



*(Draft as of 25-September)*

8<sup>th</sup> VASAB Conference of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region, Tallinn, Estonia 25-26 September 2014

**Statement from the Union of the Baltic Cities**

Given by Mr. Risto Veivo, Co-chair of UBC Commission on Environment

Your Excellencies, Dear Conference Participants and Organizers,

VASAB and UBC have a good and strong history of cooperation. VASAB has been very successful in analyzing the development challenges of Baltic Sea region and - based on this - shaping efficient strategies. UBC has been instrumental in implementing such strategies by connecting and mobilizing the cities. We have created many successful projects on warranted actions for the urban areas.

Against this history of successful and complementary cooperation, it is a special pleasure for the UBC to congratulate VASAB on the twentieth anniversary of its first common strategic document “Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010”. We do know – by now – that many of the ideas in that document have been implemented. It has been also our pleasure and responsibility to contribute to this process.

The history of VASAB has been a successful one. Also the future of Baltic Sea region development will benefit from the pro-active intellectual work of VASAB.

Many of the objectives and themes of VASAB Long-Term Perspective are also at the core of UBC’s strategy, which creates an excellent basis for continuation of our successful cooperation.

UBC’s membership of one hundred cities includes many coastal ones. This gives us a strong reason to contribute with targeted activities also to the implementation of the Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2013 – 2020 with new projects addressing the Baltic Sea, maritime activities and planning from the urban perspective. City of Turku, will host in May 2015 the European Maritime Day Conference, which will also provide an excellent forum for debate on these topics.



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The UBC and its members are committed to sustainable development and have implemented practical steps as outlined in the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 - 2015. The program has been successful with many resultful projects and a total implemented budget of over 50 million euros. One of these projects was New Bridges, which will be followed up by other large projects addressing urban-rural interaction and governance issues within functional urban areas.

We are now preparing our new programme, tentatively called "Sustainable Baltic Cities 2020", for adoption at UBC General Conference in autumn 2015. Topics preliminarily discussed include among others green urban economies, climate-smart cities and partnerships for knowledge-based development. We have had many good examples of new partnerships with universities and businesses during the recent years. This has further strengthened our understanding on how successful cities are best co-created with stakeholders.

In order to co-create our program, we warmly welcome VASAB and other BSR partners to shape our programme for Baltic Cities together with us. We will organise specific events for this purpose.

Dear Partners of Baltic Sea regional development, the need and interest for BSR cooperation is as relevant as ever. The Baltic Sea Days and Baltic Development Forum Summit in Turku in June this year gathered more participants than ever before. We have also observed a great interest towards new joint programmes and projects within the UBC.

As outlined in our strategy, Union of the Baltic Cities wants to see a dynamic, prosperous, democratic and stable European Baltic Sea Region in successful and sustainable economic, political, social, environmental and cultural development process, moving towards closer cooperation and integration. Let us keep moving to this end together and continue to complement and strengthen each other's approaches!