

INTERVENTION AT THE VIII INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF THE KALININGRAD PARTNER REGIONS

SWETLOGORSK, Russia 22 MAY 2018

ROGER RYBERG - CHAIRMAN OF BSSSC

Governor, Ambassadors, Excellences – ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for inviting me to address this important Forum– on behalf of Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC).

I am very happy to be here in the Kaliningrad region - and for the possibility for the BSSSC to arrange its spring board meeting your region.

BSSSC is a political network organization – representing all sub-regions in the 10 countries around the Baltic Sea - promoting the interests of regions among others towards national authorities and EU-institutions.

But also - using our network to promote best practice, support regional partnership cross borders and to encourage project development.

When the BSSSC was founded back in 1993 in Stavanger, Norway - representatives of the Russian North West Regions – including Kaliningrad – were very active and central in the establishment.

The BSSSC Board is happy that we over the years have had good and constructive relations with the Kaliningrad region – as well as with the City of Saint Petersburg. After some years of absence – I am glad that you are now back as an active member of our Board.

Baltic Sea Region is a region of prosperity and challenges - bridging east and west – bringing people together.

Bottom-up cooperation cross borders - involving local and regional level - is more important than ever - maintaining networks and people-to-people contact in challenging times.

Cooperation must be based on common and shared values of democracy, human rights, peace, social dimension and rule of law.

Youth involvement is a focus area of the BSSSC and we are happy that youth representatives from Kaliningrad take part in our work.

A continuous and permanent dialogue with the young generation in the Baltic Sea Region is of high importance - as they are at the core of social and political change and the key to future economic success.

BSSSC will mark its 25 years jubilee at the 2018 Annual Conference - that will take place in Gdansk, Poland with

the Pomorskie Voivodeship as hosts. The topic of this year's conference is going to be:

“Solidarity, participation and being smart in actions for a better future”.

The invitation and programme will be sent out soon – and you are heartily welcome to take part.

You have chosen interesting topics for your international forum this year. In our Board meeting tomorrow the BSSSC will discuss and hopefully adopt a position paper on Culture - as a key for building bridges across borders and across social and political differences. We also underline that culture is a driver for innovation, growth and jobs.

I look forward to take part in the interesting programme of today - and wish you the best of luck with this eight International Forum of the Kaliningrad Partner Regions. I look forward to continue working together.

Thank you for your attention!