

PRESS RELEASE

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**LAUNCH OF JOINT BALTIC SEA ACTION SUMMIT PROJECT**

President of the Republic **Tarja Halonen**, Prime Minister **Matti Vanhanen** and Chairman of the Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) **Ilkka Herlin** launched their joint initiative, the Baltic Sea Action Summit, on **Tuesday, 19 May 2009**.

The most visible part of the joint initiative is the *Baltic Sea Action Summit* (BSAS), which will pull together the strength of all heads of state, companies and key civil actors around the Baltic Sea. The Summit will be held in Helsinki in February 2010. Each participant in the BSAS will commit to a concrete act to the benefit of the Baltic Sea.

In her address at the opening session, **President Tarja Halonen** said that saving the Baltic Sea calls for concrete action and that Governments and other public actors can make significant contributions but cannot do everything. She said that innovations and best practices to save the Baltic Sea will be produced in comprehensive cooperation. The President asked public and private actors to join their forces and make commitments to the benefit of the Baltic Sea. In cooperation with Prime Minister Vanhanen, she invited all Heads of State and Government of the Baltic Sea States to take part in this work to rescue the Baltic Sea.

**Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen** outlined the concrete measures that Finland is taking. He said that the state of the Baltic Sea is obviously so poor that all the countries of the region have to be able to improve their performance. According to Vanhanen, the Finnish Government will propose to Parliament measures that will decrease the nutrient load from agriculture in Finland in the next few years. This will take place especially by means of a more careful targeting of the EU's agri-environmental measures. The terms of the support will be revised as soon as it is possible in the new programming period.

The Summit will agree about the distribution of responsibilities and the parties will roll their sleeves in concert. The initiators are of the opinion that enough speeches have been held on the issue and the Baltic Sea Action Plan, which has been adopted at political level in the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Committee (HELCOM) should be now implemented.

Chairman of the BSAG Board of Trustees, **Mr Ilkka Herlin**, summed up the content of the initiative by stating that the joint initiative of the Finnish President, Prime Minister and the BSAG adds momentum to concrete work in the entire Baltic Sea region by joining the forces of those who have money, power and solutions. He added that we need strong political will and contribution from the part of companies and private citizens. Mr Herlin believes that companies in the vanguard of business life certainly understand that responsibility for our living environment is among the operating principles of all successful enterprises now and in the future.

Nine companies that have already joined the initiative presented their own commitments and tools to save the Baltic Sea in this opening session. These companies participate in the Baltic Sea work by donating their own know-how, products and funds for projects and by adopting operations that are friendlier to the Baltic Sea. The participants unanimously noted that the promotion of public-private cooperation in the Baltic Sea region is the fastest and most sustainable way to obtain results.

"The summit has crucial key political significance for the future prosperity of the Baltic Sea region. I would like to congratulate the three initiators of the Baltic Sea Action Summit – their initiative will affect generations to come, and makes me confident that I can say not barely that **'I wish'** but that **'I will'** hand over a cleaner Baltic Sea to my child and his children..." said **Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, HELCOM, Igor Maydanov**.

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