Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Seventh Meeting of the Ad hoc Drafting Group for the Updated Baltic Sea Action Plan

DG BSAP 7-2021

Online, 15 June 2021

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The Excel attachment to this document (2-1-Att.1-Rev.1) has been updated with comments by Germany and Russia. The comments are included in the columns "Comments after HOD 60-2021".

Background

HOD 60-2021 agreed on the overarching preamble as well as the introductory texts for the segments and horizontal topics with remaining open issues presented in square brackets as indicated in document 4-1-Rev.1 from HOD 60-2021. HOD 60-2021 also agreed on the overarching introduction, with the caveat that the definitions and reporting mechanisms for the ecological and management objectives need further consideration in DG BSAP 7-2021.

HOD 60-2021 approved the formulation and target years for most of the actions proposed for the updated BSAP. For a number of actions approved at the meeting, amendments to the formulation or target year(s) were introduced. The meeting agreed that for these actions Contracting Parties have the possibility to review the proposed changes, indicated by red text and invited Contracting Parties to provide their positions by 11 June 2021 with the aim of discussing any remaining open issues for these actions at DG BSAP 7-2021 on 15 June 2021. HOD 60-2021 agreed also to continue discussion on the remaining open actions, which were not approved by HOD 60-2021, in DG BSAP 7-2021.

This document includes the remaining open issues for the preamble, overarching introduction and segment introductions. The Excel attachment to the document includes the actions that are still open as well as the actions that were approved by HOD 60-2021 that were to be reviewed by 11 June and the comments received. The Excel attachment will be updated if further comments will be received. The Excel attachment also includes two actions regarding hot spots that were approved by HOD 60-2021 and still contain more than one option for the target years.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to discuss on the open issues regarding the draft updated BSAP with the aim of reaching an agreement to be presented for HOD 60A-2021.

Open issues in the draft update BSAP

Overarching preamble

HOD 60-2021 agreed on the preamble with remaining open questions presented in square brackets and also agreed to retain square brackets for paragraphs 28-30 on adoption of documents until the documents in question have been adopted by the Ministers. The paragraph 10 in square brackets is presented below.

10. [**AGREE/SUPPORT intentions/WILL** to compile all climate mitigation and adaptation measures resulting from the BSAP that contribute to the Paris agreement for publication on the UNFCCC-NAZCA portal and the HELCOM homepage in 2024 and thereafter updated every 5 years as part of contribution to the Paris Agreement.]

Overarching introduction

HOD 60-2021 agreed on the the overarching introduction, with the caveat that the definitions and reporting mechanisms for the ecological and management objectives need further consideration in DG BSAP 7-2021. The draft description of the ecological and management objectives is included below.

[**Ecological objectives** reflect the desired state of the environment in broad terms. Progress towards reaching the objectives will be monitored by the HELCOM indicators and assessments.

Management objectives describe the desired effect of the measures. Progress towards reaching the objectives will be tracked by using HELCOM indicators and pressure targets.]

Segment introductions

HOD 60-2021 agreed on the introductions to the segments with remaining open issues presented in square brackets. The open issues are presented below in square brackets.

HOD 60-2021 approved the HELCOM operations reduction targets for marine litter and requested that they are introduced to the introduction to the Hazardous substances and litter segment. A proposal for their inclusion in the text is presented below in track changes.

HOD 60-2021 invited the Secretariat to, where needed, provide editorial amendments for the fifth paragraph under the Sea-based activities segment, to be submitted to DG BSAP 7-2021 for further consideration. The editorial amendments proposed by the Secretariat are included in track changes. The Secretariat has also proposed editorial changes in track changes to the second paragraph of the introduction which contain square brackets.

HOD 60-2021 agreed to move action SN41 from the operative section of the updated BSAP and instead use the text of the action in the introduction of the Sea-based activities segment, utilising as appropriate also the corresponding supporting information contained in document 4-2-Rev.1 and invited the Secretariat to draft a proposal for the text to be submitted for review and consideration by DG BSAP 7-2021, and approval by HOD 60A-2021. The proposal by the Secretariat is presented below in track changes.

Eutrophication segment

Net nutrient input ceilings (NIC) define maximum inputs via water and air to achieve good status with respect to eutrophication for Baltic Sea sub-basins for each country. They are calculated as shares of the maximum allowable inputs to each sub-basin using the proportions of nitrogen and phosphorus inputs in the reference period 1997- 2003. [The agreed] NIC values are given in Table XX. Nitrogen and phosphorus input ceilings are also calculated for non-HELCOM countries in the Baltic Sea catchment area, other countries with airborne input (OC), Baltic Sea shipping (BSS) and North Sea shipping (NOS).

Net nutrient input ceilings for each country and sub-basin incorporate the national shares of the nutrient inputs via transboundary rivers. Thus, nutrient input ceilings were specifically computed for these rivers, further indicating the respective national shares of their total inputs. [Nutrient input ceilings for transboundary rivers are given in the HELCOM BSEP XXX].

All nutrient input reduction measures necessary to achieve the NICs should be fully implemented by 2027 at the latest, to take into account the delay the reduction of nutrient inputs to the sea.

The input ceilings for nitrogen and phosphorus are based on current scientific knowledge and are subject to uncertainties.

[Following the precautionary principle, increased inputs of nitrogen or phosphorus to a basin should to the extent possible be avoided until both MAI and good status with respect to eutrophication have been reached~~, even in basins where inputs are already below the NIC]. [However, this does not completely preclude activities necessary due to/ vital for socio-economicetal needs on condition that MAI or NIC are not exceeded.]~~

Hazardous substances and litter segment

Reaching desired state: management objectives

Marine litter

In order to reach the desired state, the following management objectives have been identified for marine litter:

- Prevent generation of waste and its input to the sea, including microplastics;
- Significantly reduce amounts of litter on shorelines and in the sea.

The HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter is the main regional tool for achieving the marine litter ecological and management objectives. It ensures that there are measures in place to address the most common and harmful litter items found in the Baltic Sea region by:

- reducing the impact of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) on the marine ecosystem in a systematic way by developing HELCOM guidelines and recommendations,
- significantly reducing the consumption of single-use plastics including through the phase-out of unnecessary single-use plastics which are prone to becoming litter,
- preventing litter from all sources,
- minimizing inputs of microplastics through measures both at source and through end-of-pipe solutions,
- being aware of new and emerging issues related to marine litter generation and act if needed and
- promoting and actively working for a global agreement to reduce input of marine litter and microplastics.

Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention further agreed that, implementing the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, by 2025 HELCOM will reduce marine litter on the beaches by at least 30% and by 2030 by 50% from the baseline total abundance of 40 litter items per hundred meters of beach for the whole Baltic Sea except for Kattegat in 2015-2016, starting with the reduction of the most commonly found single-use plastic items and items related to fishing gear. ~~Regional thresholds for beach litter, litter on the seafloor and microlitter~~ By 2023 HELCOM will further develop regionally coordinated quantitative reduction targets for marine litter to guide progress towards relevant regional and EU threshold values.~~should be set to assess progress towards achieving good environmental status for marine litter and applying them as the basis for setting environmental targets~~. The assessment of progress towards these environmental targets

should be based on monitoring programmes utilizing regionally harmonized methodologies. Available knowledge has improved since the first Action Plan on Marine Litter was adopted, ~~but~~ however, further scientific and technological development is crucial for achieving the BSAP objectives, especially with regard to microlitter.

Sea-based activities segment

Please note that only those paragraphs for which amendments are proposed are included below. The first paragraph below is the second paragraph of the introduction.

Emissions and discharges from shipping continue to have harmful impacts on the Baltic Sea environment, despite the reinforced existing and developed new international regulations concerning maritime traffic which have been adopted by IMO for the last 10 years. Energy efficiency of ships is improving, and a downward trend is also evident for other types of emissions and discharges. Nevertheless, shipping still contributes to [significant] emissions and discharges to the Baltic Sea, including nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulphur oxides (SOx), particulate matter, sewage and discharges from exhaust gas cleaning systems, leading to pollution and eutrophication of the marine environment. In addition, shipping ~~is the cause of some adverse environmental effects~~contributes to a number of pressures that are not yet covered by mandatory international regulations, such ~~as those resulting from~~ underwater noise, biofouling, and ~~[~~grey water discharges~~]~~.

…

Fishing takes place in large areas of the Baltic Sea, with direct effects on target species as well as on protected species and habitats. Currently, the majority of Baltic Sea commercial fish stocks are not in good status with respect to biomass and [fishing mortality]. Physical disturbance to the seabed from bottom trawling and by-catches of birds, marine mammals and non-target fish species in fishing gear constitute other pressures on the ecosystem, which need to be reduced. Furthermore, fishing activities contribute to shifts in the food web, alterations in size-age distribution, as well as reductions in reproductive capacity and resilience of both fish and other marine organisms.

In addition to shipping and fishing, ~~direct~~ activities such as mineral extraction, dredging, installation of offshore wind farms, other forms of marine energy production, and laying of underwater cables and pipelines have negative effects on the marine environment. One of the effects from these activities is ~~including~~ physical disturbance and loss of the seabed~~. As a result of these multiple activities,~~ A~~a~~bout 40 percent of the Baltic Sea seabed is estimated to be potentially disturbed, with many underwater biotopes and species in unfavourable conservation status. Along with submerged hazardous objects such as sea-dumped munitions, warfare materials and wrecks containing oil, activities causing disturbance to the seabed contribute to the potential release of harmful substances that may affect the marine environment and activities in the Baltic Sea. Besides being sources of pollution, submerged hazardous objects are also physical obstacles on the seafloor and pose a risk to maritime workers. The above-mentioned activities, including the operation of offshore windfarms and aquaculture facilities, also affect marine organisms through the effects of noise and may cause hazards and disturbance to sea birds and other marine life.

…

Reaching desired state: management objectives

In order to reach this desired state, the following management objectives are to be met:

- Minimize loss and disturbance to seabed habitats
- Minimize noise to levels that do not adversely affect marine life
- No introductions of non-indigenous species
- Minimize the input of nutrients, hazardous substances and litter from sea-based activities
- Enforce international regulations – no illegal discharges
- Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution

- Effective emergency and response capabilities
- Minimize harmful air emissions
- Zero discharges from offshore platforms
- Ensure sustainable use of the marine resources

Implementing the actions of the sea-based activities segment is one of the key factors for enabling the vision of the Baltic Sea Action Plan of reaching a healthy Baltic Sea environment, and for supporting a wide range of activities in the Baltic Sea region that do not compromise ecological, societal, and long-term economic sustainability. HELCOM has the ambition to work continuously towards making the Baltic Sea a front-runner in the field of environmentally sustainable sea-based activities, including shipping, fisheries, offshore wind farms and infrastructure. HELCOM recognises the need for significant expansion of offshore wind energy in order to reach the climate targets for 2030 and 2050 and will take action to ensure that the expansion of the offshore sector is achieved sustainably and with respect to our commitments on biodiversity and a healthy marine environment. Apart from implementing the actions set out in the Baltic Sea Action Plan, this will also require the implementation of other instruments such as the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise and the enforcement of applicable national, regional and international regulations in the field of sea-based activities, as well as active voluntary commitments by industry.

In order to minimize the short and long-term impacts of seabed mining, minerals should not be exploited before the effects of seabed mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities have been sufficiently researched. The risks need to be understood and technologies and operational practices should be able to demonstrate that the environment is not seriously harmed by seabed mining activities, in line with the precautionary principle.