ONE OCEAN SUMMIT, BREST, FRANCE
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Statement by the Speaker Mr. Matti Vanhanen

Parliament of Finland

Première partie - Round table 1 Speeches from Speakers
Chair, dear colleagues - honorable speakers,

It is an honour for me to take part in this debate with my colleagues. This event provides us an excellent opportunity for exchange of views and strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the decision making on maritime.

We need to work together in solving global challenges. [I fully agree with the previous speakers that] we need a comprehensive and systematic approach addressing all aspects of maritime affairs and sea-based activities. This is required in order to deliver an effective and sustainable maritime policy at the global, EU and regional level.

There are no short term solutions. The marine environment faces constantly increasing pressures. These includes warming caused by the climate change, marine litter, nutrient loading in the Baltic Sea, loss of biodiversity, oil spills and chemical accidents to name a few. Even though ambitious measures have already been taken, their impacts are yet to be seen. It can take decades before actions taken today are reflected in the state of the sea and coastal areas. The more we postpone protective measures, the more difficult and the more expensive they will become.

Therefore, I consider it’s vital that we complete the negotiations of the treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). The adoption of this treaty would have important implications for the Arctic and the marine governance of the region. In the face of growing economic pressures and impacts of climate change, all activities in the Arctic region must provide necessary safeguards for the Arctic Ocean, its ecosystems, biodiversity and the people depending on it.
I stress the urgency to enhance coordination between different policy sectors and stake holders. This is needed in order to deliver measures which are not only ecologically but also socially and economically sustainable.

Chair, dear Colleagues,

Let me share with you some of our experiences as a Baltic Sea coastal state. For centuries, our well-being has been bound to the Baltic Sea. It has been our gateway to Europe and beyond and the source of our prosperity.

The Baltic Sea Region faces many challenges. The Baltic Sea is not only one of the most intensely operated marine areas in the world. Up to 2000 larger vessels sail in its waters at any given time. It is also one of the most fragile sea areas due to its enclosed nature and relatively low biodiversity. Despite significant progress in the past decades, the Baltic Sea remains heavily polluted and affected by human pressures. Global warming intensifies these challenges. The water and air warm up and ice conditions change which have huge impact on for example fishing, shipping and the living conditions and livelihood of many people in the region. Hence, it is not only vital to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change but also essential to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Our country’s specific challenge is that Finland is highly dependent on maritime transport all year round. Finland is located a long distance away from the main European markets and approximately 90% of Finnish exports and 80% of imports of goods are carried by sea. Due to long distances, freezing seabed and the needs of winter navigation, logistics
costs are higher in Finland than elsewhere in Europe. For us the main challenge lies in finding an effective balance between measures that reduce emissions from ships on the one hand, and their economic impacts on the industry and economy on the other.

I believe that we can tackle these challenges and transform them into opportunities. A key principle of Finland’s maritime policy is to address the environmental challenges and secure a clean Baltic Sea and ensure its responsible use in line with the principle of sustainable blue growth.

Our maritime cluster already produces solutions ensuring that the effects of climate change do not exceed the carrying capacity of the Baltic Sea and other seas. This also includes energy and material efficiency, and renewable and new fuels. Efforts to achieve the emission reduction targets set for shipping and the rapid need for new low-carbon and zero-carbon solutions represents significant opportunities for the entire Finnish maritime cluster. It is the trailblazer in cleantech solutions and services.

Sustainable use of natural resources and the good status of aquatic and marine environment also create a strong foundation for the bioeconomy and circular economy and provides opportunities for sustainable and low-carbon food and energy production. Furthermore, digitalization and automation can be utilized to improve the efficiency, safety and environmental performance in all sectors. In addition, education and research lay a foundation for sustainable blue growth and solving societal challenges.

Chair, dear Colleagues,
To conclude, I believe that the Baltic Sea Region’s development is linked to that of the Arctic region as these two regions have much in common. Solutions developed to address challenges in the Baltic Sea Region can be applied in the Arctic region. Therefore, we should bring the European Union’s Baltic Sea and Arctic policies closer together, and thereby also strengthen the EU’s Northern Dimension policy.

*Thank you for your attention!*