



Swedish Presidency



Baltic Sea NGO Forum

18 May 2018, Uppsala

**Speech by Ambassador Hans Olsson,
Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials
of the Council of the Baltic Sea States**

Dear participants,

Sweden has for nearly one year now been chairing the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The Swedish Presidency has chosen to actively support the NGO Forum for several good reasons.

Firstly, the Baltic Sea NGO Network enjoys the status of a strategic partner to the CBSS. It means that we acknowledge the need of enhancing and strengthening civil society participation in shaping a sustainable and inclusive future.

Many of the efforts structured under the auspices of CBSS wouldn't be able to yield so solid results, if not for the strong participation and commitment by the civil society. This applies to both children at risk and battling trafficking in human beings as well as creating cultural exchanges and people to people contacts.

Secondly, under our Presidency, a group of wise men and women – the CBSS Vision Group – was established to form visions and recommendations for the future CBSS. A few days ago, the group delivered its report. In this document the cooperation with civil society is mentioned as being of great value.

While civil society in the Baltic Sea Region remains strong, its contributions are not always translated into the language that policy makers are able to process and take into account. In the regional cooperation setting it is mirrored as a limited use of the creative potential of individuals and civil society actors.

Successful multilateral cooperation in our region depends on the broadest possible mobilisation and participation of stakeholders in all respective countries. Bottom-up participation and sense of "ownership" by various stakeholders - both in policy shaping and practical implementation - significantly contribute to the success of collaboration.

CBSS takes these strong signals from the Vision Group very seriously. We are committed to ensure continued support for and dynamic interactions with the civil society. We want to pay special attention to the youth. Therefore, I am very glad to see that you have dedicated one of the thematic workshops today to youth.

As a final remark, I just want to express our sincere gratitude to Foreningen Norden Sweden. The association has done a tremendous professional effort to make this forum a success.

I wish you all a fruitful and productive Forum.