

OPENING SPEECH

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Mayor of Municipality of Borgholm, Sweden

Dear friends of a good and sustainable Environment in the Baltic Sea Area!

I hope and believe that you will have a fantastic conference here in Kalmar. I am also really looking forward to see you as guests visiting the Municipality of Borgholm this Thursday.

The environmental questions are of vital importance for our future. And the fact that we together, the countries around the Baltic Sea, can discuss these questions is very important. We have no right to make our problems the burden of our future generations - our children and our grandchildren.

In our Municipality, Borgholm, the environmental questions have a top priority. The most important economic sectors in our municipality are tourism, agriculture, fishery and small scale food processing. All sectors are depending on each other and all sectors are depending on a sustainable development.

It was only yesterday that we, politicians and civil servants together with property owners (alt. local stakeholders) were discussing possibilities to restore wetlands in order to reduce nitrogen leakage. Several areas within our Municipality are a part of the EU programme Life. The Life-programme also contains activities concerning offshore meadows and wetlands. Another project we are involved in is to make Öland self-sufficiency of sustainable energy. With the help from wind power, a very well integrated system of wood chips distant heating, a little bit of digester gas and some sun energy - then we have begun our journey in our Municipality.

What is really encouraging is that the children and teachers in our school system are so devoted to this process. Four year old children are sorting waste at the nursery school and when they go home they tell their parents to do the same at home. Several of the nursery schools have been awarded with the Swedish symbol - a green flag, a mark for devoted environmental work. The green flag symbol shows that you are working on a long-term schedule and with a clear aim for the future.

There is also a big and active engagement in the EU-project Green Circle School in our Municipality. We are proud to say that we are one of three Swedish Municipalities participating in this project. The teachers from our schools who recently visited Latvia on a conference and there met teachers from our Twin City Zelenogradsk in Kaliningrad, they were very happy and pleased. We are really looking forward to the Green Circle School Conference that will be arranged in Borgholm next spring.

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I am convinced that in order to get progress in this work it is extremely important to make the children both involved and engaged in the process. Many times the children have a lot more of common sense than we adults have. And when the children start to influence their parents, people like myself, born and raised in the generation when it was considered that the earth is a never-ending resource - then we can talk about progress.

I want to wish you best of luck with your conference and in your continued work for a sustainable development and a better environment for all of us around the Baltic Sea area.

I also hope you will be given time for reflection and possibilities to look for new solutions, to be inspired of each others and - perhaps most important of it all - to be given time to exchange knowledge and experiences in a free and open-minded atmosphere during this conference.

I am looking forward to seeing you in Borgholm this Thursday.