



Outcome of the Seventh Meeting of the Ad hoc Drafting Group for the Updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (DG BSAP 7-2021)

Introduction

- 0.1 The Seventh Meeting of the Drafting Group for the Updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (DG BSAP 7-2021) was held online on 15 June 2021.
- 0.2 All the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention, except for the EU, attended the Meeting, as well as Observers from CCB and WWF. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.
- 0.3 The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Rüdiger Stempel, HELCOM Executive Secretary. Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary and Ms. Susanna Kaasinen, Associate Professional Secretary from the HELCOM Secretariat acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

- 1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda of the Meeting as contained in document 1-1.

Agenda Item 2 Draft updated BSAP

- 2.1 The Meeting recalled that HOD 60-2021 has approved the formulation and target years for the majority of the actions proposed for the updated BSAP. The Meeting further recalled that some actions approved by HOD 60-2021 were still to be reviewed by Contracting Parties and that some actions were still left open.
- 2.2 The Meeting recalled that the document containing the additional information on the actions will be submitted for approval to HOD 60A-2021, following which it will be submitted as a supporting document to the BSAP to the Ministerial Meeting 20 October 2021.
- 2.3 The Meeting discussed the open actions and any remaining open issues in relation to the proposed changes (red text) that have been identified as part of the review following HOD 60-2021 (document 2-1).
- 2.4 The Meeting noted that national consultation on the agreed actions is still ongoing in Poland and invited Poland to clarify their position in writing to the Secretariat (susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi), **by 30 June 2021**.
- 2.5 The Meeting took note of the comment by Latvia that elimination of hotspots is a resource intensive exercise and should, where possible, be aligned with timelines for external funding instruments.
- 2.1 The Meeting further developed the formulation of the actions for which issues have been raised as indicated in the Excel attachment to the Outcome (column "Proposal by DG BSAP 7-2021") and agreed to submit the proposals in light green and dark green without red text to HOD 60A-2021 for approval, as well

as to continue the discussion on the yellow actions and the light green actions containing any remaining red text in DG BSAP 8-2021.

2.2 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to submit all proposals for amendments to actions with remaining open issues in writing **by 18 August 2021** to the Secretariat (susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi).

2.3 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to contact the EU regarding their comment on action HLN07/HLN11 to clarify the scope of the action and noted the study reservation by Russia on the action until the scope is further clarified.

2.4 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to contact the EU to clarify the proposed changes to the target year and evaluation interval of action SE30/SN33 and the linkage to EU reporting.

2.5 The Meeting acknowledged, noting the ongoing consultation by Poland, that the agreed actions for which changes were introduced at HOD 60-2021, and for which either no issues have been raised or issues have been resolved intersessionally, can be moved to the category “approved by HOD 60-2021” (dark green) once Poland has clarified their position.

2.6 The Meeting recalled that HOD 60-2021 has agreed on the preamble to the updated BSAP, with remaining open issues presented in square brackets, and has also agreed to retain square brackets for paragraphs 28-30 on the adoption of documents until the documents in question have been adopted by the Ministerial Meeting (document 2-1-Rev.1).

2.7 The Meeting discussed the remaining open issue in the preamble and agreed on a proposal to be submitted to HOD 60A-2021 as included in **Annex 2**.

2.8 The Meeting recalled that HOD 60-2021 has 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.

2.9 The Meeting further developed the definitions and agreed to keep the changes to the definitions and reporting mechanisms for the ecological and management objectives in square brackets and invited the Contracting Parties to provide any additional amendments to the Secretariat (susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi) **by 10 August 2021**, with the intention of continuing the discussion at DG BSAP 8-2021 and approving the finalized formulation in HOD 60A-2021.

2.10 The Meeting recalled that HOD 60-2021 has agreed on the introductions to the segments, with remaining open issues presented in square brackets.

2.11 The Meeting further developed the formulation of the remaining open issues for the introductions to the various segments as presented in **Annex 2** and agreed to submit the agreed texts for approval to HOD 60A-2021.

2.12 The Meeting took note that Russia still needs to check with national experts the proposal on integrating the operational reduction targets for marine litter, which were agreed by HOD 60-2021, to the introduction to the Hazardous substances and litter segment.

2.13 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to find a better place for the text on seabed mining that was inserted to the Sea-based activities introduction and pointed out the importance of indicating that sand and gravel extraction are excluded.

2.14 The Meeting took note of the information by CCB on a recent European Parliament resolution regarding seabed mining and the view that the action on a moratorium on seabed mining should be reintroduced as an action instead of including the proposed paragraph in the introduction.

2.15 The Meeting discussed how to handle editorial comments submitted after HOD 60-2021, supported that a linguistic review of the BSAP is performed and acknowledged that editorial changes proposed after HOD 60-2021 are forwarded to the external reviewers.

Agenda Item 3 Next meetings

3.1 The Meeting agreed that the next meeting of the drafting group will be held on 2 September 2021.

Agenda Item 4 Any other business

4.1 The Meeting did not discuss any other business.

Agenda Item 5 Outcome of the Meeting

5.1 The draft outcome was prepared by the Secretariat and adopted via correspondence.

Annex 1. List of participants

Name	Representing	Organization	Email address
Nathia Brandtberg	Denmark	Ministry of Environment	nathb@mim.dk
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Annex 2. Open issues in the draft update BSAP

Overarching preamble

10. ~~[AGREE/SUPPORT intentions/WILLSUPPORT a HELCOM process~~ 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

[**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 where available.

[**Management objectives** describe the desired change in pressure or conservation status effect of the measures as a result of actions and measures/management measures.] Progress towards reaching the objectives will ~~be~~ tracked by using HELCOM indicators and pressure targets where available.]

Segment introductions

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.

This emphasizes the need to follow the precautionary principle. While recognizing activities of vital societal needs, increased inputs of nitrogen or phosphorus to a basin should [to the extent possible] be avoided/[are to be avoided to the extent possible] until both MAI and good status with respect to eutrophication have been reached, even in basins where inputs are already below the NIC.

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% by 2025 and by 2030- by 50% by 2030 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. In order to reach these targets, Contracting Parties will implement the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in addition to other initiatives.~~ 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 ~~pollution~~ ship-source 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 on the marine environment that are not yet covered by mandatory international regulations, such ~~as those resulting from~~ underwater noise, biofouling, and ~~grey water discharges~~.

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“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 ~~there are concerns with~~ ~~{fishing mortality}~~ ~~for many stocks~~. 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.”

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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~~ about 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.

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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.]