

## Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming

### FINLAND

Honorable co-chairs, dear excellences, dear colleagues, dear friends of the ocean,

- The warming of the oceans, ocean acidification, as well as changes in ocean currents, have put us all into an unseen on-going survival test.
- With warmer waters, coupled with increasing nutrient loads, we are also losing oxygen that is fundamental to the biological and biogeochemical processes of the ocean. We are likely to see drastic alterations in ocean productivity and biodiversity, deterioration of ecosystems and food webs, and breakdown of many ecosystem services that the oceans now provide for us.
- We Finns love the Baltic Sea, our home sea that offers us possibilities for many recreational activities, food and, for example, means of transport.
- At the same time, the Baltic Sea is a troubled sea, has been for decades, with eutrophication as the most severe problem.
- As a shallow, semi-enclosed sea area, Baltic Sea can be considered as a laboratory for future changes in many other coastal areas. The Baltic Sea region is also one of the most intensely studied coastal areas, with high data density and long-term data series.
- Today, the Baltic Sea ecosystem is affected by such levels of warming, nutrient pollution, and deoxygenation, that many other coastal areas will experience in the future. The anoxic area in the middle of the Baltic is now about the size of Denmark – but oxygen free bottoms are also found in shallow coastal areas, especially in late summer.
- With close co-operation between the Baltic Sea States for almost 50 years already, we have significantly reduced the input of nutrients into the sea from the top loads of the 1980's. I'm happy to say that we are also seeing some improvement, for example in the state of the Gulf of Finland.
- We have also taken measures to tackle the oxygen problem and the internal loading in the Baltic. When doing this, we have learnt that it is extremely difficult and expensive to restore lost areas, once the vicious circle is in place. It is the drivers and sources of distress, not the symptoms, which should be addressed, to be most effective in mitigating environmental problems. This is true also regarding climate change.
- Today, we are worried that the positive developments we have seen in the Baltic are reversed with a warming climate. We have already seen that during a warm and rainy winter, without the much needed snow and ice, the inputs of nutrients to the sea can be 10 times higher than in average years.
- Cutting CO<sub>2</sub> levels as fast as possible is the best way forward, also for the oceans. Our ambitious goal is that Finland is carbon neutral in 2035. To reach this goal, our Climate Act was revised and accepted in our Parliament just a month ago.

- Also, in order to reach a healthy ocean, Finland is committed to working towards at least 30% protection of the ocean by 2030, as stated in European Union's Biodiversity Strategy.
- We need ambition and concrete action in all countries, to sustain ocean processes that are critical for us and for the ocean life. As we all know, there is no time to waste.
- I thank you.