

Gulf of Finland Science Days “Facing our Common Future”

Helsinki, in the House of Estates, on 13-14 November, 2019

TARJA HALONEN 13.11. KLO 10:00

Trilateral cooperation and The Gulf of Finland

Dear Audience,
Friends of the Gulf of Finland

50 years old and still going strong

- I have had the great pleasure to follow and enhance the lively, scientific based cooperation around the Gulf of Finland through my presidential years and after. We all are glad that the multilateral, intensive cooperation has lasted now over 50 years and the work is still very active and goal-minded. And it is needed!
- The trilateral cooperation between Finland, Russia and Estonia is founded on the agreement established in 1968 between Finland and Soviet Union through the initiative made by soviet scientists. Among others, with the help and understanding of the Ministry of the Environment in Finland many concrete initiatives have been launched and carried out successfully. More political support was needed and different levels of approaches from the academia, civil society, NGOs, individuals and business communities.

Year 2010 was one of the highlights. The head of states and governments with shared environmental interests and policies from all coastal countries of the Baltic Sea gathered in Helsinki. Few years later the prime ministers of Finland, Estonia and Russia met again. The

support to the clean Baltic Sea was clear.

- Year 2014 is remembered also as a special year: Gulf of Finland Year was celebrated as a common project between Finnish, Russian and Estonian specialists. Information was produced and measures found to achieve a good status of the marine ecosystem. Findings and solutions were presented both to the decision makers and the public.

The presidents of all three states acted as patrons of the year. The common will went even further: in each country steering groups were founded and the good co-operation spread through NGOs, civil society and environmental education. Hundreds of activities in the coastal cities of the Gulf of Finland celebrated the many meanings of the marine ecosystem and its identity.

**Trilateral Gulf of Finland cooperation bridging EU and Russia:
Environmental cooperation is almost unaffected by political tendencies
& the Trilateral cooperation enables joint studies on the most topical
environmental questions**

- It seems that the special goals presented in 2014 did reach in a very fundamental level both scientists, politicians, NGOs and the part of civil society, as we can see long term environmental cooperation and continuity through different political tendencies.
- Shared mutual scientific projects have been established on the grounds of good trilateral cooperation founded in 2014.

Dear audience

- I want to mention few of the projects which, among others, are active in 2019 ->

1. Biodiversity

-Restocking of European eel as a measure of recovery of endangered species and preservation of natural diversity

2. Geodiversity

-European marine geological project EMODnet-geology

3. Marine Spatial Planning

-Getting Ready for the Cross-Border Challenges: Capacity Building in Sustainable Shore Use (GETREADY)

-> To increase the readiness of the cross-border region in the field of sustainable shore use to the existing and expected challenges by global change.

And finally, the 4.th, Climate change

-Towards higher adaptive capacity in urban water management (RAINMAN)

To answer the challenges that climate and urban development pose to fresh water reservoirs by managing storm waters, both in quantity and quality, directed to fresh water resources.

The importance of oceans is clear also in climate change.

The wide range of scientific cooperation and activities show the importance of cross-border cooperation especially when it comes to nature and marine ecology that recognizes no borders. The Gulf of Finland truly benefits from the kind of cooperation that is targeted to most vulnerable and critical areas of conservation and the ones that tries to tackle even the very difficult and many ways complicated issues.

The regional co-operation has been and it is valuable in the sustainable development co-operation. The Baltic Sea co-operation is specially mentioned as encouraging example in the UN Report “The Future We Want” to the Rio Summit 2012.

The future challenges:

Trilateral Gulf of Finland cooperation is central player in linking science with regional society; developing dialog between scientists, citizens, NGO:s and decision-makers

- The sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources are part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Blue Economics recognizes

the sustainable use of seas and ocean resources.

We all surely appreciate and find SDGs crucially important and I find the trilateral cooperation and work around the Gulf of Finland being one part of these global goals and especially the one concerning marine life.

- The dialog doesn't end when the projects and formal protocols end. That's actually the critical point when the true dialogue is about to start and deliver the promises made in high level forums and seminars.
- The dialogue is built on mutual understanding and perceiving the same captured moment. This concerns all: decision-makers, scientists, NGOs, business communities and citizens.

What I would like to underline, is science based knowledge and society. There is a need to create public understanding towards ecology of marine life but also towards its cultural and human dimensions.

Material and immaterial cultural heritage of the Gulf of Finland is strongly linked to our wellbeing. Natural sciences, social sciences and humanities together might light some new aspects of information to the beneficiary of all. It is good to know facts, but we need both our mind and heart in order to become committed.

Dear Friends of The Gulf of Finland,

- I can very well remember September 2009 and the international youth celebrating together Baltic Sea in many environmental activities in the island of Harakka just nearby Helsinki city.

Remembering this event together with you, ten years after, makes it relevant even today.

In creation of dialogue between sciences and scientists, NGO:s and decision-makers, business and civil society, we need cross-generational cooperation and understanding.

I thank you all warmly for what you have done and I wish all of you most successful The Gulf of Finland Science Days 2019!

Thank you!