

'The Future of the Baltic Sea Region in Europe' Conference in Hamina on 27-28 August 2009

Welcome to Hamina  
Hannu Muhonen  
Mayor

Dear conference participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the city of Hamina, I have the great pleasure of welcoming you to the port and garrison city Hamina. Our warmest thanks to the Council of State and Centrum Balticum for arranging the conference in Hamina.

The Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland have always been vital to Hamina. The city was founded in 1653 and its township was based on financial reasons. In 1721, Hamina became a bordering city when the border between Russia and Sweden was drawn 20 kilometers to the east of Hamina in the Peace Treaty of Uusikaupunki. The military fortification of Hamina started and the city became the garrison city it is even today. In the Treaty of Turku in 1743 the border between the States was moved westwards and Hamina became a Russian city. The geographical location of Hamina at the border of the east and the west has always been seen in the life and development of the city, sometimes in a positive and sometimes in a negative manner. Today Hamina is a midsize city of some 22,000 inhabitants, known for its port, garrison, historic city milieu, circular city plan and fortress and for the international military music event Hamina Tattoo, which is organised every other year. A new significant image builder for the city is the location of the Google Data Center in the city.

The port is the flagship of the city. It hosts a large concentration of corporate activities. In addition to traditional port operations, it is the home of a lot of industry, inter alia, a concentration of chemical industry. All in all, some 80 companies operate in the port and offer jobs to altogether nearly 2,000 employees.

We are naturally very interested in the future of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea should be a sea of tranquility uniting the States surrounding it. Environmental issues are very important. In order to reduce pollution and to combat environmental risks, we must do all that we can. Each State and city plays an important role in reducing the risks. The cities may decrease water pollution through their own waste-water solutions. For example Hamina and Kotka are currently building a joint waste-water treatment plant, which will enable a more pure end-result.

The Baltic Sea has great recreational values as boating and fishing are becoming increasingly popular. The development of vessel traffic and boating between Estonia and our region is slowed down by the Russian territorial sea, which has to be circled and means several extra hours to the trip.

Esteemed participants of the conference. We celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Hamina in many different ways. This conference is one of the main events. On 17<sup>th</sup> September, the day of signing of the peace treaty, a memorial will be unveiled and the historic date will be celebrated and recalled in many different ways. This anniversary year has contained many different events, lectures, plays and exhibitions. The main roles have been played by the inhabitants and the different organisations operating here.

Ladies and gentlemen. I hope that you enjoy your visit to Hamina. Welcome to the concert arranged this evening and thereafter to the reception of the city.