Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries
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FISH 12-2020

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Background

This document contains a revised draft for the BSAP seabased segment preamble as modified by FISH 12-2020. It is emphasized that due to lack of time at FISH 12-2020 the text was not finalized and the proposed amendments have not been agreed by the Meeting, but simply present various proposals made during the Meeting for further consideration in the continued drafting of the preamble. The Meeting invited HOD 59-2020 to consider the views expressed and the DG BSAP to consider them in its further work in spring 2021.

HOD 57-2019 discussed the style of writing of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). Accordingly, the updated BSAP should be a relatively short document written in a straightforward way but should at the same time provide sufficient supporting information to facilitate future follow-up of implementation (Outcome, para 3.27-3.28). Overall the updated BSAP should maintain strong links with global processes and commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity targets and the EU Green Deal, with the aim that HELCOM can function as one of the platforms for ensuring implementation of global commitments. A holistic approach should be used when viewing and addressing the effects of human activities and subsequent pressures affecting the Baltic Sea. Aspirations are to be differentiated from concrete actions and the operative sections more clearly present the plan for action. Detailed information and supporting information on the actions will be made available as annexes to the respective segment.

The Secretariat was tasked to prepare an outline of how the updated BSAP will be structured to facilitate the drafting process. A proposal was shared for information with the Working Group meetings in spring 2020 and later approved by HOD 58-2020 (Outcome, para 4.6-4.16). According to the Work Plan for the BSAP update, the first full draft is to be available at HOD in December 2020.

The updated BSAP will have a layered preamble which will also include segment-specific introductory text. HOD 57-2019 requested the Secretariat to prepare a first draft of the introductory text for the respective segments.

Such text could focus on aspirations and strategic decision for the respective segment and also recall other relevant legislation associated to the respective segment. This introduction should not contain more than 1200 words and will be supported by reference boxes and visualizations. Operative sections, including the agreed actions, will be presented for each segment and associated goal of the updated BSAP. With the more strategic and higher level ambitions being expressed in introductory passages, the operative sections will focus on the plan for action. Each operative section will be initiated by a brief description (maximum ½ page) of the current state of the Baltic Sea based on the latest HELCOM assessments (Outcome HOD 56-2019, para 2.23 and HOD 58-2020, para 4.8 and document 4-11) . This will be followed by an account of the HELCOM objectives, representing the desired state of the environment or the acceptable level of pressure (maximum ½ page). The agreed actions will then be sorted thematically.

This document contains the first draft of the segment specific introduction for sea-based activities, as prepared by the Secretariat at the request of HOD 57-2019. The first drafts for each segment are presented to the respective Working Groups for comments in autumn 2020 and then to GEAR 22-2020 and HOD 59-2020. Further work on the segment specific text will be undertaken by the Segment Teams under the DG BSAP.

Annex 1. Comments to the segment specific introductions for the updated BSAP

Sea-based activities

The following comments were given by MARITIME 20-2020 (footnotes), DG BSAP SEA 1-2020 (comments and all track changes), ~~and~~ RESPONSE 28-2020 (comments) and FISH 12-2020.

Segment sea-based activities - Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities[1]

Sea based activities include all human undertakings at sea, from commercial shipping and recreational boating, construction work and dredging, to fisheries and the extraction of minerals, oil and gas. Hence, achieving the overall strategic goal of the segment requires cooperation on a wide range of topics and involves several objectives and actors.

Ecological objectives are agreed on to ensure no or minimal disturbance to biodiversity and the ecosystem and support a sustainable use of the Baltic Sea. [such as avoiding harm to marine life from man-made noise, and ensuring that activities affecting seabed habitats do not threaten the viability of species, populations or communities][2].

Management objectives describe the desired effect of managing the human activities at sea. [Examples include for example minimizing inputs of nutrients, hazardous substances and litter at sea, eradicating illegal discharges and preventing accidental pollution, ~~-~~minimising the negative impact of fishing activities on marine biodiversity and habitats by applying the ecosystem approach and~~,~~ halting the introduction of non-indigenous species~~.~~, ~~minimizing inputs of nutrients, hazardous substances and litter at sea, eradicating illegal discharges and preventing accidental pollution.~~ They also encompass ensuring effective emergency and response capabilities, minimizing harmful emissions to the air, zero discharges from offshore platforms and sustainable use of marine resources such as bottom substrates. ~~including e.g. fish and bottom substrates and zero discharges from offshore platforms. and preventing cumulative effects~~]

The objectives are to a large part met through international regulations and agreements. In addition, ~~national~~ development of national environmentally sustainable marine spatial plans is a potentially important contributor to achieving the overarching goal.

[1] MARITIME 20-2020: ~~This is to refer only to those CPs that are States, i.e. not the EU which is not a IMO Member State but an IMO Observer, as is HELCOM~~. DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: General comment: the ecosystem approach should be introduced also to this segment specific preamble

[2] MARITIME 20-2020: Comment not to mention underwater noise but delete this part or make it more general.

Commented [A1]: FISH 12-2020: Fisheries is underrepresented in the draft, although it is mentioned in the beginning. The importance of fisheries should not be lost among shipping etc.
Extraction of minerals, sand etc is of great importance in addition to dredging.
It was noted that fish related issues are also covered by the Biodiversity segment.
FISH 12-2020: HOD 56-2019 supported that the operative sections of the updated BSAP should be shaped around the ecological objectives, management objectives and the associated actions for the achievement of the BSAP goals (Outcome, para 2.23). Fisheries is not covered in the Biodiversity section so it should be covered here.
The Meeting agreed that the preamble should be structured in the same way for all the segments.

Commented [A2]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting noted that the footnote incorrectly duplicated footnote 7. The footnote was corrected to reflect the general comment by MARITIME 20-2020 that the ecosystem approach should be introduced also to this segment specific preamble.

Commented [A3]: RESPONSE 28-2020: The meeting noted a general comment that discharges (e.g. related to MARPOL Annexes I-VI) and accidental pollution is not sufficiently addressed by the preamble.

The Meeting also noted that a connection between the preamble and the Response related actions should be made more clear.

Commented [A4]: FISH 12-2020: There should be a reference to Good Environmental Status (or expressed in other terms), The list of pressures should also include fishing practices which impact ecosystems.

Commented [A5]: This is considered more of a management objective

Commented [A6]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting noted that this paragraph reflects the agreed ecological objectives for the sea-based activities segment. The Meeting consequently agreed that the text does not need to be amended.

Commented [A7]: RESPONSE 28-2020: The Meeting noted a proposal that the resuspension of contaminated sediments should be mentioned here. The Meeting also noted that submerged hazardous objects are not reflected. The Meeting supported the comment by MARITIME 20-2020 that the text in square brackets should be deleted or made more general. A general comment was noted that manmade noise may me more appropriate as part of the management objectives. The Meeting, however, noted that the current ...

Commented [A8]: Prpose to delete

Commented [A9]: FISH 12-2020: This section is mainly addressing shipping. It needs to reference to the ecosystem approach and include other pressures (fishing!). Also sustainable use

Commented [A10]: FISH 12-2020: This again is mainly focussing on shipping (IMO) and needs to be rewritten.

Commented [A11]: FISH 12-2020: see wording in footnote 7.

The conduct of human activities and infrastructure at sea matters [3]

As a wide range of human activities affect the environmental status of the Baltic Sea. ~~are involved in the segment, it is not possible to list them comprehensively, but the most widely distributed ones can be identified.~~ The Baltic Sea is one of the most intensively navigated areas of the world, and the number and size of operating ships keep growing~~.~~ Today, there are typically around [1,500] [4]commercial ships *en route* in the Baltic Sea at any given moment. While shipping is considered ~~to be the~~the most efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-effective mode of transport for cargo, there are risks involved, as well as consequences for the environment such as underwater noise. Fishing takes place in large areas in the Baltic Sea. Bottom trawling causes physical disturbance to the sea bead and bycatches of birds and marine mammals take place in gillnet fisheries. A number of other activities such as mineral extraction, dredging also causes physical disturbance of the seabed. Another activity on the rise in the Baltic Sea is the installation of offshore wind farms, and potentially also other forms of marine energy production. The laying of cables and pipelines has also been increasing in the past decades. ~~Physical disturbance of the seabed is caused by a number of activities such as trawling, mineral extraction, dredging as well as shipping.~~ Other ~~examples of~~wide-ranging activities associated with environmental impacts include ~~the extraction of fish~~fishing, tourism, leisure activities~~,~~ etc.~~and more~~.

Key pressures associated with these include emissions and discharges in connection to shipping, seabed disturbance or habitat loss from e.g. dredging, construction work and bottom trawling, underwater noise caused by various activities and the introduction of non-indigenous species. ~~Further pressures from fishing include bycatch of protected, endangered and threatened species, loss of biodiversity, shifts in the food web and reductions in reproductive capacity and resilience.~~ ~~Related e~~Environmental concerns related to the installation of offshore windfarms include for example impacts of underwater noise during construction, and disturbance effects from the installations during their operation.

~~The Baltic Sea is one of the most intensively navigated areas of the world, and the number and size of operating ships keep growing. Today, there are typically around [1,500] [5]commercial ships *en route* in the Baltic Sea at any given moment. While shipping is considered to be the most efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-effective mode of transport for cargo, there are risks involved, as well as consequences for the environment. Another activity on the rise in the Baltic Sea is the installation of offshore wind farms, and potentially also other forms of marine energy production. Related environmental concerns include for example impacts of underwater noise during construction, and disturbance effects from the installations during their operation. The laying of cables and pipelines has also been increasing in the past decades. Physical disturbance of the seabed is caused by a number of activities such as trawling, mineral extraction, dredging as well as shipping. Other examples of activities associated with environmental impacts include the extraction of fish, tourism, leisure activities, and more.~~

Commented [A12]: Maybe refrase heading: Human activitites and pressures to the environment in the Baltic Sea..?

Commented [A13]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting revised the text based on the comment made by MARITIME 20-2020

Commented [A14]: FISH 12-2020: Again, very much focused on shipping. This detailed information is not needed in a preamble. Information on the other uses is less detailed here.

Commented [A15]: RESPONSE 28-2020: The Meeting noted that shipping nevertheless has environmental consequences. The Meeting proposed to change the word "cargo" to "global trade".

Commented [A16]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting agreed that concrete numbers should be included also for other activities than shipping, if available.

Commented [A17]: Repetiotion – do we need this?

[3] MARITIME 20-2020: General comment: Pressures and activities are mixed in this part. However, the segment should start by listing all activities. And then move on to pressures.

[4] DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: Check latest figures and include reference

[5] MARITIME 20-2020: ~~Check latest figures and include reference.~~

Sea-based activities impact on and are impacted by climate change

Many sea-based activities occurring in the Baltic Sea are sources of carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. Climate change can also have an impact on all activities. Reduced ice-coverage will increase the potential for shipping, however ~~and more extreme weather conditions~~ may also increase the risk of accidents and unintentional cargo losses as will ~~the~~ more extreme weather conditions. Such conditions also present additional challenges to response operations combatting spills at sea and on shore. Regulatory measures to decarbonise shipping are increasing and driving important adaptations across the industry.

~~Port operations, exploration activities, fisheries, construction work and many other activities are also likely to be affected, underlining the importance of adapting to the situation and increasing resilience to climate change in the Baltic Sea.~~Most notable climate change impacts to fisheries will take place in the northern Baltic Sea. Trawl fishing season will be extended, trawling areas shifted towards south and shallower areas, target species compositions shifted towards species preferring warmer and more eutrophied waters, and winter-time coastal fishing decreased due to diminishing ice-cover.

Off-shore wind farms and other construction will be affected by potentially increasing coastal erosion due to declining ice cover and rising sea level.

Most ecosystem services are expected to decline, while only the cultural services, connected to recreation, could gain from the climatic changes due to longer summers and higher air and water temperatures. Ecosystem services in the northmost and coastal semi-enclosed areas with lower salinities will be affected first.

Aquaculture will possibly phase a shift to the cultivation of freshwater tolerant fish species, plants and invertebrates. The likelihood of storm damage and production costs could increase due to possible shift of farms to more exposed locations. Uncertainty about climate impacts might promote Atlantic type offshore, semi-closed aquatic and land-based systems, with higher operating costs but greater environmental control and also the potential for species diversification in the latter case.

Many other activities, such as port operations and exploration activities are also likely to be affected, underlining the importance of adapting to the situation and increasing resilience to climate change in the Baltic Sea.

ACTION AREAS[6]

[*tentative, to be replaced by more specific wording when new information is available*:] Key actions areas of the segment focus, *inter alia*, on minimizing the inputs from the transportation sector regarding nutrients, hazardous substances and marine litter. Other focal areas include ensuring best practises and regulations to avoid harm to marine life from underwater noise, reducing the level of disturbance to the seabed from sea-based activities, reducing bycatches and safeguarding foodweb integrity by applying the ecosystem based approach in fisheries, ~~, reducing bycatch of e.g., marine mammals and birds in static fishing gear, safeguarding foodweb integrity by applying the ecosystem approach~~ and enforcing regulations to halt the introduction of non-indigenous species through e.g. ballast water and biofouling.

Commented [A18]: This part is also now mainly focused on shipping. The Secretariat suggests adding these short summary texts on the climate change key messages produced by HELCOM Baltic Earth EN CLIME. Please note that the text is only in draft status and currently under peer review and will likely change still beofre the BS Climate Change Fact Sheet is published.

Commented [A19]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting noted that it may be advisable to consider drafting the preamble in a way that more clearly distinguishes between the various activities under the segment, noting, however that the agreed page limit (2 pages) sets some challenges to this.

Commented [A20]: To be shifted under objectives?

Commented [A21]: RESPONSE 28-2020: The Meeting noted that the action areas described here do not clearly link to the work of Response.

[6] MARITIME 20-2020: General comment: All the text under action areas should be in square brackets until the the new proposed actions have been agreed for inclusion in the updated BSAP.

HELCOM will also continue its efforts to facilitate the development of coherent Maritime Spatial Plans applying the ecosystem based approach. ~~and environmentally sustainable maritime spatial plans~~[7] by the Baltic Sea riparian countries.

Connection to other segments

Reaching the objectives for sea-based activities contributes to achieving the goals of the segments "Eutrophication" and "Hazardous substances and litter", as well as the goal of the "Biodiversity" segment to achieve a Baltic Sea ecosystem that is healthy and resilient.

Connection to other treaties

Due to its international character, shipping is regulated mainly by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which is a United Nations Specialized Agency. Baltic Sea riparian countries~~Contracting Parties of HELCOM~~[8] contribute actively in the IMO to developing new internationally applicable regulations designed to protect the sensitive marine environment of the Baltic Sea. HELCOM plays an important role in facilitating this work.

[other relevant examples to be added as well?]

National and regional recommendations and regulations developed within HELCOM are important in complementing the international regulatory frameworks.

Link to relevant SDG

Work in the sea-based activities segment contributes to meeting a number of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan both on the national and regional levels will be of great importance in meeting these commitments and the SDGs as a whole.

Commented [A22]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting noted that within the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG the formulation used is "coherent maritime spatial plans applying the ecosystem based approach. .

Commented [A23]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting agreed that the horizontal segment should be referenced in this paragraph as well.

Commented [A24]: FISH 12-2020: (…treaties and conventions)
Again, very much focussed on shipping.
Also refer to international agreements such as ASCOBANS/CMS, WTO (discussion on fisheries subsidies), CBD, EU Biodiversity Strategy

Commented [A25]: FISH 12-2020: The most relevant SDGs are 12, 14. These should be specifically mentioned here.

[7] MARITIME 20-2020: Comment: Check terminology throughout. Ecosystem based MSP would be preferable over sustainable MSP? HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to consider?

[8] MARITIME 20-2020: This is to refer only to those CPs that are States, i.e. not the EU which is not an IMO Member State, but an IMO Observer, as is HELCOM. Nota bene from DG BSAP SEA 1-2020; The EU is not an IMO Member State. The EC is an IMO Observer, as is HELCOM. The Meeting noted a general reservation by the EU on the footnote as drafted by MARITIME 20-2020.

Operative section – HELCOM leads for sustainable sea-based activities[9]

Description of current state

Although there has been significant progress in many areas of sea-based activities, it is clear that further actions are needed. In addition, a number of currently unregulated pressures are to be addressed. Many pressures can be reduced, or even eliminated, by regulation and technical innovation. Another important component is to formulate and implement actions so that they can support the development of environmentally sustainable economic and social activities.

International regulations concerning emissions and discharges from ships have become more stringent over the past years. Energy efficiency of ships is improving overall and a downward trend is also evident for other types of emissions and discharges. The improvements are largely attributed to tightened regulations under the IMO MARPOL Convention and notably the designation of the Baltic Sea as a NO_X emission control area.

Nevertheless, shipping still contributes to roughly 300.000 tonnes of nitrogen oxides, 10.000 tonnes of sulphur oxides, and 10.000 tonnes of particulate matter to the Baltic Sea. There are also several more areas in need of improvements, both for the protection of the marine environment and for safety at sea. Addressing underwater noise and marine litter, as well as discharges of food waste and grey water from ships are important. Other examples of areas where the Baltic Sea region has a key role are the development and promotion of green technologies, innovation to optimize the shipping sector regarding logistics and automation, and in improving the efficiency in detecting and recovering hazardous oil spills. The risk of accidents, together with new chemical products being transported in the Baltic Sea and the increasing likelihood of extreme weather conditions under climate change, demonstrate the continuous need to develop the response capacities and cooperation of HELCOM Contracting Parties. Underwater noise from various sea-based activities, the discharge of cargo residues and the use of toxic anti-fouling systems are examples of other threats to the Baltic Sea for which the current regulatory framework is relaxed at best.

Description of desired state

HELCOM has the ambition to work continuously for the Baltic Sea to be a forerunner in the field of environmentally sustainable maritime activities, including shipping as well as infrastructure.

Implementing the actions of the sea-based activities segment aims to reach:

[*3-4 sentencess, to be developed*][10]

- Best practices and guidance to mitigate and minimize negative effects on marine life
- -xx
- An ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning that is aligned with objectives form good environmental status[11]

The development of environmentally sustainable sea-based activities is one of the key factors for enabling the vision of the Baltic Sea Action Plan to reach a healthy Baltic Sea environment, and for supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities in the Baltic Sea region.

Commented [A26]: FISH 12-2020: Again, a lot on shipping, many details not needed in this section, but other pressures such as fishing are underrepresented. All other key seabased activities need to be resonated throughout this document.

Commented [A27]: RESPONSE 28-2020: The Meeting agreed that this should be redrafted to read "efficient preparedness and response to oil and HNS spills, both at sea and on the shore".

Commented [A28]: FISH 12-2020: …and fisheries

Commented [A29]: DG BSAP SEA 1-2020: The Meeting noted that this sentence needs to be carefully redrafted in the future development of the preamble.

[9] MARITIME 20-2020: General comment: the segment preamble, in particular under description of the current state, has a high focus on shipping while other activities such as offshore platforms, windfarms and fisheries need more emphasis.

[10] MARITIME 20-2020: General comment: FISH Group to consider the need to include a point on ecosystem-based management of fisheries here.

[11] MARITIME 20-2020: General comment: The EU Biodiversity Strategy may need to be reflected in this context as it may have impacts on MSP in marine protected areas.