Statement by Mr. Dainius Čergelis on behalf of Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB)

Ministers, High-level Representatives, Distinguished Delegates,

VASAB is a cooperation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of the Baltic Sea Region countries and is known as the first macro-regional collaboration in Europe which has developed a common spatial vision and agreed on joint actions. VASAB was established in 1992 and next year we will celebrate 30 years anniversary.

The main VASAB mission is to prepare policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region, to provide forum for exchange of knowledge, promote and participate in cooperation projects as well as collaborate with other pan-Baltic, European and international organisations and initiatives.

First, I would like to emphasize that the close cooperation of VASAB and HELCOM contributes towards reaching our common goal -sustainable management of the Baltic Sea as well as implementation of the policies of both organisations.

VASAB appreciates the significant work carried out by HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group. The jointly coordinated work has facilitated preparations and adoption of joint Maritime Spatial Planning principles and several significant guidelines for better maritime spatial planning.

The Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2013-2020 has been effectively implemented by HELCOM Contracting Parties and VASAB member states. The new Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021 – 2030, elaborated by the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group and committed to be implemented by VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development and planned to be adopted by todays HELCOM Ministerial Meeting focuses on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of maritime spatial plans indicating that Baltic Sea Region countries have entered the next phase in MSP.

I would like to note that our joint efforts regarding MSP are being valued at the European and even global scale, and the Baltic Sea Region is being considered as a front-runner regarding collaboration on MSP across borders and implementation of the EU Directive on a framework for MSP.

I can assure that VASAB will take advantage of a new Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap and the Updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan for the currently ongoing update of the key VASAB strategic framework - Long-term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region.

Secondly, on behalf of VASAB I want to emphasize the role of HELCOM and VASAB in implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and it`s Action Plan. We are nominated to be the Priority area ‘Spatial Planning’ coordinator and regarding maritime spatial planning we do it together with HELCOM. Our strategic target is to draw up and apply maritime spatial plans throughout the BSR which are coherent across the borders and apply ecosystem-based approach.

It is important to mention that VASAB - HELCOM cooperation contributes also towards the implementation of sustainable development goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, I would like to underline the importance of the projects were HELCOM and VASAB have been and are involved thus providing useful inputs to encourage MSP in the region. Let me name some of them – Baltic SCOPE, Baltic LINes, Pan Baltic Scope, Capacity4MSP and recently started eMSP North Baltic Sea Region project.

And finally, VASAB express willingness to continue close cooperation with HELCOM in order to achieve our common goal - sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region.