Baltic Sea region: guidelines for a Union approach in the Baltic region

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Mrs Margaretha Af UGGLAS (PPE, S) defined the objective of her report on the EU "mare nostrum" policy in the Baltic Sea, which was adopted unanimously with one abstention by the Committee on Foreign Affairs. This report is the first to be defended in plenary by a Swedish member of parliament, who said that it was essential for the EU to have a policy which promoted stability and security in the region and that, following the accession of Sweden and Finland and now that association agreements have been signed with the Baltic countries, the Baltic sea needed to become a mare nostrum. Greater stability, better security. Emphasizing that this region was the only region which bordered Russia, Mrs Af UGGLAS recommended cooperation with, not against Russia and hence the need for the EU to help achieve regional stability. This presupposed forging stronger links with the 9 coastal states and helping to strengthen the links which already existed between them (Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden.) In this respect, Mrs Af UGGLAS called for the EU to abide by the philosophy behind the stability pact and help strengthen the dialogue initiated within the OSCE. This dialogue presupposed paying particular attention to the integration of minority groups living in the Baltic states, particularly the Russian-speaking populations; hence the call to all states in the region to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights and comply with all the obligations attached to it. As regards security, this would be achieved by reducing the military presence in the region of Kaliningrad, which could then be included in regional cooperation. Again on the subject of security, the report considered that the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was one of the Union's prime contacts, forming a transnational bridge between the EU and the states in the region. Finally, the committee approved the accession of Member States and associated countries to all security structures to which the other Members of the EU already belonged.