

DG Speaking Points for the High Level Panel
Women in Innovation and Connectivity: the Role of the Private Sector

15 May 2017, New York

Your Royal Highness, Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to thank Minister Helena Dalli and HRH Princess Nisreen El-Hashemite for their kind invitation to take part in this important event.

I greatly appreciate an opportunity to engage in a discussion with such a distinguished set of speakers and present in brief terms how Member States of the Council of the Baltic Sea States jointly advance gender equality in a region which is renowned for its leading positions in innovation performance as well as topping the global gender parity indexes.

I should also point out right away that the best practices which I will be presenting today are of great importance also to the global advancement of women leadership and could be of relevance to the recommendations to be developed.

The specific initiatives supported by the Council, which I would like to present to you, all are in line with the three long-term priorities of the CBSS, namely, **Sustainable & Prosperous Region, Regional Identity** and **Safe & Secure Region**.

SUSTAINABLE & PROSPEROUS REGION

Let me start by the long-term priority **Sustainable & Prosperous Region** since it has the most prominent role in advancing science and business cooperation.

The key fora for crafting Baltic Sea Region's joint approach in advancing the Agenda 2030 is the Expert Group on Sustainable Development. This expert group will soon publish the **Baltic 2030 Action Plan** – a macro-regional policy document with tailored approach to transnational implementation of the Agenda 2030

To provide you with some additional insights in the contents of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, I would like to point out one thematic strand – demographic change – which holds relevance also in the context of female advancement.

Research and science cooperation also has a prominent role in the advancement of the long-term priority Sustainable & Prosperous Region.

As an example, I would like to introduce you to the **GENERA consortium**. This consortium serves as the most visible example on how a number of Council's Member States and Observer States **with the support of Horizon 2020 programme** are taking the **European Research Area** as a common reference point for the advancement of

gender parity. GENERA focuses on monitoring and improvement of Gender Equality Plans of a number of leading research institutions and organisations of the physics research field. The customised Gender Equality Plans involve systematic examination of all decision-making processes to identify any possible sources of gender bias in the research organisations active in physics and related fields.

REGIONAL IDENTITY

The Council's efforts in advancing the women leadership in science is not constrained solely to supporting projects which target accomplished scientists. I would like to draw your attention to **Balticlab** – a programme aligned with the goals of the Council of the Baltic Sea States long-term priority **Regional Identity**.

The Council's Secretariat in partnership with the Swedish Institute formed the programme in order to create a space for female entrepreneurs and creatives to meet and build on each others experiences. Balticlab builds female empowerment by also including young men. Thus, the programme is formed as a reflection of our day-to-day work environments.

Every year, at locations across Europe, the programme gathers around one hundred new participants representing the tech sector, cultural operators, public relations specialists, artists, entrepreneurs and scientists from the CBSS Member States and Observer States.

Should you be interested in having a more detailed view of the values and principles embodied by this programme I would invite you to get acquainted with the recently launched Balticlab's Innovation Manifesto.

I would like to point out that Balticlab and other youth initiatives are built on the Council's desire to unite future generations and to facilitate their reflections on a more sustainable, equal and creative future of the Baltic Sea Region and the world.

CONCLUSION

All in all, having presented some of the projects and initiatives which are supported by the Council of the Baltic Sea States, I hope I have also provided food for thought and some suggestions for further action to other regions in order to unleash their full scientific and innovative potential aligned with gender equality perspective.

Should you be interested in getting a more thorough insight in the Council's discussions on gender parity, I invite you to attend the **Barbershop Conference: „Mobilizing Men and Boys for Gender Equality in the Baltic Sea Region"** which will take place in

Reykjavik on 23 May. The conference is organised by the Icelandic Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States together with the Nordic Council of Ministers. This event feeds into the Icelandic Presidency's efforts in broadening the Baltic Sea Region-wide debate on equality.

To conclude, the Secretariat of the CBSS is already investing considerable efforts in disseminating the best practices during such events as the annual consultations between the Council's Member States and Observer States, as well as annual meetings of the regional councils – those in the Baltic Sea area and in wider Europe. When it comes to the global outreach, I might take the liberty to add that there will be always a room for improvement, since so many technologically advanced and scientifically notable solutions are being developed in the Baltic Sea Region with a potential to advance the well-being and prosperity in other parts of the world.

Thank you once more for this opportunity to reflect on the role of women in innovation. I look forward to get to know the perspectives on this topic presented by other speakers gathered today.