

***What is next after VASAB 2010 and VASAB LTP – a message from the side event
“20 Years after VASAB 2010” of 25 September 2014***

Mr Wilfried Görmar, VASAB CSPD/BSR member
Tallinn, 26 September 2014

Dear Chairman,

Dear Ministers and heads of delegations

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was asked to summarize some messages from our “VASAB pioneers” who gathered yesterday and I do this with great pleasure. First of all, I would like to thank the Estonian host and VASAB-Secretariat for preparing that event.

It was interesting to see that our pioneers have further fresh and inspiring ideas. No wonder, they went through the “VASAB school”. I have got the impression: Although our former colleagues and VASAB pioneers are not responsible anymore for any VASAB activities, they still feel committed to our work and provided valuable inputs to our way ahead.

From my observation, there was a strong confirmation of both, the priorities of our future work and the way we are working. Moreover, there were reflections on conditions and impacts of VASAB work.

Firstly, it was underlined to continue working on vision, strategies and spatial concepts as that provides an excellent framework for other actors in the Baltic Sea Region. Polish participants communicated a respective message of the MEP and former EU Commissioner Danuta Hübner. The meeting underlined the focus on territorial cohesion as well as the strong focus on promotion of maritime spatial planning to make the Baltic Sea Region a forerunner in that respect. Here, VASAB should also make use of existing policies and legislation such as EU Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning.

While keeping the focus of work, it should be discussed more intensively with

- Regional and local authorities in order to receive feedback on developments at the ground,
- Sectoral institutions and the business sector in order to better understand their policy and to follow-up also economic developments,
- Scientists as they are allies concerning regional analysis and forecasts as well as education and training of future spatial planners.

Secondly, in view of the challenges of demographic and climate change, accessibility and connectivity, urban-rural cooperation and partnership as well as energy solutions and their territorial conditions and consequences should remain important issues on our agenda.

Thirdly, VASAB involvement in implementing the existing macroregional strategies in the Baltic Sea Region will promote integration and a balanced territorial development with the help of all actors around the Baltic Sea. Swedish participants highlighted the role of VASAB concepts for the preparation of macroregional strategies.

The VASAB pioneers liked also the way VASAB works now:

- Combining visions and strategies with concrete actions and projects especially transnational INTERREG projects.
- Monitoring territorial development in the Baltic Sea Region in order to pinpoint achievements and challenges to other actors and to the public in the area.
- Working well integrated and cooperating with other networks in the framework of CBSS.

Two additional proposals were put forward to be considered in the VASAB work schedule:

- To create a „VASAB Young Professional Forum” in order to get in touch more intensively with the younger generation and to create a more sustainable basis for the future of spatial planning cooperation
- To promote an more intensive exchange of civil servants in order to better follow new approaches on spatial planning (especially land-based spatial planning) in different countries and to intensify the use of good practice.

It was also expressed that VASAB might even more sell such model of cooperation on spatial planning of several countries on equal basis to other areas in the world. It was a contribution to create bridges and to promote mutual trust and it can be a contribution also in future to solve conflicts and find to common actions. At the same time, it relies also on mutual trust and peace.

I think these ideas and suggestions of our „pioneers” provide a good basis for our discussion today and the way ahead for VASAB. Thank you for your attention.