Gothenburg, 22.6.2020

Dear representatives of MSP authorities in the North Sea countries,

Allow me on behalf of the CPMR North Sea Commission to congratulate you to the progress so far on creating a transnational collaboration group on Maritime Spatial Planning in the North Sea. I recall the discussions at the Connecting Seas Conference in Hamburg last year, where I attended, and at the conference in Malmö last January, where the North Sea Commission was represented on technical level. The North Sea is under pressure from many activities and the need for cross-sectoral coordination is obvious. The national maritime plans, which are now being finalized in each country, represent an important step in the efforts to manage the sea in a coordinated and sustainable way. It is also obvious that transnational collaboration is needed. Maritime borders are artificial. The sea basin that divides, or hopefully unites, our countries faces joint challenges that cannot be handled only country by country.

To the cross-sectoral and trans-national perspectives, I would like to add the multi-level perspective. Coastal regions and municipalities all have maritime interests. All activities at sea, energy production, fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, ferry lines, leisure activities etc are connected to land in a region and a municipality, where they are part of the regional/local economy and have implications for physical structures and terrestrial planning. Coastal regions are affected by the development of the maritime sectors and by the condition of the marine environment. MSP links governance on land, coast and sea. Land-sea interactions therefore have to be taken into account since it is clear that ecosystems and activities at sea have a direct impact on regional coastal planning.

It would therefore be useful to have a strong connection between the transnational MSP collaboration and representatives of the coastal regions. These regions are involved (to different extent) in the national MSP processes. Involving regional governments also in the transnational work on Maritime Spatial Planning would create a wider understanding among regional decision-makers for MSP as such and for marine and maritime conditions in the entire North Sea basin. It would be a way to reach out to more stakeholders in the regions. The integration of different levels of government, from the international to the local level, is a precondition for an efficient management of marine and maritime resources.

The CPMR North Sea Commission, founded in 1989, is a networking organisation for elected sub-national governments of coastal regions in all North Sea countries. Almost all counties/regions/Länder/provinces along the North Sea coast of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium and a number of councils in the United Kingdom are members. We work together with other coastal regions in Europe in the umbrella organisation CPMR – the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions.

Since more than 30 years we are engaged in North Sea regional development through projects, policy discussions, exchange of information and best practice among our members. We work for stronger ties between regional decision-makers in all countries across the North Sea. We have also
developed a North Sea Region strategy, where we jointly define the major challenges in the area and the ways to handle them. Through the CPMR’s excellent connections with the European Parliament and the European Commission, we can raise issues on the European agenda and make North Sea perspectives known in a broader European setting. We have worked in this way with matters related to energy cooperation and a North Sea grid, North Sea regional interests in the TEN-T network, plastic litter in the sea and waterways and we are about to do so on maritime container safety, just to mention a few examples.

With these words, I hope to encourage you to involve us on a regular basis also in the further transnational collaboration in the North Sea basin. We are happy to attend as a core member, or in any other format that you find most beneficial for future cooperation.

Kind regards,

Kerstin Brunnström

President, CPMR North Sea Commission