



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries

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Background

The Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission was held on 6 March 2018, in Brussels, Belgium, under the EU Chairmanship of HELCOM.

This document presents the Outcome of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting including the adopted Declaration of the Ministers of the Environment of the Baltic Coastal Countries and the EU Environment Commissioner, HELCOM Brussels Declaration 2018 (Annex 11 to the Outcome).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information from the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 and use the information as appropriate.



BRUSSELS
**MINISTERIAL
MEETING 2018**
HELCOM

Minutes of the Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission

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Minutes of the Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission

Introduction

0.1 The Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission was attended by representatives of the Governments of all Contracting Parties, by Chairs and Vice-Chairs of HELCOM Groups, and the following Observer organizations: Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment (BFFE), Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP), KIMO International, OCEANA, OSPAR Commission, Race for the Baltic, Sea Alarm Foundation, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). In addition, a representative of Stockholm University Baltic Sea Centre participated as invited guest. The list of participants is included as **Annex 1**.

0.2 The Meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Helsinki Commission, Ms. Marianne Wenning.

0.3 Mr. Karmenu Vella, Commissioner, European Commission DG Environment, welcomed the Meeting to Brussels. He reminded that the purpose of the meeting was to safeguard the vital shared resources of the Baltic Sea and highlighted that EU as chair of HELCOM has worked to secure improved regional governance in the Baltic Sea region, seeing that it is crucial to work together at regional and international level to reach healthy seas and oceans. Mr. Vella commended the "State of the Baltic Sea" report as a great achievement that can be used to draw up a course of action in HELCOM for the coming years. He also thanked the HELCOM Contracting Parties being EU Member States for the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the Baltic Sea region and HELCOM for the work on coordinating implementation of ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals in the region (**Annex 2**).

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

Document: Provisional Programme and Provisional Annotated Agenda

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Provisional Annotated Agenda as submitted to the Meeting, included as **Annex 3**.

Agenda Item 2 Introduction

Documents: None. Website: <http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi/>

2.1 The Meeting took note of the video on the HELCOM "State of the Baltic Sea" report, reflecting the latest assessment on progress towards reaching good environmental status for the Baltic Sea. The report is the outcome of a large-scale collaboration among Baltic Sea countries and EU in HELCOM, and provides background information for the Ministerial Meeting and the draft Ministerial Declaration to be considered for adoption.

Agenda Item 3 Ministerial debate

Documents: The report "Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan 2018 – three years left to reach good environmental status"; Draft Brussels Ministerial Declaration

3.1 The Chair introduced the draft Declaration submitted to this meeting based on the outcome of HELCOM 39-2018, and pointed out that the draft Declaration acknowledges the positive effects that have been achieved over the past years while also addressing the challenges left to meet the existing objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) by 2021.

3.2 The Meeting took note of the report "Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan 2018 – three years left to reach good environmental status", as presented by the Executive Secretary of the Helsinki Commission, Ms. Monika Stankiewicz. The report presents how far the Baltic Sea countries have come in carrying out the agreements of the BSAP and the ongoing activities in HELCOM to fulfil the implementation. The report provides background information for the Ministerial Meeting and the draft Ministerial Declaration to be considered for adoption.

3.3 The Chair presented the following questions for the Ministerial debate:

- I. What should be HELCOM's priorities to accomplish the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021? Which are the national actions you will take in your country and which are the top three actions that Parties should do jointly to achieve good environmental status?
- II. What opportunities do you see from our cooperation to support implementation of UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea? Is HELCOM as organization fit to do it, and if not, what are the key changes needed so we would be?

3.4 The Chair opened the floor for the debate on question number one.

3.5 The Meeting took note of the input by the Commissioner, European Union, Mr. Karmenu Vella. The EU outlined three top priority actions for HELCOM; eutrophication, marine litter and underwater noise. Mr. Vella also wished the Ministers to give a strong mandate to HELCOM for updating the BSAP in 2021 and take the necessary measures to improve the state of the sea, also noting that a strong sense of commitment of all Contracting Parties is a necessity for the implementation of the BSAP.

3.6 The Meeting took note of the input by the Minister for Environment and Food, Denmark, Mr. Esben Lunde Larsen. Denmark underlined that the updating of the BSAP needs to be discussed on a political level, taking both environmental and economic considerations into account. Mr. Lunde Larsen mentioned Danish achievements so far, including a considerable reduction in nutrient input and the designation and management of marine protected areas. He also informed that Denmark plans to use the extra nutrient reductions to the Kattegat to expand the aquaculture sector. The examples of newest national work are ongoing national actions on nutrient reduction specified according to the needs of specific catchment areas, designation of new marine protected areas, and the reduction of marine litter.

3.7 The Meeting took note of the input by the Minister of the Environment, Estonia, Mr. Siim Kiisler. Estonia proposed to focus regional efforts on reduction of eutrophication, hazardous substances and marine litter. Based on national experience Mr. Kiisler also proposed to develop regional-wide standards on more advanced technology to reduce hazardous substances from municipal and industrial waste water.

Estonia also stressed that plastic wastes do not belong in the sea and underlined the need to develop plastic free technologies and plastic free products.

3.8 The Meeting took note of the input by the Minister of the Environment, Energy and Housing, Finland, Mr. Kimmo Tiilikainen. Finland noted that with only three years left to reach the goals of the BSAP, HELCOM is lagging behind in the implementation. Nationally, Finland will focus on the implementation of remaining national actions and as incoming Chair of HELCOM Finland will facilitate the implementation of the joint actions. Mr. Tiilikainen highlighted the need for political commitments in order to reach as many actions as possible and also stressed the need to look to the future, and identify the necessary next steps.

3.9 The Meeting took note of the input by the Deputy Head of Government and Environmental Minister, Åland, Ms. Camilla Gunell. Ms. Gunell highlighted the support by Åland for the update of the BSAP with the aim to achieve a plastic free and clean Baltic Sea.

3.10 The Meeting took note of the input by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany, Ms. Barbara Hendricks. Germany outlined the following priorities for HELCOM; reduction in the introduction of nutrients and hazardous substances, marine litter, and biodiversity protection. Ms. Hendricks mentioned recent actions at the nation level including new ordinances on the use of fertilizers and sewage sludge with the aim to support nutrient recycling. Germany also stressed that the precautionary principle and polluter pays principle are guiding the Helsinki Convention and raised doubt about end-of-pipe solutions.

3.11 The Meeting took note of the input by the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia. Mr. Jānis Eglīts. Latvia acknowledged that the BSAP is yet to be fully implemented in Latvia. In order to speed up the implementation, Latvia is focusing on actions related to circular economy, management measures addressing maritime spatial planning and spatial protection, and the use of blue catch crops as a method to reduce nutrients in coastal waters. A specific national measure is the reduction of use of plastic bags.

3.12 The Meeting took note of the input by the Minister of Environment, Lithuania, Mr. Kęstutis Navickas. Lithuania informed about the launch of a water development programme, including river basin management, environmental protection, drinking water supply, and waste water management. Lithuania also stressed the importance of transparency and information sharing in the HELCOM area with regards to transboundary issues such as development of offshore oil exploration and gas pipe-lines.

3.13 The Meeting took note of the input by the Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation, Poland, Ms. Anna Moskwa. She informed that Poland is working closely with neighbouring countries in cases of accidents of oil and hazardous substances. Poland is also focusing on testing of environmentally friendly fishing gear to minimize impact of fishing gear on the marine environment and actively participation in cleaning the Baltic Sea from marine litter, including derelict fishing gear. As prioritized joint actions Poland proposes to focus HELCOM work on dumped chemical munitions and unexploded ordinances, on reducing the amount of waste from ships including through improving port reception facilities, and maritime spatial planning.

3.14 The Meeting took note of the input by the Director, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, high-level representative of Russia, Mr. Nuritdin Inamov. Russia informed of activities taken to implement the BSAP, including a reform of the national environmental legislation that addresses new waste management approaches and the introduction of best available technologies to be used as a basis

to modernize industries in Russia. Mr. Inamov also pointed out that the waste water treatment plant in St. Petersburg has best cleaning efficiency in Russia and that the release of sewage from Kaliningrad has been reduced significantly. Two new protected areas have furthermore been recently established in Russian waters. Maritime Spatial Planning is seen as an important tool to achieve the goals of the BSAP.

3.15 The Meeting took note of the input by the Minister for the Environment, Sweden, Ms. Karolina Skog. Ms. Skog reminded about the costs of inaction and how the healthy sea can serve the economy and development in the region. Sweden proposes to focus HELCOM work on finalizing the establishment of the coherent network of marine protected areas, reducing eutrophication and to work together with local communities to find suitable measures to reduce the impact on the Baltic Sea. At the national level, Sweden is focusing on the implementation of national measures to reach the BSAP commitments.

3.16 The Chair thanked the participants for their contributions and opened the floor for question number two on the opportunities for HELCOM to support implementation of UN Agenda 2030 in the Baltic Sea.

3.17 The Chair thanked the participants for their contribution to the Ministerial Debate and the proposals put forward for future HELCOM work. The details of the debate are reflected in **Annex 4**.

Agenda Item 4 Statements by HELCOM Observers

Documents: Contribution by the OSPAR Commission submitted in advance of the meeting; Statements by Observer organizations distributed during the meeting.

4.1 The Meeting took note of the statement of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), presented by Mr. Hans Olsson (**Annex 5**). CBSS noted with pleasure that HELCOM has aligned its targets with the UN Agenda 2030, the Aichi Biodiversity targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity and furthermore expressed appreciation for the voluntary commitments taken by HELCOM at the UN Conference on the SDG goals. CBSS welcomed that HELCOM addresses climate risks and climate change and suggested further collaboration with HELCOM in the field of Maritime Policy.

4.2 The Meeting took note of the contribution by the OSPAR Commission as submitted in advance of the Meeting and of the statement of the OSPAR Commission, presented by the Executive Secretary of OSPAR Ms. Susana Salvador (**Annex 6**). OSPAR highlighted the shared vision by HELCOM and OSPAR on the ecosystem approach as well as sharing the transition area between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea as a palpable basis for cooperation. Ms. Salvador mentioned the topics of underwater noise, marine litter, invasive species and conservation of biodiversity as scope for further collaborative activities. OSPAR concluded that regional collaboration will play a substantive role in supporting the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030.

4.3 The Meeting took note of the statement of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), presented by President Mr. Jörgen Pettersson (**Annex 7**). Mr. Pettersson underlined that parliaments and parliamentary organizations around the Baltic Sea will continue to support the timely implementation of the BSAP, but also demanded implementation on schedule by the governments. BSPC also called for more regular HELCOM Ministerial Meetings, to bring the issues of a clean Baltic Sea more closely into the political

debate. BSPC supports HELCOM as the coordinator of the regional implementation of UN Agenda 2030 through strengthened implementation of the HELCOM BSAP.

4.4 The Meeting took note of the joint statement by World Wildlife Fund, Coalition Clean Baltic and OCEANA, presented by Ms. Hanna Paulomäki (**Annex 8**). The NGO's stressed the need for a strong BSAP and for urgent implementation of the measures covered by the plan and beyond. The NGO's also emphasized cross sectoral implementation and cooperation between ministries, and highlighted that measures to improve the Baltic Sea must be seen as an investment in the region's sustainable economic and social development.

4.5 The Meeting took note of the statement of Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment, presented by Ms. Liisa Pietola (**Annex 9**). BFFE reminded of the work the agricultural sector has done so far to reduce nutrient loading to the Baltic Sea and welcomed a closer cooperation between HELCOM and the farmers' organizations. BFFE appreciated that the Declaration addresses internal nutrient loading in the Baltic Sea and the emphasis on safe nutrient recycling. Ms. Pietola stressed that climate change, the impacts of which will also affect the nutrient load from agriculture, must be taken into account when updating the BSAP.

4.6 The Meeting took note of the joint statement of KIMO International and Race for the Baltic, presented by Mr. Robert Beest and Mr. Marc Klaus (**Annex 10**). KIMO International and Race for the Baltic highlighted involvement of local stakeholders as fundamental to achieving concomitant sustainable economic growth and good environmental status in the Baltic Sea. Mr. Beest and Mr. Klaus urged HELCOM to step up implementation of the BSAP by setting measurable targets and achievable goals for specific stakeholders, with municipalities pinpointed as key stakeholders to influence and coordinate activities at the local level.

4.7 The Meeting thanked the Observers for the statements and expressed a wish for the good cooperation between HELCOM and Observers to continue also in the future.

Agenda Item 5 Adoption of the HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration

Documents: Draft 2018 HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration

5.1 The Meeting adopted the 2018 HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration (**Annex 11**).

Agenda Item 6 Closure of the meeting

Documents: Draft list of decisions

6.1 The Meeting was presented with a draft list of decisions for adoption.

6.2 The Meeting thanked the European Commission for excellent hosting of the Meeting.

6.3 The Commissioner thanked all Contracting Parties for their collaborative approach and Ms. Marianne Wenning, HELCOM Chair, for her excellent work.

6.4 The Chair thanked the participants for the successful adoption of the 2018 HELCOM Brussels Declaration, for their contributions and support for the Helsinki Convention, the Baltic Sea Action Plan and

their future development in line with global processes under Agenda 2030, and concluded that the Declaration will provide the roadmap for HELCOM for the years to come.

6.5 The Minutes of the Meeting were finalized in consultation with the Chair and will be submitted to all Contracting Parties and to any government, intergovernmental organization and non-governmental international organization invited to send observers to the Meeting.



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Annex 1 List of Participants

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Annex 2 Welcoming address by Commissioner Vella

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and thank you Marianne for that introduction. It is my great pleasure to declare this Ministerial Meeting open.

For more than 40 years, HELCOM has been doing excellent work in protecting the Baltic Sea. Today we will be looking to the future, and thinking about how to improve on that legacy. We are here because we understand the importance of safeguarding this vital shared resource. And we understand the importance of working together to do that.

When the EU took over the role, we announced three priorities: "Reaching a healthy Baltic Sea by 2021", "Innovation for a sustainable Blue Economy", and "Tackling the challenge of regional governance". I am pleased to see that today's discussions will cover all of these priorities.

I am very pleased to see that the State of the Baltic Sea Report is approaching completion. This report is a great achievement, and it has already delivered some very useful insights into the state of our environment, and the pressures it faces. It is after all the reason we are here today. It provides the common basis to assess the progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. It helps us look to the future, and to draw up a course of action for the coming years.

To decide on HELCOM's course of action for the future, we need to ask ourselves the right questions. And I am confident this Ministerial meeting will address them in the right way, with the right answers. We are all aware of the main pressures that need to be addressed. Eutrophication is high on the list, but we need a broad spectrum of actions. We need to look at all pressures affecting the Baltic Sea, such as hazardous substances, overfishing, marine litter, seabed damage and underwater noise. We need our Declaration to reflect all of these key issues, as that will be the best way to sharpen the focus of our action.

During our time as chair, we have worked hard to secure improved regional governance in the Baltic Sea region. I see this as a crucial pre-requisite for healthy seas and oceans. It is only by working together at the regional and international level that we can fully implement an ecosystem approach. So I am heartened to see this goal being continuously pursued by HELCOM.

Speaking on behalf of the EU, I would like to express my gratitude to you all for the HELCOM contribution to the implementation of our Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Your efforts are going a long way towards helping the Baltic reach good environmental status – which is after all the goal we all share.

Finally, I would also like to thank all the HELCOM Contracting Parties and the Secretariat for the work on coordinating implementation of ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals in the region. Your work is already an excellent example of how strong regional cooperation can speed delivery on key goals like these.

Let's carry that spirit of coordination into our meeting today, and use it to translate our priorities into HELCOM commitments to guide us in the years to come.



BRUSSELS
**MINISTERIAL
MEETING 2018**
HELCOM

Annex 3 Annotated Agenda

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting is invited to adopt the Provisional Agenda.

Agenda Item 2 Introduction

A short introduction to Ministerial debate, including presentation of a video on the HELCOM “State of the Baltic Sea” report.

Agenda Item 3 Ministerial debate

Contracting Parties are invited to consider a draft Ministerial Declaration and exchange their views on issues topical for the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. The following questions are proposed for the Ministerial debate:

- What should be HELCOM's priorities to accomplish the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021? Which are the national actions you will take in your country and which are the top three actions that Parties should do jointly to achieve good environmental status?
- What opportunities do you see from our cooperation to support implementation of UN Agenda 2030 in the Baltic Sea? Is HELCOM as organization fit to do it, and if not, what are the key changes needed so we would be?

Two documents provide background information for the debate and consideration of the draft Ministerial Declaration:

The first version of the HELCOM “State of the Baltic Sea” report was published in July 2017 and is available at <http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi/>. It reflects the latest environmental situation in the Baltic Sea.

The HELCOM report “Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan 2018 – three years left to reach good environmental status” is submitted to the meeting. The report focuses on the implementation of agreements in HELCOM in comparison with the results of the first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report. It covers the actions agreed in the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and HELCOM Ministerial Declarations in 2010 and 2013.

The Meeting is invited to discuss and resolve any potential open issues in the draft Ministerial Declaration.

Agenda Item 4 Statements by HELCOM Observers

Observer Governments and Observer Organizations, who will have expressed the wish to do so by 1 February 2018, are invited to give their statements under this Agenda Item. The contributions based on which the statement will be made should be received by the Secretariat in written form in advance of the Meeting. The oral statements should concentrate on concrete contributions to the work of the Helsinki Commission.

The Meeting is invited to take note of the statements by HELCOM Observers.

Agenda Item 5 Adoption of the HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration

The Ministers are invited to adopt the HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration.

Agenda Item 6 Closure of the meeting

A list of decisions will be prepared and presented for consideration and adoption before the closing of the Meeting.

The Minutes of the Meeting will be finalized in consultation with the Chair and will be submitted to all Contracting Parties and to any government, intergovernmental organization and non-governmental international organization invited to send observers to the Meeting.

Annex 4 Debate by Ministers and High-level Representatives of the Contracting Parties

The Chair presented the following questions for the Ministerial debate:

- I. What should be HELCOM's priorities to accomplish the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021? Which are the national actions you will take in your country and which are the top three actions that Parties should do jointly to achieve good environmental status?
- II. What opportunities do you see from our cooperation to support implementation of UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea? Is HELCOM as organization fit to do it, and if not, what are the key changes needed so we would be?

European Union

Commissioner, Mr. Karmenu Vella

The EU outlined three top priority actions for HELCOM; eutrophication, marine litter and underwater noise. Mr. Vella also wished the Ministers to give a strong mandate to HELCOM for updating the BSAP in 2021 and take the necessary measures to improve the state of the sea, also noting that a strong sense of commitment of all Contracting Parties is a necessity for the implementation of the BSAP. He emphasized close cooperation with different sectors including municipalities and the importance of generating funding as well as novel approaches.

The Commissioner highlighted the importance of high level regional cooperation to support implementation of the ocean-related SDG targets and considered HELCOM to have a clear role to contribute to SDG implementation as a coordination platform and that HELCOM is fit for the role. He appreciated presence and contribution of HELCOM to the UN Ocean Conference in New York and the Our Ocean Conference in Malta, and underlined the added value of regional coordination of common indicators, monitoring and possibly even joint reporting on SDGs across the region. Mr. Vella noted that the traditional environmental conservation can pave the way for sustainable blue economy, and HELCOM can evolve with time and Baltic Sea governance can be further strengthened, understanding that oceans and seas present big opportunities for economy but in relation to that there are even bigger environmental responsibilities. He emphasized the application of the ecosystem-approach in maritime spatial planning. EU has contributed to the Baltic Sea successes via its work on enforcement of EU directives, such as related to the SOx Emission Control Area (SECA). The Commissioner encouraged HELCOM to continue the good partnership with BONUS, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, improve availability of Port Reception Facilities, as well as strengthen the partnership with BALTFISH. The Commissioner saw an opportunity to transform Baltic challenges to opportunities through HELCOM.

Denmark

Minister for Environment and Food, Mr. Esben Lunde Larsen

Denmark underlined that the updating of the BSAP needs to be discussed on a political level, taking both environmental and economic considerations into account. Mr. Lunde Larsen mentioned Danish achievements so far, including a considerable reduction in nutrient input and the designation and management of marine protected areas. He also informed that Denmark plans to use the extra nutrient reductions to the Kattegat to expand the aquaculture sector. The examples of newest national work are ongoing national actions on nutrient reduction specified according to the needs of specific catchment areas, designation of new marine protected areas, and the reduction of marine litter. Regarding future priorities, Denmark suggested to focus on jointly prioritizing development of indicators and coordinated monitoring especially for marine litter and underwater noise, strengthening the coordination of the Marine

Strategy Framework Directive with other organizations such as ICES and OSPAR, engaging in joint research projects and implementing HELCOM Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter.

According to the view by Denmark, the approach on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is a national decision. Denmark noted that, in general, EU and international regulations are an important basis for the implementation of SDGs. Mr. Lunde Larsen informed that Denmark has drafted a national action plan outlining the approach and priorities for following-up on the SDGs, and that Denmark reports annually to the UN regarding the status of SDG implementation. Denmark does not see the need for HELCOM to initiate changes in its organization to support the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda.

Estonia

Minister of the Environment, Mr. Siim Kiisler

Estonia proposed to focus regional efforts on reduction of eutrophication, hazardous substances and marine litter. The Minister highlighted the need to further reduce the environmental impact from agriculture, industries, and aquaculture. Due to the cumulative nature of hazardous substances such as pharmaceuticals, he emphasized the importance of measures to prevent these substances from entering the sea. Based on national experience Mr. Kiisler proposed to develop regional-wide standards on more advanced technology to reduce hazardous substances from municipal and industrial waste water. Estonia also stressed that plastic wastes do not belong in the sea and urged to increase the level of ambition in fighting marine litter. Estonia proposed to create a Baltic Plastic Phase-out Programme promoting plastic free technologies and plastic free products.

Estonia supported global and regional cooperation on implementation of UN Agenda 2030, and also noted that others can learn from the Baltic Sea region experiences. As opportunities for cooperation, Mr. Kiisler suggested eutrophication, marine litter, managing nutrient and other pollutant inflows and establishing marine protected areas. He highlighted the importance of research and expert networks to improve the status of the Baltic Sea. Estonia would welcome a larger role by HELCOM including joint and coordinated actions in data collection, big data management, joint monitoring networks as well as marine assessment systems and even implementation of joint measures. Estonia proposed to set up a Baltic Sea Digital Task Force to identify future challenges and to stay fit in managing the Baltic Sea effectively.

Finland

Minister of the Environment, Energy and Housing, Mr. Kimmo Tiilikainen

Finland noted that with only three years left to reach the goals of the BSAP, HELCOM is lagging behind in the implementation. However, the "State of the Baltic Sea" report provides excellent background information what should be done next. Nationally, Finland will focus on the implementation of remaining national actions and as upcoming Chair of HELCOM Finland will facilitate the implementation of the joint actions, such as a new recommendation on biotopes. Mr. Tiilikainen highlighted the need for political commitments in order to reach as many actions as possible and also stressed the need to look to the future, and identify the necessary next steps. Finland drew attention to the importance of the agreement on Maximum Allowable Inputs, and noted that the work to reduce nutrient loads to the Baltic Sea will become more difficult in the future due to the effects of climate change. Mr. Tiilikainen mentioned circular economy as an opportunity to reduce marine litter as well as nutrient loading while creating economic benefits and new business opportunities. He drew attention to the nutrient reserves that have accumulated in the sea, posing the risks which should be carefully addressed.

Finland outlined that implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan can be seen as implementing the SDGs at the same time. Finland viewed HELCOM as a positive example to other regions of the world, and noted that the experiences of the Baltic Sea region on cooperation and models of action should be shared.

Deputy Head of Government and Environmental Minister of Åland, Ms. Camilla Gunell

Ms. Gunell acknowledged the great value of the good status of the Baltic Sea to Åland and the large number of tourists visiting the islands. She informed that Åland aims at long term sustainable green and blue growth including implementing sustainable food strategy and enhancing nutrient recycling. Ms. Gunell pointed out that the actions to improve the status of the Baltic Sea also contribute to implementing the SDGs. She also highlighted increased cooperation in maritime spatial planning, the importance of financing tools and the support by Åland for the update of the BSAP with the aim to achieve a plastic free and clean Baltic Sea.

Germany

Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Ms. Barbara Hendricks

Germany outlined the following priorities for HELCOM; reduction in the introduction of nutrients and hazardous substances, marine litter, and biodiversity protection. Germany emphasized that it is essential to step up the regional and national efforts to reach nutrient reduction targets. Ms. Hendricks mentioned recent actions at the nation level including new ordinances on the use of fertilizers and sewage sludge with the aim to support nutrient recycling. She called for urgent actions on hazardous substances including reducing excess use of medicines, plant protection agents and biocides. Germany highlighted the importance of implementing the HELCOM Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter as well as the conservation of species on HELCOM red list and reaching a coherent and well-managed network of marine protected areas. Germany also stressed that the precautionary principle and polluter pays principle are guiding the Helsinki Convention and raised doubt about end-of-pipe solutions.

Ms. Hendricks showed appreciation for the HELCOM voluntary commitments presented at the UN Ocean Conference in June 2017 and acknowledged the added value of regional cooperation. She encouraged HELCOM to continue the good work and also the close cooperation with OSPAR and regional user organizations and fishery commissions. Germany was of the view that regional cooperation like HELCOM is essential foundation for establishing global ocean governance. Germany highlighted the dependency on the economic capacities of our oceans and stated that healthy populations of species and intact marine ecosystems are a prerequisite for blue growth.

Latvia

Vice Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Mr. Jānis Eglīts

Mr. Eglīts acknowledged that the BSAP is yet to be fully implemented in Latvia. In order to speed up the implementation, Latvia is focusing on actions related to circular economy, management measures addressing maritime spatial planning and spatial protection, and testing the use of blue catch crops as a method to reduce nutrients in coastal waters. Specific national measures to reduce marine litter include the reduction of use of plastic bags and the voluntary ban of microbeads in rinse-off cosmetics by the cosmetic industry. Latvia encouraged HELCOM to continue the cooperation with BONUS Joint Research programme to gain knowledge on valuation of ecosystem services and effectiveness of joint measures. Latvia highlighted addressing the impacts of maritime transport and developing ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning. Latvia also supported including climate change aspects in the BSAP update process and in forthcoming assessments to take necessary actions to adapt policies.

Mr. Eglīts noted that with the decades-long experience on cross-sectorial cooperation and implementation of BSAP, HELCOM is also fit to deliver for UN Agenda 2030. Latvia supported using the ocean- and water-

related SDGs as a framework for updating the BSAP. Latvia pointed out that ongoing HELCOM actions such as implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter contribute to implementing the global goals as well. Latvia noted that implementation of regional action can encourage HELCOM members to meet their international commitments for Agenda 2030.

Lithuania

Minister of Environment, Mr. Kęstutis Navickas

Mr. Navickas stressed the need to focus on already agreed actions and strengthen the cooperation and exchange of good practices, for example in the fields of agriculture and waste water treatment, in order to make progress towards the 2021 goals of the BSAP. Lithuania informed about the launch of a water development programme, including river basin management, Baltic Sea environmental protection, flood risk management, reduction of impact from agriculture, drinking water supply, and waste water management. Lithuania also stressed the importance of transparency and information sharing in the HELCOM area with regards to transboundary issues such as development of offshore oil exploration and gas pipe-lines.

Mr. Navickas emphasized the need to combine efforts with international and EU policies including available financial instruments and viewed HELCOM as an exemplary regional cooperation platform. For Lithuania, it is evident that strategic documents like UN Agenda 2030, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, BSAP and MSFD share the same goals. Lithuania highlighted implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter, supporting sustainable agricultural practices and continuing the battle against eutrophication. Lithuania noted that updating the BSAP could help to implement SDGs in the Baltic Sea region.

Poland

Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation, Ms. Anna Moskwa

Ms. Moskwa informed that Poland is working closely with neighbouring countries in cases of accidents of oil and hazardous substances and strengthening its response capacity by constructing a new vessel. Poland is also focusing on testing of environmentally friendly fishing gear to minimize impact of fishing gear on the marine environment and actively participation in cleaning the Baltic Sea from marine litter, including derelict fishing gear. Concerning fisheries and making the relevant HELCOM indicators operational, Poland highlighted the need to identify data gaps regarding the rate of by-catches of protected species of sea mammals and birds as well as the impact on bottom habitats. As prioritized joint actions Poland proposes to focus HELCOM work on dumped chemical munitions and unexploded ordnances, on reducing the amount of waste from ships including through improving port reception facilities, and maritime spatial planning.

Poland considered it very important to set HELCOM activities to support the implementation of ocean- and water-related SDGs and noted that SDGs should be taken into account in updating the BSAP. Poland called for active cooperation to ensure that the updated BSAP will answer to both local and global needs. The final "State of the Baltic Sea" report and a first draft of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan will provide further insight into how HELCOM can support the implementation of UN Agenda 2030.

Russia

Director, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, high-level representative of Russia, Mr. Nuritdin Inamov

Mr. Inamov highlighted innovative approaches, way of thinking and actions. In this respect, Russia informed of activities taken to implement the BSAP, including a reform of the national environmental legislation that

addresses new waste management approaches and the introduction of best available technologies to be used as a basis to modernize industries in Russia. Mr. Inamov also pointed out that the waste water treatment plant in St. Petersburg has best cleaning efficiency in Russia, exceeding the HELCOM requirements, and that the Kaliningrad waste water treatment plant has been completed, reducing release of pollution in sewage significantly. Another example of large scale collaboration is on Krasnyi Bor hazardous waste landfill, involving e.g. Finland and NEFCO. Two new marine protected areas have furthermore been recently established in Russian waters. Russia also informed that they are promoting international public-private-partnerships within the St. Petersburg Initiative, which was launched by the Heads of Government at the summit in 2013, and which has already led to tangible results, such as new actions in green shipping and developing new legislation on maritime spatial planning

Russia considered HELCOM as a good example of regional cooperation. Russia noted that the problems faced in the Baltic Sea region are also global, like marine litter, and that HELCOM can set up an example to tackle these issues. Mr. Inamov pointed out the importance of reaching out to other regional and global organizations including the interaction with OSPAR. Russia was of the view that HELCOM has the experience to arrange cooperation in ocean- and water-related SDGs, in particular SDG 14 on seas and oceans and SDG 6 on freshwater, demonstrated with the initiation and implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. This experience could be shared with other partners, and the knowledge we have can be used to reaching the targets of Agenda 2030 successfully.

Sweden

Minister for the Environment, Ms. Karolina Skog

Ms. Skog reminded about the costs of inaction and how the healthy sea can serve the economy and development in the region. She urged HELCOM to be ambitious when updating the BSAP. Sweden proposed to focus HELCOM work on finalizing the establishment of the coherent network of marine protected areas, reducing eutrophication and to work together with local communities to find suitable measures to reduce the impact on the Baltic Sea. At the national level, Sweden is focusing on the prioritization of national measures to reach the BSAP commitments. Ms. Skog informed that Sweden is increasing finances for marine protection which will be used, for example, for treating hazardous wrecks and strengthening educational programmes on ocean literacy. Sweden also highlighted joint actions such as strengthening cooperation with BONUS programme, combatting hazardous substances as well as seeking finances for priority projects.

Sweden pointed out that by implementing the BSAP the HELCOM Contracting Parties are implementing the UN Agenda 2030. Sweden encouraged HELCOM to share its good examples of regional cooperation as was done in the Ocean Conference in June 2017. Ms. Skog stressed that the pressures from climate change will be important when implementing the SDGs and need to be considered when updating the BSAP. She noted that HELCOM should show the important role of regional cooperation in combatting marine litter. Sweden also highlighted development of sustainable blue economy and the interlinkages between various SDGs. Sweden pledged strong commitment to HELCOM work and outlined ambition and engagement as the strengths of HELCOM to make it fit for the future.

Annex 5 Statement by Mr. Hans Olsson on behalf of the Council of the Baltic Sea States

Introduction:

- On behalf of the Swedish Presidency of the CBSS and the CBSS itself, I would like to thank HELCOM for a kind invitation to the ministerial meeting.
- We had the pleasure to welcome Ms. Marianne Wenning, Chair of the EU Chairmanship of the HELCOM, in the last meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of CBSS, at the end of January. We received a highly encouraging response from the CSO members regarding a continuous and close cooperation between the HELCOM and the CBSS.
- There are two main units within CBSS that work with issues related to the Baltic Sea: Baltic 2030 and Expert Group on Maritime Policy.
- Today I would like to give you an overview of the recent developments within these CBSS' working areas as well as discuss points of existing and potential collaboration, as suggested by the Units and Senior Advisers themselves.

Baltic 2030:

- We welcome HELCOM being an active member of CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development (EGSD) since the very beginning of the work of EGSD and particularly its recent involvement in preparation of "Realizing the Vision: BALTIC2030 Action Plan".
- We have been noting with a great pleasure that for implementation of UN Agenda 2030, HELCOM has aligned HELCOM's targets, SDG's targets and the Aichi Biodiversity's Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity in a recent report "Measuring Progress for the Same Targets in Baltic Sea".
- We appreciate that HELCOM has taken voluntary commitments to the UN Ocean Conference on SDG 14 and is preparing a renewal of its Action Plan with relevant provisions.
- As CBSS EGSD mandate is to facilitate and monitor implementation of the BALTIC 2030 Action Plan, we consider HELCOM as a major partner for in the implementation of Goal 14 - conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.
- As coordinator of the Horizontal Action Climate, the CBSS is welcoming the HELCOM ministers and high-level representatives to address the climate risks and climate change undermining efforts, which have been taken so far to combat eutrophication and human pressures in the Baltic Sea catchment area to mitigate climate impacts on biodiversity.

Maritime Policy:

- The CBSS Expert Group on Maritime Policy (EGMP) positions itself within the ongoing discussion of Baltic Sea Maritime issues. The Group is involved in the activities of EU Strategy for the BSR (PA SHIP and PA SAFE), Northern Dimension Partnership on transport and logistics and HELCOM.
- As an intergovernmental group of experts, the EGMP bases its work on knowledge sharing and dialogue. It aims to provide politically coordinated support to relevant efforts, concrete initiatives, actions and projects in order to improve Baltic Sea Region's international competitiveness within development of the sustainable maritime economy. The goal is to become a model region with the best maritime practices and a balance between a successful maritime economy and sustainable development.
- The current Swedish Presidency of EGMP is focusing on solutions of SDG 14' implementation. In 2015, a Maritime Strategy was launched in Sweden. It is the take off point for the current EGMP's discussions regarding the SDG 14. The strategy has a focus on people, jobs and the environment, which correlates to the three legs of sustainability - social, economic and environmental.
- A good example of close cooperation between CBSS' Expert Group on Maritime Policy and HELCOM took place in September 2017 at the Island of DONSÖ. The Event was devoted to the Green shipping, technology and alternative fuels, Blue Growth Agenda and UN Sustainable Goals' implementation regarding maritime economy. We believe that similar collaborative events should be organised in the future.

Conclusion:

- On behalf of the members of CBSS we are looking forward to a close and fruitful cooperation with HELCOM.
- We would also encourage to make the exchange of views between our organisations an annual tradition.
- Finally, I would like to thank you once again for the invitation.

Annex 6 Statement by Ms. Susana Salvador on behalf of the OSPAR Commission

Dear Chair of HELCOM, distinguished Ministers, EU Commissioner, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my gratitude for providing me the privilege to give a statement on behalf of OSPAR Commission. The Chairman of OSPAR and I are very pleased to participate at HELCOM's annual and Ministerial meeting.

The OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic aims to take all possible steps to prevent and eliminate pollution and the necessary measures to protect the North-East Atlantic from the adverse effects of human activities, while restoring marine areas which have been adversely affected, so as to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems.

HELCOM and OSPAR share a common vision of an ecosystem approach to managing human activities impacting on the marine environment, resulting in good environmental and ecological status which are necessary to support sustainable economic and social activities.

HELCOM and OSPAR have also the advantage of counting on the role of some countries that are Contracting Parties to both Conventions and have contributed towards the enhancement of common knowledge. With the Kattegat, the two Conventions share a particular transition area, where the North Sea and the Baltic Sea connect and therefore where the most opportunities for cooperation exist.

Like HELCOM, OSPAR is committed to contribute to a marine environment free of anthropogenic eutrophication, hazardous substances and adverse cumulative impacts from the different human activities, such as the introduction of marine litter, non-indigenous species and underwater noise. The need to reduce the loss of biodiversity also implies halting the decline and contributing to the recovery of threatened or declining species and habitats.

Regular assessments of the marine environment are therefore essential to prepare for action, while also providing accessible relevant data in a wider context, in particular the United Nations and its overwhelming preparatory work leading up to a second global integrated marine assessment in 2020.

OSPAR congratulates HELCOM for the State of the Baltic Sea report, while acknowledging the cooperation on common indicators in both HOLAS II and OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2017.

As stated in the Letter addressed by OSPAR to the Chair of HELCOM, in December 2017, there is a long history of close collaboration for many years, but the last 4 years intensified efficiency gains, good examples are the joint requests to ICES, the work on indicators, the sharing of databases, the jointly developing measures on Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. Also in the development of effective measures regarding invasive species, underwater noise and migratory birds, cooperation is an advantage.

On the engagement in the global process of fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 14, OSPAR welcomes further cooperation with HELCOM on existing work and the identification of new issues of common concern, to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development'.

Amongst a wider scope of opportunities and collaborative activities where both organizations may join efforts in the future, some steps on specific areas may be further developed through cooperation at thematic, regional, European and global levels.

Given the two Convention areas are connected, OSPAR is interested in exploring further collaboration with HELCOM on biodiversity matters, in particular on monitoring procedures, data management and data sharing regarding seabirds and mammals, but also on MPA networks as an opportunity for seeking connectivity, coherence and lessons to be learned on effective management.

Joint concerted action is of utmost interest on common aspects related to the environmental impact of human activities, in particular on marine litter and the implementation of our respective Regional Action Plans, but also on underwater noise, where the sharing of information and methodological developments may contribute to an harmonized work in this emerging field. Enhanced collaboration on knowledge and measures on non-indigenous species may also result in harmonised outcomes as those on ballast water exchange.

On hazardous substances, the utilisation by HELCOM of the contaminants assessment tool and a joint platform to operationalize the calculation of hazardous substances indicators is a good example of our collaborative work.

HELCOM, OSPAR and the European Union assist Contracting Parties that are also EU Members States in delivering their obligations under the MSFD, the most recent examples being the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2017 and HELCOM HOLAS II, which can be used for reporting purposes if those Contracting Parties so wish. In future, HELCOM and OSPAR could explore developing synergies and improving cross-regional coherence to support the assessments, target setting and monitoring programmes of those Contracting Parties.

But the future reserves many other emerging issues, like information sharing on emerging work on pharmaceuticals, or more horizontal challenges as regional approaches to an ecosystem-based management, and cumulative effects, as well as the need for adaptation in regard to climate change and ocean acidification.

In conclusion, regional collaboration and sharing of expertise between OSPAR and HELCOM will play a substantive role in the future and may give support to our Contracting Parties towards the implementation of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in particular Goal 14 on Oceans.

Finally, let me wish you a very successful meeting.

Thank you.

Susana Salvador

Executive Secretary of OSPAR Commission

Annex 7 Statement by Mr. Jörgen Pettersson on behalf of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

HELCOM and the BSPC,

this is the story of long years of intense collaboration.

Not just since the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference has been enjoying an official observer status at HELCOM since the start of this millennium, the 27 parliaments and parliamentary organizations we represent all around the Baltic Sea and beyond have actively supported the work of HELCOM and called on their governments to give HELCOM the political and in particular parliamentary support it needs to execute the measures considered necessary.

And we don't do this just as an end to itself. We do this because the people who elected us expect us to provide them with a clean and healthy Baltic Sea. The people are on our doorsteps, saying, Do something, when they see algal carpets on the Baltic Sea, when they are confronted with visible pollution and 'bathing prohibited' areas, but also when they are troubled by reports on the increasing invisible pollution.

And we all know that this is about questions, problems and measures that, due to different interests, cannot be radically implemented from one day to the next, leading to quick success. That is why it is so important to achieve the goals that we have set ourselves with the Baltic Sea Action Plan and to do so within the very time frame set in the plan. If we do not succeed, if we are too hesitant or act not consequently enough approaching the necessary measures to achieve our goals, then it will be far more expensive and difficult in the long term to reach what the people expect of us.

Here it is important to continue not asking ourselves to do the impossible but always a little more than we believe is doable, because – as the past has shown – this can release innovative forces allowing us to reach stringent standards after all.

I myself am from Åland. Our 6700 islands in the middle of the Baltic Sea, due to their location and history, not only have had a particular role and a lot of experience in peace-making processes. For us, the Baltic Sea is a central lifeline and central living space. We are surrounded by it, and we live amidst it and with it.

That is why we have a vital interest in the well-being of the Baltic Sea. That is why we have developed a wide-ranging sustainability strategy which we hope will be acknowledged as a Best Practice and repeated by others.

Of course, I am aware that the political focus is different in a large territorial nation only bordering the Baltic Sea. Unless catastrophic conditions occur in the ocean, for the majority of the population in such a nation, for instance, it is considerably more important that they can continue to drive into the large inner cities and metropolitan areas and reduce the air pollution there.

Nonetheless, I consider it as necessary to keep emphasizing the political will for stringent action regarding a clean Baltic Sea and to thus shift it a lot more closely into the focus of the political debate. For that reason, I am glad about this ministerial meeting happening here today. Such meetings generally lead to more forceful follow-up actions. That is why we call for such ministerial meetings to happen regularly every year, as we have also asked of the CBSS, making HELCOM more political again.

With you sitting here together, we are achieving a political focus that is not possible on the administrative level. And past experience has proven this. The meetings of both environmental and transport ministers 17 years ago on maritime safety led to a breakthrough for wide-ranging measures to increase the safety in the Baltic Sea Region as well as wide-ranging internationally binding agreements from which we still benefit. Here, too, much has been achieved. And yet the world keeps turning ever faster, and we find ourselves having to refocus on this topic with different aspects.

We, the parliaments and parliamentary organizations around the Baltic Sea, will continue to support you in all your efforts for a timely implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan which we welcomed and supported from the start. But we will not only be benevolent companions but also demand the implementation on schedule from our governments.

As early as 5 years ago, at the last HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in Copenhagen, the BSPPC reiterated its appeal to governments for sincere and forceful efforts to implement the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Apart from all the progress achieved by HELCOM in the meantime, the current situation shows us that appeals alone are not enough. We must act more widely and rigorously and make greater efforts.

At this point, it may not be impossible but certainly a particular challenge to implement the requirements of the action plan on time by 2021 and the further goals of HELCOM.

If we want to achieve these goals, we have to force ourselves to act more stringently than before.

The climate debate – where in some respects we were on a better course at the start of the 1990s than we are today and could have achieved more wide-ranging goals than seem possible today – is another issue that has shown that we have to constantly stay on target. Otherwise we would run the risk of only being able to achieve our goals in the end with two or three times the effort and immensely higher costs or having to cut down on our goals to the detriment of the environment and the people whom we are representing.

The HELCOM Chairs and Executive Secretaries have regularly kept us informed – such as Ms Wenning did two weeks ago – both during our annual conferences as well as our winter sessions here in Brussels on the continued development at HELCOM. For that, I would like to offer my sincere thanks once again. Our parliamentary colleagues, who are the observers at HELCOM and rapporteurs on eutrophication, have presented respective reports every year to the BSPPC.

Accordingly, we are very familiar with what you are doing and are observing it very closely. This also means that we can see where difficulties occur. And that is precisely where we would like to help and support you.

At our 26th Annual Conference last year in Hamburg, we called on the governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU, to

1. intensify the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region including the Northern Dimension, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the Strategy for the Socio-Economic Development of the North-West Federal District of Russia in addition to other regional actors by identifying common priorities and developing respective regional strategies and action plans in fields of common interest and mutual benefits.
2. further strengthen and develop HELCOM as the coordinator of the regional implementation of ocean-related goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda of the United Nations, through the strengthened implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and further commitment to achieve a Baltic Sea in good environmental status by 2021 and, if applicable, by renewing the Baltic Sea Action Plan in line with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda with a time perspective until 2030;

3. support HELCOM in elaborating a regional action plan on underwater noise as well as in implementing the marine litter regional action plan and in its battle against eutrophication; concrete measures to reduce the input of plastics into the marine environment should be taken on.

Some of our parliaments have voted unanimously in favour of our resolution in total and have called on their governments to implement the resolution within their responsibilities. Almost all of them have already passed the resolution on to their respective governments and have asked them to report on the implementation of these demands.

That is what you have on your desks.

At this point, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the fact that - not only in relation to the environment - the statements of all governments on our resolutions – as you can see on our website – are becoming more comprehensive from year to year.

(Moreover, in the year before, in Riga, we emphasized the necessity to strengthen and develop HELCOM as the main coordinating body in the effort to protect the Baltic marine environment, and to strongly support and encourage a fast implementation of the Marine Litter Action Plan, as well as the implementation of the NOx emission control area Roadmap for the Baltic Sea, and to stress the importance of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) as one of the environmental pillars of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.)

Dear Ministers of Environmental Affairs,

You are most welcome at our annual conference and to discuss there the environmental problems of the Baltic Sea with the parliamentarians from the whole Baltic Sea Area at the political level on 27 August 2018 in Mariehamn, thereby strengthening and increasing the parliamentary dimension and support of your work. I invite you all to come to the Åland Islands even if it is a little more difficult for many of you than coming to Brussels. (But that way you will then be in the visible core of what we're negotiating).

If you want to use this as an additional meeting with each other, we will offer the logistical support for you to do so.

We are confronted with tremendous challenges which we jointly can turn into a bright future through our common efforts.

Let us – parliaments, governments and societies – strengthen our efforts working toward a good environmental status of our Baltic Sea, which is a lifeline for most of us. Let us continue our successful and committed cooperation.

This event here and today is a further cornerstone on this path.

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Åland on 26-28 August 2018 will continue on this path, and also offer dialogue, debate, solutions, friendship and a strong will to increase cooperation, prosperity and a healthy environment in the region. We are the Islands of Peace in the midst of the Baltic Sea, and we want the whole of the Baltic Sea Region to follow our example.

You all are welcome to participate!

Thank you very much for your efforts to reach a good environmental status of the Baltic Sea as soon as possible and

welcome to Åland.

Annex 8 Statement by Ms. Hanna Paulomäki on behalf of World Wide Fund for Nature, OCEANA and Coalition Clean Baltic

Dear Prime Minister/Head of Government

Dear Minister of the Environment,

The Baltic may be a small sea, but is of immense importance for its citizens, security, shipping and economic development, as well for its unique marine environment. Unfortunately, the precious marine environment is heavily degraded by eutrophication, overfishing and other human activities. For this reason, Baltic Sea issues are dealt with in numerous regional fora such as the Helsinki Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment (HELCOM), the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR) and others. Within these fora, schemes of regional cooperation and action plans have been developed, which in fact have come to be seen as good examples of global models. Some of these were highlighted at the High-level UN Conference to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14.

On March 6, you and your representative will meet in Brussels to sign a new declaration under the Helsinki Convention to re-affirm your "strong commitment to strengthen the full implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the follow up declarations, by 2021".

We, the environmental NGOs, Coalition Clean Baltic, Oceana and WWF have stated on several occasions, as observers in HELCOM, that we see a desperate need for a strong Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and for urgent implementation of the measures covered by the plan and beyond. However, the draft declaration to be endorsed at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting offers little of this. This will be re-iterated in the WWF Scorecard report and CCB's Civil Society Declaration, both to be presented at the Ministerial Meeting.

The institutional problem of political decision making in countries is making implementation of ambitious plans difficult as environmental ministers need their counterparts from other ministries to be meaningfully engaged in complex cross-cutting issues. The problems cannot be overcome by concentrating the efforts in playing with words in the Ministerial declaration. In each country, an ecosystem based, cross sectoral implementation approach involving Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Fisheries, Transport, and the Environment is urgently needed.

We urge that you take the political leadership needed in addressing the flaws introduced in the declaration and hope the suggestions we raise will clarify the actions that need to be taken. We ask you to make your utmost to include your peers from other ministries in the discussion to finding the balance between competing economic interests and seeing the long term needed investment for the sake of the Baltic Sea and for the sake

of our future region. Let us work to moving from rhetoric to action and raise the political ambition as set out in 2007 to follow through in saving the Baltic Sea.

Measures to improve the Baltic Sea must be seen as an investment in the region's sustainable economic and social development. This is the only way to truly secure the healthy marine environment and its services we, collectively, so heavily depend on.

With this letter and enclosed Annex, we would like to draw your attention on the following specific topics which we see as the major flaws in the declaration you have been asked to sign. We will continue to monitor the progress by you and your government in the years approaching to achieving 2021 objective of Good Ecological Status.

Yours sincerely,

For Coalition Clean Baltic

Mikhail Durkin
Executive Secretary

For OCEANA Europe

Lasse Gustavsson
Executive Director

For WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

Håkan Wirtén
Chair of the Programme and CEO of WWF
Sweden

Annex: Segment-specific asks and tasks

Eutrophication - the role of agriculture

Agriculture remains the biggest source of nutrient losses to the Baltic Sea as confirmed by the EU Court of Auditors (2016) and a large part is due to the current EU CAP which fails to provide concrete environmental and social benefits and lack incentives to efficiently preserve nutrients, both in crop production and animal farming. In addition, excessively generated manure, especially from cattle and other ruminants farming, contributes substantially to GHG emissions and hence climate change.

The HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration of 2013 set a number of concrete actions to curb harmful side-effects of agricultural production on the Baltic environment. However, most of those still remain to be implemented and even more concerted dialogue with agricultural stakeholders, including farmers, is needed. Agriculture can contribute to the BSAP targets only through quantifiable and verifiable measures at source. Such measures include:

- Reduce nutrient surplus levels per hectare at field level, improve nutrient use efficiency set HELCOM limits for total fertilisation, introduce proper soil nutrient mapping and nutrient bookkeeping at farm level.
- Review, update and strengthen part II of Annex III "Prevention of pollution from agriculture" of the Helsinki Convention (1992).
- The CAP reform must transform to make provisions for the reduction of nutrient run-off as one of the key objectives of the policy to meet environmental and climate targets. The share of agri-environmental measures that support implementation of the agreed HELCOM commitments from 2007 and 2013 must increase to at least 20% of the budget.

Biodiversity and impacts on ecosystems

Today all assessed biotope complexes and over 25% of the biotopes and habitats are considered threatened. Four percent of the species are in danger of becoming extinct in the Baltic Sea, among which are also economically important fish species. Only one out of 17 biodiversity core indicators show good status in all assessed areas, six core indicators do not show good status in any of the assessed areas. We urge you to take strong actions to improve the status of the Baltic marine biodiversity with no further delay. The BSAP deadlines are right around the corner and the original deadline for forming an ecologically coherent network of MPAs is already passed by eight years.

Only a healthy marine environment can produce the ecosystem services we depend on and, further to this, be resilient in the face of large scale, human induced changes, like climate change. For these reasons it is of utmost importance to secure the following actions:

- Adopt the *HELCOM recommendation on the conservation of the most threatened biotope complexes, biotopes and habitats* with no further delay. The cause of this non-action is carried heavily by all countries and the marine environment.
- *Ecologically coherent and well-connected networks of efficiently managed MPAs* should form the core of the actions aimed at preserving biodiversity and the resilience of the ecosystems. Improvement is still needed both in *protection of areas within territorial seas, EEZs and transnational protection* of the sea areas shared by two or more countries.
- Efficient management plans and measures to limit human pressures inside MPAs need to be applied with special focus in protecting threatened species, habitats, biotopes and biotope complexes.

- The vast majority of the current MPAs suffer from little or no management. To redress this, the countries need to work collaboratively on; capacity building, direct support, and other measures to improve management, sustainable financing of MPAs, and ensuring that local people benefit from and contribute to MPAs management
- To ensure a true ecosystem approach planning of new MPAs should be an integral part of the MSP process

Seabed damage and disturbance

Seabed damage and disturbance are caused by multiple human activities which often result in permanent loss of a habitat type and decrease of the value of the area. Despite that at present only 1% of the Baltic Sea is estimated to be permanently lost and about 50% of the area is potentially disturbed - in almost half of the sub-basins the estimated disturbance is between 80-100%.

- Use *the precautionary approach* and take action to reduce human pressures in the most threatened and sensitive and heavily disturbed areas. This is the only way to avoid permanent losses from happening, in the environment and the coastal states' economies.
- Particular attention should be given to areas where *red listed species and habitats* are known to exist.

Biodiversity – the role of Fisheries

The 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial declaration set many clear targets for the improvement of the fish stocks in the Baltic Sea and to mitigate harmful effects of fishing in line with the EU CFP. Little progress has happened in the implementation of these agreements or improvement of the stocks, the environments and the species threatened by fishing activities. Regardless of those 2013 agreements and global efforts (SDG 14.4, 14.6) to halt overfishing and prohibit harmful fisheries subsidies by 2020, Baltic Sea countries continue overfishing by allowing fishing in part of the cod stock already at the edge of collapse, as well as fishing on the critically endangered population of European eel. Therefore, it is crucial that the following actions are implemented with no further delay:

- Contracting Parties must actively work jointly to safeguard the eel, reconsider *to ban active fishing for eel* and share best practise on removing migration obstacles up -and downstream.
- HELCOM countries need to ensure that all fishing gear used is selective and that sufficient mitigation measures are taken to *minimize bycatch*. Introduce sufficient bycatch monitoring of the fishing fleet, as stated in the MSFD, to get estimates of the actual bycatch rate in different fisheries.
- A comprehensive *Salmon River Management Plans* to address at least one weak wild salmon river in Sweden, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania needs to be developed by 2019 and implemented urgently, to reach active protection in 2020, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP.
- The use of public funds to support businesses must be steered towards the *Best Available Technology* and best performers to drive constant improvements, with regard to supporting aquaculture operations and fishing gear development.
- Joint efforts to streamline data collection and catch reporting need to be developed, to enable impact assessment and the economic value of the recreational sector in fisheries

Maritime Activities

The Baltic Sea is one of the busiest seas in the world and shipping traffic is predicted to more than double by 2030. Much has been carried out by the Contracting Parties in the maritime segment of the BSAP and the

number of pollution events from oil spills has decreased. However, there are several areas, where more action is needed:

- We urge you to collectively and individually prioritize the ratification and full implementation of the Ballast Water Management Convention.
- Progress still needs to be addressed to upgrading of *port waste reception facilities* for sewage discharges in passenger ports.
- There is a need for *integrating oiled wildlife into oil spill response / contingency planning*.
- Update *the action plan for the protection of the environment from offshore platforms* and *put into practice the zero discharge principles* which has been put on hold with no further notice.
- Handling of bulk fertilisers and collection of sewage from leisure crafts should be also evaluated and addressed with adequate mitigation.

Hazardous substances

The big problem for the Baltic Sea today and in the future is the ever-increasing emissions of chemicals that have not been risk-assessed, individually or in combination. Much is still unknown on how long exposure to low concentrations of chemical substances as well as combined with other contaminants, such as pharmaceutical residues in the sea gives for effects. In order to tackle this problem, it is increasingly important to:

- *Improve sewage treatment in municipal water treatment plants* by setting new regional standards with more advanced purification technologies to prevent chemical contaminants from being released into the water bodies. Two thirds of all wastewater around the Baltic Sea coast passes through 45 major wastewater treatment plants and mitigation applied at those will make a difference.
- Speed up in addressing the problem at the source through chemical regulation process, control chemicals in goods, green procurement, and develop a more systematic identification of new environmental pollutants.

For all HELCOM Contracting Parties to ratify and implement the UNEP 2013 Minamata Convention on mercury

- Enforce a regional ban on the use, storage, production and marketing of priority substances, such as endosulfan, pentaBDE and octaBDE,
- HELCOM's Objective for Hazardous Substances is implemented by updating the BSAP list of hazardous substances of specific importance for the Baltic Sea, to develop additional targeted measures for specific substances (e.g. pharmaceuticals)
- Develop a common harmonised methodology for monitoring *marine litter and particularly microparticles* from riverine inputs and address the sources of other major contaminants

Annex 9 Statement by Ms. Liisa Pietola on behalf of the Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment

On behalf of the around 2 million farmers around the Baltic Sea, BFFE appreciates being invited to provide a statement in the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting.

The draft Ministerial Declaration contains many topics with remarkable importance to reach Good Environmental Status (GES) for the Baltic Sea. It is important that the Baltic Sea is seen as a whole, and that the interactions between a vast array of stressors are recognized. In this context, we mainly focus on issues directly related to agriculture. However, we would like to emphasize that other issues are equally important to be included in the Declaration.

BFFE sees that the "State of the Baltic Sea" report is useful because it provides basis to assess, whether the goals of the BSAP have been achieved. We support that the draft is finalized and the next holistic assessment will be prepared in 2023/2024. However, we want to emphasize the importance of real measurements providing data for the models and continuous development of them.

BFFE agrees that GES for the Baltic Sea is unlikely to be reached by 2021, although many efforts have been made. Agriculture is often mentioned as a sector that needs to do more. We want to remind that the agricultural sector has already implemented many measures to reduce nutrient load, and we will continue doing so on the voluntary basis. We also realize that the pressure will increase, due to the climate change. Agriculture is heavily regulated by EU and national legislation, and there are not needed more obligatory measures but financial and knowledge support to implement measures.

Cooperation needed to reduce eutrophication (Items 23, 24)

Farmers cultivating the land in the catchment of the Baltic Sea welcome an increased cooperation between HELCOM and the agricultural sector. This has been wanted for many years. Many fruitful partnerships have already taken place, but they have mainly been limited to individual projects. It is time to broaden collaboration and involve more farmers. Every day, thousands of farmers use a vast array of measures to reach the country allocation targets for nutrients, while ensuring food safety and security. This work is essential, an approach, based on inclusion of and cooperation with farmers, is necessary.

As farmers, we have already been invited to increase cooperation within the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). In the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) guidelines to the EU member states it is stated that increased involvement by people leads to more measures being done. Environmental measures to protect lakes and streams also protect the Baltic Sea. The effort of creating local involvement in the WFD differs among the Baltic Sea states. Some states have many new local dialogue groups and have deployed a model of catchments officers, whereas other countries have restricted local involvement to the minimum of the public consultation, stated by the WFD. However, there is an emerging curiosity of the potential of local involvement, and large EU funded LIFE and Interreg projects are ongoing to explore the best ways of co-governance.

We propose that the efforts to enhance cooperation within the implementation of the WFD, when possible, should be attached to the ministers' decision and utilized when updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). However, it is a major undertaking to do such a thing in larger scale. But at the same time, it is necessary and well worth exploring, since both the BSAP and the WFD implementation will benefit from it. This will also increase the alignment of nutrient reduction requirements.

BFFE suggests that cooperation with farmers' organizations should be equally important to other undertakings by HELCOM, such as launching a common manure standard. Without the concrete

involvement of farmers, technical improvements, new standards and advice will not be as successful as they could be. Therefore, we suggest that a new task force is set up to start the dialogue on how to enhance cooperation and involvement.

Internal load slows the recovery of the sea (Items 25 - 27)

The Baltic Sea is heavily loaded by nutrients (N and P) from industry, shipping, municipal waste, agriculture and other land use in the past decades. Even though the load from land-based sources is now continuously decreasing, the old phosphorus load will keep the Baltic Sea eutrophicated for at least 100 years. Besides this, only the phosphorus accumulated to date is described, and the role of nitrogen is left for a lesser extent.

We highly appreciate that the importance of the internal flux of nutrients is recognized and included in the Declaration. We agree that the knowledge base needs to be improved first, but it is not enough. The BFFE welcomes HELCOM's precautionary viewpoint of effects for the ecosystem, when it comes to large scale measures, but it is important to continue an ambitious work to understand and eventually address internal loading.

Recycling of clean nutrients and organic matter needed (Items 28, 29)

Nutrient recycling itself and used methods and technology are important from agricultural point of view. Despite the origin of nutrients, plants use them at the same way and they can also be lost. Many recycled nutrients are in organic form, and they need to be converted to soluble form before uptake by plants. If the decomposition of organic material is not quick enough, the risk of nutrient leaching after the growing season increases. We remind that nutrient recycling itself does not reduce agricultural nutrient load, but everyday agri-environmental measures to reduce the risk of nutrient losses are needed, and they can be further developed and targeted.

In the current waste water processes, especially phosphorus is often bound to a form, unavailable for plants. The BFFE presents that the cleaning technology should also be developed from the point of nutrient utilization, as well as better removal of the harmful substances and micro-plastics is needed.

The BFFE emphasizes that farmers want to recycle nutrients, but not harmful substances. The BFFE appreciates that the risk assessment and safe recycling of nutrients is highlighted in the Declaration.

Climate change increases the risk of nutrient leaching (Item 48)

Climate change directly affects the Baltic Sea, but there will be also many indirect impacts. If precipitation increases as forecasted, due the climate change, it means also higher risk of nutrient leaching. To reduce risk, we need to pay more and more attention to soil structure and water management on fields, and main drainage, such as open ditches, should be restored in many cases, as well. This can be done by applying the principles of so-called environmental river engineering. Otherwise this can cause unplanned flooding of arable land high in nutrients. This helps also to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of agricultural landscapes.

Farmers are equally concerned about the possible changes by climate change for food production, as HELCOM is about the consequences for the Baltic Sea. And, as for the Baltic Sea, still more understanding is needed of the effect of climate change on agriculture. Some new scientific reports announce, among other effects, possible increased risk for soil erosion and phosphorus losses, due to more frequent intensive rainfall. This could increase both N and P load from riverine transport to the Baltic Sea. In this context, BFFE would like to stress to not treat this question one-handed by HELCOM, as if it was only a matter of eutrophication.

Changed hydrological regime must be treated in a broader perspective. There is increasing number of international examples, where farmers provide the ecosystem service of storing large volumes of water, when flooding occurs. Therefore, a closer local collaboration is needed to enhance local solutions like wetlands and bufferzones on areas prone to flooding. It is also important that the HELCOM understands the important role that farmers and cultivation can play in mitigating climate change. The new climate-friendly bioeconomy uses a broad spectra of food and fiber from arable land and from forests, instead of fossil fuels. This will both increase social and economic sustainability, and in the long term reduce climate change.

Baltic Sea Action Plan

Climate change and its effects must be taken into account when updating the BSAP. Agricultural load is a diffuse that is affected by the amount of precipitation, on which the farmers cannot have a personal influence. Farmers will do their best to reduce nutrient load, because the clean Baltic Sea is also important for them, but in very rainy conditions they run out of tools.

BFFE also stresses that it is important to recognize the time, which is needed to see the effects of the reduced load as a better water quality in the Baltic Sea. This means that the internal load should be included when updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

On behalf of the Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment

Liisa Pietola

Head of Environmental Affairs, Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, MTK Head of Secretariat, Baltic Farmers Forum on Environment BFFE

Annex 10 Statement by Mr. Robert Beest and Mr. Marc Klaus on behalf of KIMO International and Race for the Baltic

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic affirm their support of HELCOM's continued commitment and efforts to the protection and restoration of the Baltic Sea, and welcome HELCOM's role as coordinator of regional input into implementation of the UN Global Goals, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life below water.

We commend HELCOM's efforts to complete the comprehensive "State of the Baltic Sea" report and the work to integrate new knowledge into the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

With the 2021 target year of the Baltic Sea Action Plan being only three years away, KIMO International and Race For The Baltic hope that this Ministerial Meeting will decide on intensified efforts to ensure stronger follow-through on the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic welcome HELCOM's interest to explore ways to engage with municipalities, and the public, private and third sector more closely in implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

KIMO International and Race for the Baltic believe that the key to effective action is a long-term approach which enhances cross-sector cooperation, strengthens partnerships and increases linkages across policy, research and implementation. This approach embraces the potential for innovation and sustainable economic growth, as well as restoration of good environmental status of the marine environment. Catalyzing and supporting the involvement of local stakeholders – cities, municipalities, NGOs, industry, entrepreneurs, innovators, citizens – is fundamental to achieving this sustainable future.

Turning environmental challenges into opportunities and capturing benefits

Investing in clean and healthy waters will boost jobs and economic activity in municipalities. Addressing the pollution impacting the Baltic Sea should not be seen as a cost, but as an opportunity to create local jobs and increase socio-economic benefits.

A report¹ commissioned by Zennström Philanthropies, and published in 2015 by The Boston Consulting Group, highlighted that within the entire Baltic Sea region, 900,000 jobs could be created by 2030, representing almost 2% of the total labour supply, through investments in clear waters. There are also many environmental and socioeconomic benefits from addressing eutrophication, such as improved biodiversity, reduced risk of flooding and a healthier population.

By restoring local waters, a municipality can develop sustainable businesses and increase recreation, aesthetic value, flood control, biodiversity, and citizen well-being. For an average municipality, the difference between two scenarios, clear waters state and shipwrecked state, could amount to almost 3,000 full-time jobs and €270 million in economic output aggregated over the course of 15 years.

A key way for municipalities to contribute to improved water quality, both locally and in the Baltic Sea, is by developing a local Baltic Sea Action Plan, as promoted by programmes such as the Baltic Sea Accelerator². Such plans address the geographical and socioeconomic factors of the local municipality, while working with the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan as a reference framework.

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic suggest the following key recommendations to HELCOM as concrete ways to support and facilitate the development of local BSAPs in the region's municipalities. These recommendations have been developed through key findings from the Baltic Sea City Accelerator pilot programme, as well as from conclusions from a pilot project "Baltic Sea Pioneers for better Pollution Monitoring and Reporting", led by SIWI Swedish Water House, in partnership with Race for the Baltic and The Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management (S2S platform). Also instrumental to the recommendations is feedback from ongoing consultations with the 180 municipalities and organisations which KIMO International represents.

- Provide a checklist based on HELCOM priorities to assist municipalities in identification of local priorities and the potential to undertake environmental measures which can contribute to improved socioeconomic development in municipalities in the Baltic Sea region.
- Increase access to existing water quality data in a clear and transparent way to assist municipalities to identify local pollution sources and to showcase progress that has been made.
- Provide targets and recommendations that could serve as indicators for municipalities to report their progress and contributions towards improving the Baltic Sea environment.
- Support increased communication and cross-regional connectivity to facilitate municipalities' work.

Municipalities play a key role

The 1,500 or so coastal municipalities in the Baltic Sea catchment area play a crucial role in creating a safe and healthy environment for the population. It is their role also to enforce national laws and to drive or increase local voluntary actions such as the reduction of nutrient input from agriculture and stormwater. The municipality serves as the key stakeholder and has comprehensive knowledge of the local area, waters and discharge sources. As the most local authority, municipalities can coordinate initiatives, drive impact and influence the behaviours of local businesses and citizens. Furthermore, municipalities procure and invest in technology that will clean up local waters.

Citizens' engagement with locally driven initiatives plays a vital role together with cooperation beyond municipal borders. Examples include the Fishing for Litter project, a simple, effective initiative that reduces marine litter through involvement of the fishing industry, ports and harbours, and the numerous beach clean-up projects that take place in coastal municipalities that also raise public awareness of pollution and marine litter in the Baltic Sea.

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic believe that national and regional agencies should inform, educate, support and adequately fund municipalities, thus empowering them to be more strategic about what actions they focus on to safeguard their waters, coastlines and to fulfil their role as local implementers. This work - from informing to implementing - can be supported by international networks and organisations such as KIMO International, Race For The Baltic, NGOs and other local actors who seek to promote collaboration among a range of stakeholders from the public and private sector.

Considerations to step up implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)

Being aware of the harmful effects of marine pollution on the environment and on human health and the socioeconomic losses that it causes to Baltic Sea activities (fishing, shipping, tourism, recreation), KIMO International and Race For The Baltic urge HELCOM to step up implementation of the BSAP by setting measurable targets and achievable goals for specific stakeholders so that the number of concrete actions taken is increased. International examples of best practice can provide inspiring examples for our Region to adapt.

Based on our work and observations, KIMO International and Race For The Baltic strongly urge HELCOM to consider the following to support the vital work done at local level:

- Engage more closely with municipalities and other local actors to implement the BSAP commitments by increasing and improving information and guidance from national agencies, thus empowering municipalities to take concrete actions and utilise the potential for economic growth in efforts to restore the status of the marine environment;
- Adopt a multilevel governance approach to implementing local measures, so that the important work done by municipalities is valued and supported by regional, national and internal levels;
- Promote sharing of examples of successful projects and best practices to municipalities and provide guidelines and recommendations on the most effective measures to reduce water pollution, in particular from waste water, storm water and marine litter;
- Explore synergies with a broader cross-sectoral range of organisations and businesses, including innovative companies, HELCOM observers, international networks and organisations to support local level work through projects, collaborations and partnerships;
- Set specific, measurable targets and concrete actions for awareness raising and education, particularly in riverine and hinterland municipalities, and support them to make changes for positive environmental and economic benefit;
- Lack of coordination in multilevel governance has led to poor compliance and delays in implementation of measures. A cohesive, inclusive governance structure should be implemented to slow down ecosystem decline and accelerate creation of new socioeconomic opportunities;
- Ensure sufficient funding is allocated and available to municipalities and other stakeholders, and, further, accessible via innovative or streamlined mechanisms, to more rapidly take actions that address the mitigation of pollution and restoration of the Baltic Sea.

¹Restoring waters in the Baltic Sea Region: a strategy for municipalities and local governments to capture economic and environmental benefits. Commissioned by Zennström Philanthropies and published by the Boston Consulting Group, February 2015.

²Baltic Sea Accelerator Programme is an initiative of Race For The Baltic. The platform brings together local governments, science and business to identify cost-effective, smart and innovative solutions to local water challenges using a strategic business lens.

KIMO is an international association of municipalities who work to protect, preserve and enhance marine and coastal areas and to find enduring solutions to marine environmental issues. It is a fully independent organisation driven by the collective opinions and ambitions of its member municipalities. Established in 1990, KIMO now represents around 180 municipalities and organisations in 8 countries.

Race For The Baltic is a foundation of Zennström Philanthropies and works to convene leaders made up of forward-thinking politicians, industry professionals, NGOs and local governments who are determined to reverse the negative trends and restore the Baltic Sea environment, so as to ensure the long term economic viability of the region.



BRUSSELS

**MINISTERIAL
MEETING 2018**

HELCOM

Ministerial Declaration

Brussels, 6 March 2018



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Declaration of the Ministers of the Environment of the Baltic Coastal Countries and the EU Environment Commissioner, HELCOM Brussels Declaration 2018

General

1. **RECALLING** the objective of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention) to prevent and eliminate pollution in order to promote the ecological restoration of the Baltic Sea area and the preservation of its ecological balance, and **RECALLING FURTHER** the aim of HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) to restore the good environmental status (GES) of the Baltic marine environment by 2021 to achieve the HELCOM vision for the Baltic Sea;
2. **WELCOMING** the first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report (2017), which presents an assessment of environmental status, pressures and impacts, as well as social and economic analyses of the use of marine waters and cost of degradation, and **AGREEING** to update the first version by June 2018, to provide the common basis to assess the progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the BSAP; **PLANNING** to prepare the next holistic assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea in 2023;
3. **NOTING** with great concern (a) that the Baltic Sea area is still heavily affected by eutrophication, resulting from multiple factors and partly due to the time lag between measures and effects; (b) that unfavourable conservation status of Baltic marine biodiversity is widespread as a result of multiple pressures from human activities, and in particular that several species, biotopes, and habitats are still in danger of becoming extinct, that most of the assessed habitats are not in good status, and that there are signs of deterioration of food webs; (c) that levels of hazardous substances continue to be elevated and a cause for concern; (d) that invasive alien species are still being introduced to the Baltic Sea, marine litter is a pressure of special concern, and other pressures such as underwater noise disturb the marine life, and (e) that around half of the seabed is potentially disturbed by human activity;
4. **NOTING** with great concern the impacts of climate change and future ocean acidification on the marine environment of the Baltic Sea, including decreasing ice cover extent and duration, rising water temperature and lowered salinity, as well as the low level of oxygen near the seabed; **NOTING** that these impacts compound existing pressures on marine ecosystems and thus make the need to reduce these pressures even more important, also so as not to further impair the ability of the seas and oceans to act as climate regulator;
5. **ACKNOWLEDGING** in this regard that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement sets out a global framework for action to put the world on track to avoid adverse effects of climate change by limiting global warming, and **WELCOMING** the increasing recognition of the link between oceans and climate;
6. **NOTING** that the status of the Baltic Sea marine environment continues to be unsatisfactory as a result of pressures from human activities and that recovery is not yet sufficient to achieve the goals and ecological objectives of the BSAP; **NOTING ALSO** that the most widely-distributed pressures causing impacts are excess nutrients, contamination, underwater noise, invasive alien species, excessive extraction of fish and physical disturbance, and that an analysis of cumulative pressures and impacts indicates that those tend to be higher in coastal areas than in the open sea. Furthermore, sea-dumped chemical weapons and munitions and radioactivity continue to be a cause of concern, but it is expected that concentrations of radioactive substances indicative of good status could be achieved by 2020;
7. **RECOGNIZING** that the state of the marine environment affects human welfare, and that according to the “State of the Baltic Sea” report losses in recreational values due to the deterioration of the marine environment are estimated to be 1-2 billion euros annually and **NOTING** that the high level of

eutrophication, if reduced, is estimated to result in annual economic benefits in the order of 4 billion euros that are spread across various sectors;

8. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the progress in implementing the 2007 BSAP with nearly 70% of the regional actions and measures implemented, and 23% of the national actions completed by all Contracting Parties and 62% by some Contracting Parties, and the positive impacts it has had on preventing further deterioration, such as drastically reducing the number and volume of illegal oil spills, expected further reductions of pollution from shipping – in particular air pollution, substantially decreasing the input and deposition of cadmium, mercury and lead, and the improvement of several seal populations;
9. **WELCOMING** the progress that the Contracting Parties have made in reducing their nutrient input to the Baltic Sea from land-based sources and in addressing inputs from ships by designating the Baltic Sea as a special area under MARPOL Annexes IV and as a NO_x Emission Control Area (NECA) under MARPOL Annex VI;
10. **REGRETTING**, however, that Maximum Allowable Inputs of phosphorus are exceeded in six out of seven sub-basins and of nitrogen in four out of seven sub-basins of the Baltic Sea;
11. **REITERATING** the agreed actions and measures in the BSAP and the Moscow (2010) and Copenhagen (2013) Ministerial Declarations, **WE RE-AFFIRM** our strong commitment to strengthen the implementation of the BSAP and the follow-up declarations, by 2021, as pledged by HELCOM at the United Nations Ocean Conference on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (the UN Ocean) in 2017;
12. **WITHOUT PREJUDICE** to and seeking synergies with national legislation, international agreements and legislation of the European Union, **WE EXPRESS** our strong political support for implementing this Declaration;
13. **WE DO HEREBY ADOPT** this HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration.
14. **EXPRESSING CONCERN** that, despite all current efforts that we made together and individually, GES for the Baltic Sea area and favourable conservation status of biodiversity are unlikely to be reached by 2021 for all aspects, **WE CONTINUE** to strive, as a first priority, for achievement of already agreed actions with renewed efforts to make decisive progress towards our 2021 goals and in particular to strengthen our efforts to address the most widely-distributed and harmful pressures;
15. **WE AGREE** to complete and fully operationalise a set of indicators used for regularly assessing the status of the marine environment including in the next holistic assessment; to advance mapping and assessment of the extent and intensity of human activities in the Baltic Sea region and improve the understanding of their impacts, including the cumulative effects on the ecosystem; and to use this information for strengthening the implementation of ecosystem-based management;
16. **WE DECIDE** to update the BSAP by 2021 at the latest, with the aim to set out a robust action plan for continuous achievement of the agreed HELCOM vision of a healthy Baltic Sea environment. **WE ALSO DECIDE** that the updated BSAP will, in addition to existing commitments to be fulfilled by 2021, address new issues, on the basis of the commitments made in this Ministerial Declaration and further deliberations during the BSAP updating process;
17. **WE REITERATE** our determination to implement the declaration *Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action* adopted by the UN General Assembly on 6 July 2017, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular its water- and ocean-related goals and targets, and **RECALL** the role of HELCOM in leading the regional efforts in this regard and in line with the Outcome of the High-Level segment of HELCOM 38-2017. **WE**, therefore, **COMMIT** to using those goals and targets as a framework in updating the BSAP;

18. **WE DECIDE** that the updated BSAP should include actions necessary for managing human activities in such a way that the current HELCOM strategic goals “Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication”, “Baltic Sea with life undisturbed by hazardous substances”, “Maritime activities carried out in an environmentally friendly way” and “Favourable conservation status of the Baltic Sea biodiversity” can be achieved, and that its overall objectives support relevant political processes and strengthen science-based decision-making. **WE RECOGNIZE** the economic and social benefits of achieving these objectives;
19. **WE AGREE** that the updated BSAP should be based on an ecosystem approach, fully use the precautionary principle, be supported by fit-for-purpose scientific research, be strongly communicated with stakeholders, enable knowledge sharing between science and policy across all levels, be developed in a participatory and transparent way at regional and local levels, including all appropriate stakeholders, and give due consideration to economic and social impacts of the measures to be taken to meet its objectives;
20. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that while we work on updating the BSAP we will at least maintain the ambition level of agreed actions and objectives.

Eutrophication

21. **WE RECALL** the Country-Allocated Reduction Targets for nutrients, which will lower nutrient inputs as specified by the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, including through implementation of measures taken under relevant EU legislation for Contracting Parties being EU Member States and under relevant national legislation in the Russian Federation;
22. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that due to improved data on nutrient inputs in the reference period¹, the Country-Allocated Reduction Targets for nutrients are no longer always sufficient to achieve GES of the Baltic Sea with regard to eutrophication and that, therefore, the follow-up of the nutrient reduction requirements of the BSAP should focus on national commitments based on Maximum Allowable Inputs and that this should be taken into consideration when updating the BSAP;
23. **RECOGNIZING** with concern the sustained high nutrient input especially from agriculture, **WE DECIDE** to engage, as a priority, in further enhanced cooperation with the agricultural sector in the Baltic Sea area with the aim of further reducing land-based nutrient inputs in the Baltic Sea, as well as to engage with the relevant river basin authorities to better align national and international nutrient reduction requirements of the BSAP with those of coastal waters, whilst seeking synergies between relevant regimes;
24. **RECOGNIZING** with concern that large amounts of nutrients have accumulated in the Baltic Sea during the past decades due to anthropogenic activities, resulting in an enhanced internal flux of nutrients between sediments and sea water thereby exacerbating eutrophication;
25. **WE ENCOURAGE**, as a first step, further improving the knowledge base regarding the nature and dynamics of internal nutrient reserves.
26. **WE ENCOURAGE**, as a second step, undertaking research on the potential of measures to manage internal nutrient reserves that have accumulated in the sediments due to anthropogenic activities in the last decades; **WE EMPHASIZE** that the risks to ecosystem and human health stemming from measures to manage internal nutrient reserves, as well as the long-term sustainability of their effects, need to be considered and thoroughly evaluated; **WE ALSO ENCOURAGE** in parallel developing and applying a risk assessment framework in HELCOM to meet the necessary environmental requirements for measures planned for the open sea and any other measures having potentially significant transboundary effects;

¹ Pre-BSAP period (1997-2003).

WE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE the need to elaborate in line with the Helsinki Convention commonly agreed regional principles as guidance for internal nutrient reserves management.

Nutrient recycling strategy

27. **BEING AWARE** that replacement of nitrogen fertilizer could contribute to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and that phosphorus is a limited natural resource and a critical raw material, for which recycling methods for use in agricultural production already exist; **RECOGNISING** also that nutrient resources are not optimally managed everywhere and that there is a need to improve both recycling of nutrients and their efficiency of use, **WE COMMIT** to elaborating by 2020 a Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy that aims for reduced nutrient inputs to and eutrophication of the Baltic Sea and:
- focuses on measures at source rather than end-of-pipe solutions;
 - is based on the best available scientific knowledge on sustainable management and processing of nutrients in agriculture by safe recycling of nutrients especially from manure and sewage;
 - promotes environmentally safe nutrient recycling in the Baltic Sea region, taking into account principles of circular economy, geographical and socio-economic conditions, as well as spatial distribution of nutrient stocks and their flows, whilst respecting objectives and geographical scales already defined under other legal frameworks;
 - gives guidance on risk assessments and solutions to prevent potentially harmful consequences from the application of recycled products and on technological processes of nutrients recycling;
 - helps to identify regional challenges, applicability and added value for the whole Baltic Sea region;
 - is established with a step-by-step approach and proposes a common vision and objectives for nutrient recycling;
28. **WE DECIDE** to also develop, as a follow-up to the Strategy, possible nutrient recycling measures to be included in the updated BSAP.

Marine litter and circular economy

29. **BEING CONCERNED** that marine litter, and in particular plastic waste, continues to be a problem in the Baltic Sea, **WE STRESS** the importance of eliminating discharges of litter from land and sea-based sources to the Baltic Sea;
30. **WE ARE DETERMINED** to combat marine litter through coordinated implementation of the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan;
31. **WE RE-COMMIT** to preventing and reducing marine litter from land and sea-based sources and to achieving a significant quantitative reduction by 2025. To that end **WE COMMIT** to regional work on developing baselines and threshold values for maximum levels of marine litter in the Baltic Sea, in close coordination with work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora. If additional efforts are needed to achieve those levels, **WE COMMIT** to developing ambitious, regionally coordinated, quantitative targets to reduce input of litter;
32. **WE ALSO COMMIT** to strengthening regional research and developing harmonised monitoring methods on the sources, distribution, amounts and impacts of marine litter including micro-plastics, in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora, and to improving assessment of the effectiveness of measures;
33. **WE SUPPORT** measures aimed at preventing plastics, including micro-plastics, from contaminating the marine and coastal environment, at addressing the entire lifecycle of products, and at examining efficient

and cost-effective options to reduce plastic and micro-plastic releases from products and processes into the environment;

34. **WE DECIDE** to develop appropriate measures to address micro-plastics in riverine inputs, urban waste water effluents as well as storm water based on an increased knowledge on the scale of the problem.

Hazardous substances

35. **WE AGREE** to re-examine the effectiveness of measures and recommendations for legacy pollutants and to identify the scale of problems of contaminants of emerging concern, including micro-pollutants in coastal and marine waters and, based on this knowledge, to consider possible cost-effective mitigation measures. **WE WELCOME** the joint HELCOM-UNESCO-EUSBSR status report on pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment in the Baltic Sea Region as the information basis for developing measures, as appropriate, to prevent pharmaceuticals from reaching the Baltic Sea, and also **WELCOME** the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) regional cooperation platform to reduce pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea;
36. **WE ALSO AGREE** to identify and assess further hazardous substances and contaminants from offshore sources, which may give rise to pollution effects, and develop appropriate mitigation measures.

Underwater noise

37. **WE WELCOME** the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap 2015-2017, including the establishment of a joint HELCOM/OSPAR registry of licenced impulsive sound events and on-going work for a regional monitoring programme and for monitoring guidelines for continuous noise, as well as new evidence regarding potential impact of underwater noise on species in the Baltic Sea;
38. **WE EMPHASIZE** the need to further improve our understanding of the adverse impacts of underwater noise on those identified noise sensitive marine species and in particular the cumulative impacts of impulsive noise from multiple activities;
39. **WE AGREE** to develop an action plan, preferably by 2021, and regionally coordinated actions on underwater noise, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species identified as sensitive to noise, whilst safeguarding the potential of the Baltic Sea for sustainable human activities;
40. **WE COMMIT** to continuing fruitful cooperation between European Regional Seas Conventions, and in particular OSPAR, in order to exchange good practices and to fill knowledge gaps, and to continuing regional work in developing scientifically sound threshold values for underwater noise that are consistent with GES for species identified as sensitive to noise in the Baltic Sea, in close coordination with work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora including UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

Seabed damage and disturbance

41. **WE AGREE** to do regional work on developing threshold values for the adverse effects of anthropogenic physical disturbance and, based on the best available scientific information in close coordination with other relevant fora, if needed to achieve GES, to develop the necessary regionally coordinated quantitative targets for the reduction of physical disturbance caused by human activities and habitat loss;
42. **WE AGREE**, based on best available scientific advice, to work together to elaborate regional and national actions aiming at delivering the necessary reductions in adverse effects of physical disturbance caused by human activities.

Biodiversity and impacts on ecosystem

43. **WE COMMIT** to increasing the protection and restoration of biodiversity, to intensifying regional, sub-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation, and to preserving and promoting the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea area with strengthened resilience, also as streamlined response to adaptation needs stemming from human-induced climate change;
44. **WE AGREE** to take actions to prevent the loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea and to improve the status of species, biotopes and habitats that are threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red Lists², *inter alia*, by establishing conservation plans or other relevant programmes or environmental measures for species, biotopes and habitats at risk of extinction;
45. **WE WELCOME** the significant progress made towards increasing the geographical coverage of the HELCOM marine protected areas (HELCOM MPAs) network. **WE RECALL** the HELCOM commitment to step up efforts to establish an ecologically coherent and effectively managed network of HELCOM MPAs in accordance with HELCOM Recommendation 35/1. **WE ALSO COMMIT** to improving the understanding of the role of MPAs for ecosystem services, in order to enhance cost-effectiveness of MPAs management and yield the greatest environmental benefits. **WE ALSO AGREE** to strive for full achievement of Aichi Target 11 regarding the management, ecological representativeness and connectivity of the HELCOM MPAs network;
46. **WE RECALL** the HELCOM commitment made at the UN Ocean Conference, to describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea in collaboration with the Convention of Biological Diversity.

Climate change

47. **WE STRESS** the need for research and adaptive management to strengthen the resilience of the Baltic Sea in the face of climate change impacts. **WE AGREE** to increase HELCOM's preparedness to respond to climate change impacts, by taking foreseen climate change impacts into account when updating the BSAP and by exploring the needs and possibilities to further adapt HELCOM's policies and recommendations 1) in line with existing objectives of protection of the marine environment and sustainable use of marine resources, also under the changing climate, and 2) to maximise the capacity of the Baltic Sea ecosystem to contribute to mitigation of climate change through blue carbon storage;
48. **WE EMPHASIZE** the need to further strengthen the scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change together with multiple other stressors on the Baltic Sea marine environment, and **AGREE** that HELCOM should take action to bridge this knowledge to policy and practice.

Implementation of the ecosystem approach

49. **WE RECOGNIZE** that knowledge on the relationship between the state of the marine environment and human well-being is essential for applying the ecosystem approach to management of human activities and in maritime spatial planning in the region, as well as for implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity;
50. To this end, **WE AGREE** to further develop and carry out coordinated regional economic and social assessments, including mapping, valuation, and analysis of ecosystem services and natural capital accounting, taking advantage of improved methods and comparability of data;
51. **WE ALSO AGREE** to encourage further coordinated research to support cost of degradation analyses, cost-effectiveness analyses of regional measures, and assessment of cost and benefits related to achieving GES covering the entire Baltic Sea region;

² BSEP No. 138 and 140.

52. **WE EMPHASIZE** that the implementation of the ecosystem approach will enable the transition towards a sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services by present and future generations, to the benefit of the effective implementation of marine policies as well as maritime spatial planning, and will lay the grounds for a sustainable blue economy;
53. **WE RECOGNISE** that BONUS, the joint Baltic Sea Research and Development programme, has enhanced research capacity in the Baltic Sea region and provided an important platform for cooperation in research activities as well as useful research for science based decision-making and **WELCOME** further cooperation to strengthen joint research programmes, under the umbrella of JPI (Joint Programming Initiative) Oceans.

Improving regional ocean governance

54. **WE WELCOME** the great successes already achieved in regional cooperation and governance, for instance in the fields of maritime transport, maritime spatial planning, and research:
- In particular, **WE WELCOME** the progress made in addressing the environmental impact of the maritime transport sector in the Baltic Sea via (a) the collaborative long-term effort to designate the Baltic Sea as a NO_x Emission Control Area (NECA), (b) HELCOM commitment at the UN Ocean Conference on NECA and to promote green shipping technology and use of alternative fuels, including LNG, and (c) the recent International Maritime Organization (IMO) decision on the date of enforcement of the Baltic Sea as a special area under MARPOL Annex IV³;
 - **WE ALSO RECOGNISE** the Baltic Sea region as a forerunner in regional cooperation on ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning (MSP) and regional governance, involving HELCOM and VASAB and facilitated by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, and the important contribution MSP can make to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, thus enabling a transition to a sustainable ocean-based economy;
 - **WE APPRECIATE** the constructive cooperation with other partners in the region, including the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and **UNDERLINE** in this context the many successful cooperation projects developed within the “Northern Dimension” Environmental Partnership (NDEP), EUSBSR or within the BONUS Research Programme as well as different projects within the cross-border cooperation programmes and initiatives by cities and municipalities in areas of common interest;
 - **WE DECIDE** to continue the concrete cooperation on HELCOM Hotspots with the aim to eliminate the remaining hotspots. **WE WELCOME** recent efforts made so far in addressing those hotspots via multi-stakeholder cooperation, such as for the Krasnyi Bor landfill involving NEFCO;
55. **WE WELCOME** the Baltic Sea 2030 Action Plan of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and **AGREE** to strengthen regional governance, and **WE COMMIT** to enhancing cooperation, policy coherence and coordination at all levels for delivering water- and ocean-related SDGs under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular:
- in maritime transport, **WE COMMIT** to improving the availability of adequate port reception facilities in the region for delivery of sewage and other ship-generated waste;
 - **WE REITERATE** the common goal of all Baltic Sea countries to establish, by 2020⁴, maritime spatial plans that are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach, and in this regard, **STRESS**

³ 1 June 2019 for new IMO registered passenger ships and 1 June 2021 for existing passenger ships with an extension until 1 June 2023 for direct passages between St. Petersburg area in Russia and the North Sea

⁴ The corresponding deadline, for contracting parties that are EU Member States, in Directive 2014/89/EU establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning is 2021.

the importance of further cooperation in using the agreed principles, guidelines, concepts and mechanisms for planning purposes and developing them further as needed, whilst investigating existing obstacles that impede more rapid development in this field;

- **WE AGREE** to strengthen cooperation on ship hull fouling solutions with regard both to preventing the introduction of invasive alien species and to hazardous substances in anti-fouling systems;
- **WE AGREE** to strengthen coordination and cooperation mechanisms with fishery bodies active in the Baltic Sea region, in particular BALTFISH, and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council, to seek synergies with the work carried out by ICES, and to aim to ensure coherence between marine and fisheries management measures;
- **WE STRIVE** to raise awareness on the state of the Baltic Sea area, enhance ocean literacy, and support transparency, networks and campaigns;
- **WE AGREE** to enhance local initiatives and cooperation, and to support joint efforts of governments, science, business, civil society and financial institutions, for the implementation of the BSAP and SDGs, in particular SDG 14, and in this regard **WE TAKE NOTE** of examples such as the St Petersburg Initiative established by the Heads of Governments of the Baltic Sea States in 2013;
- **WE ENDEAVOUR** to explore further synergies of HELCOM Monitoring System with other relevant monitoring activities;

56. **WE STRIVE** for joint approaches and synergies among HELCOM and relevant multilateral environmental agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas. **WE STRESS** the importance of transboundary cooperation, transparency, and information-sharing among Contracting Parties in order to assess, prevent, mitigate, and compensate the impacts arising from human activities such as nuclear energy projects, offshore projects of oil drilling and construction of gas pipelines, in line with international legislation;

57. **WE WELCOME** the entry into force of the Ballast Water Management Convention on 8 September 2017 and **COMMIT** to regionally supporting its ratification by Baltic Sea States which have not done yet so, and to enhancing harmonized implementation of this Convention and other relevant IMO instruments, including MARPOL, in the region;

58. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that projects on issues of common interest under the EUSBSR and NDEP have given substantial contribution to the implementation of the BSAP, **WE WILL CONTINUE** the constructive cooperation with actors involved in this framework to contribute to the implementation of the BSAP and endeavour to ensure synergies between the priorities of the BSAP, of the EUSBSR Action Plan and of the NDEP activities, as well as national strategic planning documents of Contracting Parties, also in the future;

59. **WE AGREE** to strengthen the fruitful cooperation with OSPAR on transboundary issues and common challenges to gain efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of SDGs such as ballast water management and introduction of invasive alien species, the issue of underwater noise, micro-plastic, migratory birds, MPA network and management, and threatened and endangered species;

60. **WE AGREE** to step up the cooperation with other Regional Sea Conventions and relevant River Basin authorities in our work to reach SDGs, and **RECOGNIZE** the opportunities for increased knowledge, efficiency gains and effectiveness when jointly addressing implementation challenges, including the work on regional seas indicators on the implementation of SDG 14;

61. **WE ARE DETERMINED** to continue working together in HELCOM to deliver our common objectives until 2030 and beyond efficiently and effectively; and to this end **WE WILL CONTINUE** to work to strengthen

the cross-sectorial, regional and inter-regional partnerships and to mobilize financing to support the implementation of the BSAP and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.