



THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

Kadriorg, 28. April 2009

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Dear Conference participants

The Baltic Sea today is the new *Mare Nostrum* of the European Union. It is, for all intents purposes, "our sea". How we take care of it, and how we use the opportunities it avails us will provide a measure of what we are capable of in the EU.

When, five years ago we began work on what has become the Baltic Sea Strategy, we did not know how far it would be possible to go. Four new member states, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland were only beginning to play a role in the Union. As time passed, however, we came to see the enormous potential for closer EU integration with the Baltic Sea as a unifying, no longer a dividing body of water, a new platform to achieve the kind of close intra-European co-operation that has been so successful elsewhere in Europe.

I hope that in your deliberations of the Baltic Sea Strategy that you come up with bold and innovative proposals, and that these be incorporated into the Strategy in its final form.

I wish you good luck and good ideas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Toomas Hendrik Ilves".

Toomas Hendrik Ilves