

Vice-President of the Bureau of the Congress of Local & Regional
Authorities of the Council of Europe

Mr Mayor, Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear colleagues,

It is an honour for me to address the Conference of the Union of Baltic Cities on behalf of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and I wish to express my gratitude to all organisers and the Estonian authorities in particular for giving me this opportunity – and the opportunity to visit the beautiful seaside city of Pärnu, the summer capital of Estonia, albeit in the first week of autumn.

It is also my pleasure to speak to you today because the Union of Baltic Cities has been a long-standing active partner of the Congress with which it enjoys observer status, and I am sure that our common

efforts to consolidate territorial democracy and cooperation in the Baltic Sea area will only be increased in the future.

In fact, the importance of joint activities in this region has just been stressed once again at a conference on cooperation in the Baltic Sea area and the High North, organised by the Congress on 3 July this year in Tromsø, Norway. The conference participants pointed out, in particular, that cooperation in the Baltic region could serve as an example to be followed in other areas where there have previously been conflicts or tensions.

There are many fields where initiatives brought about by local and regional authorities in the Baltic area could be of great benefit to our citizens: environmental protection, transport and infrastructure, coastal management, inter-cultural exchange, as well as involving young people in transborder cooperation, to mention but a few. It is heartening to see that the themes chosen for this conference – climate change, culture as driving force for municipal development, and involvement of youth in democracy – reflect the same approach within the Union of Baltic Cities.

These themes are also priority areas for action by the Congress and its Committees on Sustainable Development and on Culture and Education. We have been actively working for quite some time on the issue of climate change and the importance of action at local and regional level in coping with it. Just two weeks ago, our Committee on Sustainable Development held a workshop on adaptation to climate change, which stressed the need for territorial authorities to evaluate their vulnerability and reinforce their capacity to adapt in order to develop strategies and preventative measures.

The role of culture for municipal development, and the question of involving young people in democratic processes have been high on the agenda of our Committee on Culture and Education. The concrete result of its work is the Revised European Charter on Youth Participation, which proposes a framework for enhancing young people's involvement in political life at local and regional level.

Among some of the more recent initiatives of the Congress is the creation of Euro-regions of a new type, aimed at building bridges between local and regional authorities of both European Union and non-European Union countries bordering on European semi-closed seas, and to involve national authorities in their initiatives. The Adriatic Euro-region is already operation, the Black Sea Euro-region is in the pipeline, and reflection has been given to the setting up of a Euro-region in the Baltic Sea area. The Congress is actively pursuing this reflection process, which, we are sure, will receive a new impetus under the Swedish Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers beginning of May 2008.

Indeed, we see many possibilities for synergies between the Congress' Euro-regions and the Baltic Sea organisations. The Congress can clearly benefit, for its future activities, from the experiences brought about by regional organisations of the northern part of Europe, while providing a platform for networking Euroregional and regional organisations, at least in the Baltic area. It goes without saying that cities, and their organisations such as the Union of the Baltic Cities, have an important role to play in boosting intermunicipal cooperation within these Euro-regions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is clear that what we are witnessing today is the growing importance of the cities against the background of the devolution of power towards territorial level, coupled with the transfer of competences and financial means from central authorities. I could mention such a new phenomenon as City Diplomacy – the direct involvement of cities in action for peace and democracy, in developing networks such as Cities for Children, Cities for Human Rights, Cities for Peace.

This comes as no surprise because local authorities are at the forefront of facing today's problems and challenges or dealing with their consequences, from threats to the environment or access to social rights or integration of migrants to combating trafficking in human beings or domestic violence. All these

phenomena are taking place in our cities, places where our citizens live, making municipal authorities the first line of defence of people's rights and the first line of action for their benefit.

I am sure that organisations such as the Union of the Baltic Cities will take an active part in these many initiatives which I have just described and which receive full support of the Council of Europe Congress. For its part, the Congress stands ready to provide its expertise and to pool the resources of the organisations such as yours for our common action.

I would like to conclude by stressing once again the need for synergies between such institutions and organisations as ours, the need to join and increase our efforts in order to succeed in making the Baltic Sea area a region of sustainable communities for our fellow Europeans.

I wish your conference every success.

Thank you.

Mr Uno Aldegren
President of the Relex Commission, Committee of the Regions

Your Excellencies, Dear friends and colleagues,

It is really with great pleasure and honour that I participate today at this General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities and I would like to particularly thank the Union for having invited the Committee of the Regions to share this day with you all and to enjoy the unique atmosphere of this beautiful city of Pärnu. I would like to greet all participants in the name of the President of the Committee of the Regions, Mr. Delebarre, to whom I have the pleasure of representing here today.

As Chairman of the Committee of the Regions Commission for External Relations and Decentralised Cooperation, I would first like to start my intervention with a brief introduction to the Committee of the Regions of the EU and to present the work of the Committee related to climate change and Northern Dimension.

As you all may know, the European Committee of the Regions is a political assembly of the European Union, representing local and regional government.

We are one of the Consultative Bodies of the European Union, with the key role of advising the European Parliament, Council and the European Commission over the drafting of EU legislation, taking into account that over three quarters of EU laws are implemented at local or regional level, being the main objective to give local and regional government a voice at the heart of the European Union, and this way, bringing Europe closer to its citizens and encouraging a culture of subsidiarity.

The Committee of the Regions has 344 members appointed for a four-year term by the Council, acting on proposals from the member states. Each country chooses its members reflecting the political, geographical and regional/local balance in their member state, as well as a close democracy and the community framework to exercise multilevel governance.

But, let us now turn our attention to the work that we have ahead of us today.

The purpose of us gathering here today is to discuss the climate change from a regional perspective and, in order to get the most out of this meeting, I would like to focus at the position of the Committee of the Regions regarding the climate change and the environmental protection from a regional perspective.

Nowadays there is a growing concern amongst European regions, especially amongst the more vulnerable ones and we have learnt that some of the most prepared regions have already undertaken adaptation and limitation plans.

At this stage we do need to insist on the importance of inter-regional cooperation for transferring knowledge and best practices, at Forums at the one that gathers us here today, so that Regions can contribute to curbing national greenhouse gas emissions and improve overall environmental performance and compliance with Kyoto requirements.

A recent study commissioned by the European Commission reveals that climate change will have unprecedented consequences on employment in various sectors of Europe's economy. However, global warming will also create business opportunities in sectors such as transport and construction. Sectors likely to be affected are:

- Primary sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, due to a decrease in production yields.
- Tourism, due to a change in the distribution of tourists across Europe and across the seasons.
- Insurance and finance, due to increased losses in relation to increases in damage claims.
- Health, due to an increase in extreme events.
- Infrastructure, due to an increase in sea levels.

Due to the crucial actuality of it, currently the Committee of the Regions is putting climate change high on its working agenda and next October 2007 the Committee will adopt the following Opinions:

1. An Opinion on the Communication from the Commission "Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius - The way ahead for 2020 and beyond" that includes the following key political messages:

- The CoR urges the Commission to increase its efforts at the highest political level to boost the international coalition against climate change since climate change can only be tackled if all (major) countries contribute;
- Recommends the use of European Structural Funds and the European Cohesion Fund as useful means to assist regions facing relatively high adaptation or mitigation costs. This would increase support for European climate policy in these regions;
- Agrees with the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament that the European Union should pursue high unilateral targets given that leadership is needed to create a global coalition against climate change.
- Will assume its responsibility by strongly encouraging the implementation of these kinds of measures at regional and local level through three types of action: improving the dissemination of knowledge on cost-effective climate measures; encouraging cooperation between EU regions; encouraging cooperation between EU regions and regions in other parts of the world, such as in the United States, China and India, partly by intensifying already existing relationships between these regions.

2. An Opinion on the Energy Package with the following key political messages:

- The CoR believes that energy policy and climate protection policy are closely interrelated and must be coordinated, given that 80% of CO₂ emissions in Europe come from the production of energy.
- Supports the targets of improving energy efficiency by 20% by 2020, and raising the share of renewable energy to 20% by 2020.
- Supports the binding target of 20% of total energy consumption coming from renewable sources by 2020;
- Points out that many measures are implemented at regional and local level and contribute to the success of the European initiative: regional development taking into account energy aspects as incentive programmes for energy efficiency measures; and incentive programmes for renewable energy sources; etc.

With the renewal of the Northern Dimension policy as an important tool to enhance cross-border cooperation and, more concretely, within the context of the Baltic Sea Cooperation, the RELEX Commission, on 21 November 2006, adopted a Political Declaration on "Cross-border co-operation in the Northern Regions of Europe" which stress, and please allow me to mention literally, "the importance of mutual trust and long-term vision in the exploration of natural resources in the fragile areas of the Northern regions of Europe; a common strategy, that balances economic growth with responsible management of natural resources should be encouraged" and it also stress "that social and economic development should be based on the principle of sustainability and that local and regional authorities have a key role in ensuring environmental protection of the Northern regions of the EU as elsewhere".

Finally I would like to conclude, remembering that, very recently, on 19 September, at the Committee of the Regions we hosted a very important Round Table on European Union - Russia cooperation at local and regional level in the context of the new Northern Dimension Policy, where one of the main subjects debated was the environmental protection and the possibilities of concrete cooperation.

Last but not least; I do not want to forget to mention here, being this one of the main topics of today's debate, the fact that we, at the Committee of the Regions, we do support intercultural dialogue and youth exchange programmes and we have a very close collaboration with the academic bodies. And, at this point, I allow myself to mention again the Saariselka Declaration adopted, on November 2006, by the External Relations Commission of the European Regions Committee, which recalls "that local and regional authorities can be a motor for cooperation in research programmes and for exchanges in the fields of education and training that are key elements for economic growth and social development"

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: we have a lot of work ahead of us and I do not want to keep us further from our important business! Let us seize the opportunity of today to work together, to exchange ideas and best practices and to demonstrate the full potential of this meeting.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Toivo Klaar

Head of the European Commission Representation in Estonia

Mr/Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This summer the North-West Passage shipping route between Europe and Asia through the Arctic has become navigable for the first time since records began. The area covered by Arctic sea ice has shrunk to the smallest ever seen.

For commercial shipping this may seem like good news, but the wider implications for our planet are anything but positive. The Arctic is literally starting to melt. There can few more dramatic – or more worrying - indicators that the climate on Earth is changing.

I am grateful to the Union of Baltic Cities for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the European Commission about this very grave threat to our collective economic prosperity, our social stability and, indeed, our individual physical safety.

The global temperature is three-quarters of a degree Celsius warmer today on average than in 1850, and this trend is accelerating. In Europe the temperature has increased by almost a full degree, and the Arctic has warmed even more - by twice the global average,

Unless the international community takes urgent action to cut emissions sharply, there is a very real danger over the coming decades that climate change will transform the face of our planet, wreck our economies and put tens of millions of people at risk

As home to half of the world's population – and 80% of Europe's – cities are on the front line of climate change. They are both the main engine rooms of greenhouse gas emissions and the places where many of the human and economic impacts of climate change will be felt most widely.

The world's leading scientists are projecting that the global average temperature is most likely to rise this century by a further 1.8 to 4 degrees Celsius if we do nothing to curb emissions. In the worst case the increase could be as much as 6.4 degrees.

But the latest science also warns us that the risk of irreversible and possibly catastrophic global changes will become much greater if the temperature rise goes beyond two degrees above the pre-industrial level.

The good news is that we still have a good chance of preventing global warming from reaching this tipping point if the world acts rapidly and decisively.

The European Union is determined to ensure that it does.

Europe has been leading the international fight against climate change since the early 1990s and we continue to do so.

The EU and member states have implemented a battery of measures to achieve our collective or individual targets for reducing emissions under the Kyoto Protocol.

Without doubt the most significant and innovative measure developed at EU level has been our Emissions Trading Scheme, which is driving the expansion of a global market for cutting carbon emissions cost-effectively.

The modest cuts in developed countries' emissions that are required by the Kyoto Protocol are a necessary first step, but now much bolder action is needed.

That is why the European Union is pressing hard for negotiations to start on an ambitious new United Nations climate agreement to take effect in 2012 when Kyoto's first commitment period ends. Time is short, so it is imperative that these negotiations are launched at the next UN climate conference this coming December in Bali.

The science is clear about what needs to be done if we are to have a chance of stabilising global warming at 2 degrees or less. Worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases have to stop rising within the next 10 years or so, and by 2050 they must be cut to half of their 1990 levels.

This is an enormous challenge, but it is feasible technologically and it is affordable. And early action to control climate change will be far cheaper than doing nothing and paying the disastrous consequences later.

Shifting to a low-emissions global economy, as we must do, is also a huge opportunity for the innovators who will develop the technological solutions we need. European businesses must seize the moment.

The industrialised world has a duty to take the lead in cutting emissions since it is we who are very largely responsible for the climate change that is happening now. But it is also essential that the more

advanced developing countries like China and India start slowing their emissions growth. There can be no effective solution to climate change without them.

To bring global emissions under control, the EU is proposing that developed countries commit under a new agreement to cut their collective emissions to 30% below 1990 levels by 2020. We are ready to do this provided that other developed countries agree to shoulder their fair share of the global effort. However, not all of our partners are prepared to do so yet, and we will have to work hard over the coming months to convince them.

To underline our determination to get serious global action, the EU has committed to cutting our emissions by at least 20% by 2020 regardless of what other countries decide to do.

To achieve this reduction, EU leaders have endorsed an integrated climate and energy strategy that the European Commission unveiled last January. The strategy exploits synergies to create 'win-win-win' opportunities. Besides cutting greenhouse gas emissions, it will also strengthen the EU's energy security and competitiveness.

The strategy sets three important energy-related targets to be met by 2020.

- We will improve our energy efficiency by 20%.
- We will increase the share of renewable energy in electricity consumption to 20%.
- And we will raise the share of biofuels in petrol and diesel to 10%, provided that sustainably produced 'second generation' biofuels from non-food sources become commercially available.

In December the Commission will be following up this strategy with a set of legislative proposals to implement it, including how the targets for cutting emissions and increasing renewables should be shared out among member states.

The package will also include proposals for strengthening the Emissions Trading Scheme, the cornerstone of our climate change strategy, to make it more effective. As you probably know, we have already proposed expanding the scheme to include emissions from aviation with effect from 2011.

These initiatives will of course need to be implemented at the national level. But winning the battle against climate change requires more than a top-down approach. Action is needed at all levels of governance, from the local level upwards.

Cities are thus key players in this challenge. Their use of energy – for instance in transport systems, local industry, heating and cooling - is a major source of greenhouse gases.

Some of the EU measures I have mentioned will help to reduce emissions in urban areas. But there is much else that cities can do - and in some cases are doing – in line with their local circumstances. This afternoon's workshop will be a useful opportunity to explore these possibilities.

Moreover, a range of EU mechanisms is available to support local efforts. These include the Structural Funds, the Intelligent Energy programme, the LIFE+ fund and the Civitas initiative on sustainable urban transport. I am glad to say Tallinn is participating in Civitas.

Civil society and ordinary citizens also have a crucial contribution to make to the battle against climate change. The local level is important in this regard as well because it is often here that people can have the greatest impact on policy decisions.

Since the middle of last year the Commission has been running a major campaign to raise public awareness of what we as individuals can all do to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The 'You control climate change' campaign is built around a very comprehensive website that is full of practical information and available in all EU languages. I strongly recommend visiting it if you have not already done so.

Mr/Madam Chairman,

Sharply cutting emissions of greenhouse gases is the first way in which we must tackle climate change.

But there is also a second and complementary approach that we must embrace now that climate change is clearly happening. This is to adapt to it.

Let me explain briefly before I end.

By finding ways to adapt to today's changes and by anticipating tomorrow's, we can substantially reduce the adverse impacts of climate change and its costs. Much of this adaptation effort will need to be done at the regional, local or even individual level.

Around the Mediterranean, for instance, local and regional authorities will have to prepare for more frequent heatwaves and greater water scarcity. These changes have major implications for sectors like healthcare, electricity production, tourism, agriculture and forestry, as well as for people's daily lives.

Here in the Baltic region, by contrast, we need to be ready for more rain and snow. This could increase the risk of winter flooding, but it could also boost the hydro-power sector. Agriculture must prepare to cope with new pests and diseases: just this summer blue-tongue disease, a virus that can kill livestock, has spread from Africa into much of northern Europe.

It is also essential that we help developing countries to adapt to climate change. Geographically and economically, they are among the most vulnerable to changes in climate, yet they are also the least able to cope financially.

To raise awareness of the importance of adaptation for Europe, and to stimulate a debate on priority actions, the Commission published a Green Paper at the end of June.

I would urge you all to contribute to the public consultation that runs until November. This process includes four stakeholder workshops around Europe, the first of which is taking place in Helsinki today and tomorrow. The consultation will help us to formulate concrete policy directions in a White Paper at the end of next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Commission and EU member states are in no doubt about the seriousness of the threat that climate change poses.

Through leadership and the example of our own actions we are determined to persuade our partners to contribute to the deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions that are urgently needed.

At the same time Europe must start adapting to the climate change that is already under way in order to limit its impacts.

On both of these fronts, what is achieved in cities will be crucial to our success.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Xosé A. Sánchez Bugallo
President of the Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities

Good morning:

It is a great honour for me to stand here today as the President of the Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities, accepting your kind invitation to this conference.

First of all, I must say that you are a model of cross-border cooperation for the Atlantic regions and cities, which we would like to emulate in many respects. The countries that surround the Baltic Sea, a region that has experienced numerous exchanges over the course of history, count on important levels of cultural, commercial and economic cooperation amongst their traditions. Participating in this forum gives us the opportunity to understand in detail the policies that the UBC has developed successfully over the course of more than a decade, and that have been conceived intelligently from the perspective of sustainable development, applied across all the areas of work.

We are interested in transferring the experiences of the Baltic States to our territory. The maritime basin of the Atlantic Arc is not bereft of advantages; we count on the proximity of a large, open ocean that for centuries has given form to modes of life and landscapes that, although different on certain points of the façade, have a lot in common. The territorial diagnostics and other available studies show that an Atlantic reality exists, although it is diverse.

The Atlantic Arc is characterised as being a relatively protected area, a mark of life that is still preserved and attractive. The cities that make up this area, for their size and population density, as well as their recent, but real, political will to protect the environment and natural resources, contribute in offering a quality of life that is amongst the best in Europe and is capable of attracting tourists and investors.

However, we must not forget that, as happens in other places, our natural heritage is subject to strong demographic and economic pressure that must be reconciled with numerous natural adversities, such as the climate, or external ones, such as pollution. In line with the aims of Lisbon and Gothenburg, we have established the aim of protecting and valuing the enormous potential riches of the Atlantic area, and which are largely unexplored.

We are currently trying to develop a project whose main aim is to make the Atlantic Arc into an area of excellence in the field of applying sustainable development, thanks to the tools that investigation, innovation and new technologies can offer us. We hope to put into place a local Agenda 21 programme, which will make preservation a developing factor, and which should be carried out in an organised manner with other levels of government.

Although the European Union and the individual States play a role in the definition and promotion of policies of territorial organisation, the level of government appropriate for applying the aims of sustainable development, is the local one. With 80% of Europeans living in urban areas, the cities are key in sustainable development. We local administrations are the largest entity capable of correcting from the start the social, economic, political and environmental problems that are harming the modern world.

The application of these sustainable development principles would mean reconsidering the whole of our local policies, such as policies on housing, urban transport, water supply, waste management, renewable energy, integral management of coastal areas, and also the rehabilitation of poorer areas or urban areas in disuse, the promotion of the active participation of the population, social integration and access to basic services.

Undoubtedly, these ideas are well known to you, as you are reaping the benefits of the application of sustainable policies. Your experience is very valuable to us; for this reason, we have accepted the invitation from the Union of Baltic Cities.

We are particularly interested in the main role that your cities have played in the Baltic area. Unlike other cooperation programmes, where the States and the Regions are in control, the Baltic cities have managed to lead important actions that count on the support of the higher governmental entities that collaborate and co-finance these initiatives. As I said earlier, from the Atlantic Arc we consider that this working dynamic is basic in order to achieve our aims, because although only the governors of a city can know the needs of their citizens, the actions that we hope to develop cannot be carried out without the support of the States and the European Union.

We are also interested in knowing what processes have been followed in order to implant the model of a territorial agenda 21 in an area like the Baltic, made up of such different realities. We find it striking the fact that you have been able to put together projects of such magnitude, overcoming those obstacles derived from being different countries and even from having different economic or ideological backgrounds.

We imagine that all of this would not have been possible if you did not have a strong European vocation and a feeling of belonging to a special and characteristic territory within Europe, which is the Baltic. In this sense, the Atlantic Arc, as an area with a strong multicultural heritage, puts great store in the value of culture in awakening this same sense of belonging in the citizens of the Atlantic.

We are working on a project that will attempt to develop a travelling exhibition that will visit all the cities of the Arc. The theme will be on the points of union between the societies that make up the Atlantic Area. All of them have in common the fact that they have travelled the seas in order to discover a new world. For this reason, they have contributed to opening Europe up to the world, in forming a European identity and also, over the course of history, to the formation of the ideas of the Western World.

We consider that this initiative will contribute to the development of an Atlantic conscience in our citizens that they will actively participate in the activities that their cities develop and will participate effectively in the real implementation of the local Agenda 21 from their role as main users of our natural heritage and resources.

The exhibition is part of a project that the Culture and Heritage Commission is developing, currently lead by the city of Lisbon, and which attempts to promote and protect our identity through an integrated policy of culture.

The Atlantic Arc has four work groups. The Transport and Access group, lead by Nantes, follows especially the work from the EU related to the Green Book on urban transport.

The Atlantic Arc also counts on a work group centred on Urban Development and Port Cities, lead by Coventry and Brest. This commission is attempting to rehabilitate the city centres and plan maritime security on the Atlantic Coast, following the guidelines laid down in the Green Book in June 2006 by the European Union, and which set out the challenge of achieving an innovative and competitive maritime industry which respects the environment and with the same quality of life for the coastal regions.

For its part, the Commission on Economic Development, lead by San Sebastian, works on promoting regional competition through projects in investigation, technological development, innovation and urban clusters, in connection with the strategy outlined in the Lisbon summit.

Finally, the city of Santiago de Compostela, as the president of the Conference, leads the Policy and Strategy Commission. As President and coordinator of this group, I propose guiding firmly a political project that achieves territorial cohesion in the Atlantic Arch and reinforces our identity.

We are convinced that we can contribute to the real implementation of sustainable criteria, destined to improving the management of resources and the quality of life of the inhabitants of the cities in the Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities, and to use all the tools available to us to change the logic of development and turn ourselves into champions of the struggle against climate change.

Your collaboration in terms of sharing technology and experiences may be key to successfully developing a plan for a future sustainable Atlantic. Thank you in advance for your time and help. I can only add that the Atlantic Arc is at your service in whatever matters we are able to help with.

Thank you.

Mr Michel Sudarskis
Secretary General of International Urban Development Association INTA
On behalf of Mr Joe Montgomery, President of INTA

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Culture, inscribed in our build environment, is one of our greatest national as well as world resources. From prehistoric monuments to great contemporary architecture, from temples, medieval cities and many civic buildings to production sites, from fishing villages to towns of the Industrial Revolution, it is a uniquely rich and precious inheritance.

But it is about more than bricks and mortar. It embraces the landscape as a whole, both urban and rural, and the water and maritime environment. It shows us how our own forebears lived. It embodies the history of all the communities who have made their home in their host countries. It is part of the wider public realm in which we can all participate.

The contemporary contribution of culture to economic development increasingly acts as a catalyst for other activities to further develop through territorial clusters. It also demonstrates the power of culture as a tool for the social integration of distressed people and communities, thus contributing to social cohesion.

The traditional notion of culture has been expanded to new dimensions (creative and cultural industries) and new applications (cultural and creativity districts). Apart from the conventional package of cultural activities (live performances, plastic arts and architectural heritage, cinema) and the now-traditional notion of cultural industries (audiovisual productions, records and disks, books), Culture has become a source of growth and cohesion.

This cultural environment is something from which we can learn, something from which our economy benefits and something which can bring communities together in a shared sense of belonging. With sensitivity and imagination, it can be a stimulus to creative new architecture and design, a force for regeneration and a powerful contributor to people's quality of life.

But this environment is fragile. A complex web of relationships has to be established between the many national and local bodies that care for the treasures of the past and make them accessible to millions of people from home and abroad.

Your debate, at the occasion of the IX UBC General Conference, takes place at a time when the public's enthusiasm for the past is increasingly evident, not least in the strong media focus on heritage and history.

New, more creative approaches are being used to present historic sites and buildings to visitors and to engage a wider audience. Heritage continues to be a massive draw for tourists. Each city of the UBC can testify to this success. As such it makes a major contribution to the economy and underpins huge numbers of jobs, importantly in rural and less favoured communities as well as in traditional economic centres.

This is why INTA is involved in these issues and will continue to exchange experiences and practices on these critical sectors to the benefit of the urban communities.

There is, however, much more to be done.

Indeed, this sector can be regarded as something still to value both in cultural and economic terms. We need to find new ways of reaching and empowering excluded individuals and communities. We need to develop new policies to realise economic and educational potential through modernised structures and improved service delivery. Achieving these objectives involves the use of many different policy instruments: funding; legislation; policy guidance; delivery mechanisms; reprioritisation and partnership working.

I hope your Conference in Pärnu makes proposals to enable organisations to work better together and statutory regimes to operate more effectively that can over time deliver more attractive towns and cities, world-class tourist attractions, new jobs and learning, vibrant and self-confident communities.

I strongly support an agenda enhancing our historic environment's contribution to education, both within school curriculum and through lifelong learning, and of replenishing essential conservation skills. This agenda responds to people's desire to broaden the definition of what should be valued and champions: the role of historic assets in the development and regeneration processes and as a focus for community cohesion.

This is what I believe the cultural dimension of our cities can contribute to contemporary life. This is why we must continue to protect and sustain it, both for our own benefit and that of future generations.