

27 November, 2018, 9:00-9:30
Riga, Stradiņš University

**Speaking points for the Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
Secretariat, Ambassador Maira Mora**

Dear Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

First, I would like to say that being Latvian myself, I am very proud to address you all here in Riga and I would like to congratulate the State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia, which holds the current presidency in the Civil Protection Network of the CBSS, for organising such a timely and needed event.

I would also like to take this opportunity and express our gratitude to the Swedish Institute, who initiated the Baltic Leadership Programme and generously supported it, and to our partners from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), who have been our trusted partners in organising and delivering the courses.

I am very glad to see that many of the alumni from the previous Baltic Leadership Programmes are here in the audience. This is strong evidence that the Programme has been successful in achieving its main goal: creating a network of key civil protection actors in the Baltic Sea region.

In our work we use the word “network” quite a lot: we are creating networks, building networks, connecting different networks.

Often, we forget that behind this overused word there is a simple idea: **networks are people who know each other and trust each other**. People who can pick up the phone and call each other when they need help. It makes me happy to see you here, together, like old friends. Friends who will help each other when the time comes, like the Polish firefighters who came to help their Swedish colleagues during the worst forest fires this summer. **I trust that all of you here will do the same for each other without hesitation.**

I have been reading through the reflections of the participants from the latest BLP in Sweden and I would like to quote one of the statements that, in my opinion, perfectly summarises the reasons why the BLP has succeeded in building this strong network.

The statement reads: “From the course I will bring back new knowledge as well as the “old” knowledge but in a new context! **Most of all I will bring back new contacts and networks of colleagues in the region, which will be useful for future cooperation**”.

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I have seen for myself how these contacts were made in Sigtuna last year, when the future directors and chiefs of emergency agencies from all 11 countries around the Baltic Sea shook hands and exchanged telephone numbers after four intensive days of working together. And it makes me very happy to see that you have stayed in touch with the Programme and, more importantly, with each other.

Aside from strengthening the ties between people, agencies and countries, this quote highlights another important aspect of the Programme – bringing new knowledge to the participants in a creative mixture of theory and practice and putting existing knowledge in a new context, so that the participants can be on the same page regarding the threats and the solutions. **This more than anything helps us to come closer to a common societal security culture, for which the CBSS has been advocating so actively.**

Looking at today's event programme, I can see that it continues the good tradition of the previous BLPs – today you will see a combination of theory and practice, lectures by distinguished experts and interactive workshops, as well as insightful research and innovative technologies.

I hope that all the BLP alumni will find this event useful and will return home to their agencies inspired and with new contacts, whom you will be able to call without hesitation.

It also makes me happy to see the young faces in the audience – the students! I would like to say that you are very lucky to have such a great opportunity to learn from the best, meet your future mentors and employers and prepare yourself for successful careers making our region safer and more prosperous.

Finally, I wish to all of you, alumni and students, that all the knowledge you have acquired in past Baltic Leadership Programmes and will acquire today will make you better leaders and increase our region's resilience, **but I really hope that these skills will remain only theoretical and will not be tried by any serious disasters.**

Thank you and make the best of today!