

## **“Baltic Sea Fisheries: Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives”**

The aim and focus of the conference and  
a historical perspective to the Baltic Sea

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Mr Chairman, Commissioner, Ministers, Distinguished participants,  
Dear Friends !

It is great honor for me to moderate this important Conference and I will do my very best to do it smoothly and effectively. Considering loaded program and the need to secure sufficient time for discussion I strongly appeal to all distinguished speakers to stick to the time given. I will let you know 1 minute before the end of your time to summarize your presentation. I am really counting on your understanding and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start with following words:

- Bearing in mind that maximum and stable productivity of the living resources of the Baltic Sea and the Belts is of great importance to the states of the Baltic Sea basin ,
- Recognizing their joint responsibility for the conservation of the living resources and their rational exploitation ,
- Being convinced that the conservation of the living resources of the Baltic Sea and the Belts calls for closer and more expanded cooperation in this region ,

Have agreed as follows:

Can you tell from which document these I am sure still valid words are coming from?

Yes , you are right this text is coming from the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea

and the Belts (the Gdansk Convention) which was signed on the 13 September 1973 and entered into force in 1974 . Pursuant to Article V of this Convention the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission was established.

For those much younger than myself I would like to remind that it was the time of great political and economical differences, something called the “Iron curtain” still existed, Berlin Wall was in place dividing Germany, nobody heard of Lech Walesa and traveling within Europe required passport and time consuming visas..

Despite these obstacles however, those responsible for the Baltic fisheries understood that fish is not respecting curtains or walls, does not need passports and visas to move around and in fact is our common treasure, common for all the Baltic States. If so then in the sake of our own interest we shall cooperate . The International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission formed platform and vehicle for such cooperation.

It is not my intention to evaluate achievements and failures of the IBSFC. It, in my subjective view, this Commission performed not better nor worse than any other regional fisheries management organizations and was faced with many similar problems. However I wish to emphasize that it was **our** regional organization. It allowed for meetings of administrators and representative of fishing sector from member states, both for formal negotiation and free and informal talks. They were a little bit stiff and cold at the beginning but with time when we know ourselves better it changed to become open and friendly. discussions, and negotiations were conducted at working groups and plenary sessions in which everybody could participate. Though decisive voice was with government representatives, the representatives of the sector could follow the discussion and decision making process. Thus the process was quite transparent. With time however this transparency started to diminish. With introduction of the Common Fisheries Policy EU Members States disappear from the table taking seats behind the European Commission. Real negotiations started to be taken not at the plenary but at the head of delegations meetings, with other stakeholders waiting for hours just to hear the final sentence. It becomes clear that decision process lost its transparency.

In addition deterioration of some stocks, in particular cod led to gradual reduction of available quotas, which on one hand were established higher than recommended by ICES but on the other hand it was clear that data provided to ICES and IBSFC by Member States were often far from real. This resulted in lost credibility of science and its advice as well as administrative decisions based on this advice. As result of this, significant expansion of IUU fishing in the Baltic took place with culmination of the problem in years 2005-2007. It was BS RAC, together with the Danish Ministry of Food, Fisheries and Agriculture who finally decided to address the problem and called for the special conference to combat IUU fishing in the Baltic and built culture of compliance. Further action by the European Commission in the region brought positive results and we can say that problem of unreported catches in the Baltic Sea has been dramatically reduced. This does not mean that further efforts to strengthen culture of compliance are not required.

Like in many Regional Management Organization also IBSFC had problem with long term vision. TACs fluctuated and were political. Though justified technical measures were introduced it was done at the short notice often taking fishing sector by surprise and forcing them to replace gear used within months, which resulted in economic loses. Only at the end of its life of the Commission long term view started to emerge. Salmon Action Plan was elaborated and successfully implemented, basic steps in preparation of long term management plan for cod were taken. But the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission sized to exist, informally in 2005 with its last session in Visby and quite formally in 2007. It was replaced with bilateral agreement EC-Russia.

Though my words about IBSFC are critical I have to admit that this regional fisheries commission was quite unique among the other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations. It consisted members from different political and economical systems, which have to give up jurisdiction over natural resources in their Exclusive Economic Zones. This indicates clearly strong will for regional cooperation, and the Commission provided required platform for such cooperation, which unfortunately at the later stage become less and less effective.

Management of fisheries to be efficient requires:

- Openness and transparency.
- Management decision based on solid science and reliable data.
- Fishing capacity matching available resources.
- Efficient compliance with regulations in force

With all these elements Commission had problems .

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are some failures from the past, which today I am convinced are our real asset, because we know what was wrong. We are here in Sweden from where the very first impulse for regional cooperation as early as 70. was sent. It was Sweden who started process which resulted in the Gdańsk Convention and creation of the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission. To day we are here again to discuss something which I am sure we all around the Baltic are badly missing – regional cooperation. Meeting old friends from fisheries administration, fishermen, scientists and environmentalists together to discuss our own business and searching ways how to do it in the most responsible, efficient and transparent way. We know that this can not be done **well** in Brussels, Luxemburg or Strasburg. We went through it with all our frustrations. Now we have chance to change it. The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is giving us exceptional possibilities to make our future better. Creation of Regional Advisory Councils under present Common Fisheries Policy was a very important and good step forward. Question is ? is it enough or do we need something more to make regional cooperation really effective? Should it be a new RAC or other technical body ? How to ensure that our regional views be strong enough to convince and influence the European Commission decisions. This is intention of this Conference to use our best knowledge and experience to propose necessary changes to new CFP, to make it more our policy instead Brussels policy only.

It is not an easy task, therefore BS RAC and Swedish Presidency invited top speakers who will give us their views on changes required and how our interest and future of Baltic fisheries could/should be incorporated and secured in new Common Fisheries Policy. I am

pleased to see here so many representative of fishing sector and other stakeholders and I am counting on your strong voice and advice during discussion. It is very rare occasion to have at one place so many top level decision making persons on which the future of the Baltic fisheries depends. Let us do not to miss this opportunity.

Finally before concluding I would like to make it very clear that my critical words about IBSFC do not refer to the performance of the Secretariat. We were lucky to have excellent Secretaries as well Secretariats staff. However performance of the organization depends on its members , their responsible commitments and effective activities and this is also valid experience for our future.

Thanks for your attention.