

**Opening remarks by H.E. Prime Minister Ms. Laimdota Straujuma**  
**VI Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**

Your Royal Highness, Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden,  
Prime Minister Butkevičius,  
and Mr. Kallas,

Excellences, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a privilege to welcome you to Latvia and to Jūrmala, for the Sixth Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

I can think of no better location for this event than the City of Jūrmala. Traditionally the meeting place of merchants and travellers. A place to accumulate energy and strength for new deeds ahead.

I am convinced that today's gathering will give the EU Strategy a new momentum.

Your Royal Highness, Ladies and gentlemen,

The Baltic Sea Region has enormous potential. It is an engine of growth and trade. It is a hub of innovation and a bridge of connectivity.

This is reflected in the priorities of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU. To make Europe more competitive, more digital and more engaged.

And it is captured in the theme of the Annual Forum – “Achieving e-Quality”.

Because despite the progress we have made, there is more we can do.

We can boost transport and energy links. We can do more to improve the ecological situation of the Baltic Sea. We should realise the benefits of the digital age.

But where the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region provides the framework, it is our people, societies and economies that provide the energy.

So I am delighted to see a wide representation here from the European Commission, national governments and local authorities; business and civil society is represented; as well as scientific community takes part.

It is this network of people – this web of connections – which is the driving force of the Baltic Sea Region's integration and prosperity.

Your Royal Highness, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that our discussions will not only strengthen these ties. They should give vision to the Strategy. And help us translate our vision into action. And deliver concrete benefits to citizens.

The Baltic Sea Region has long been an area at the forefront of trade and commerce; in goods and services as well as in ideas and knowledge.

In 2015 it should also stand for dynamism, sustainability and connectivity.

By harnessing our collective strengths and working together towards a common vision, I believe we can do just that.

Distinguished guests, let me once again extend a warm welcome to everyone here today. I wish you all to engage in fruitful discussions.

Thank you.