



---

<b>Document title</b>	Outcome of the HELCOM Marine Litter Stakeholder Conference
<b>Code</b>	2-1
<b>Category</b>	INF
<b>Agenda Item</b>	2 - Outcome of the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference
<b>Submission date</b>	10.03.2016
<b>Submitted by</b>	GEAR Chair, Moderator of the Conference
<b>Reference</b>	Outcome of HOD 49-2015, para. 2.2

---

## Background

The HELCOM Marine Litter Stakeholder Conference was held on 9 March 2016 in Helsinki, Finland, and was attended by over ninety people representing businesses, governments, industry, non-governmental organizations and private citizens in the search for solutions and leadership to tackle the litter problem.

The main aim of the Conference was to stimulate wider ownership for implementing the regional actions of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP ML). The implementation of the RAP ML has started but not all actions have leadership.

In the Conference, HELCOM succeeded in getting together representatives of governments, industry, municipalities, researchers, financing instruments, non-governmental organizations and consumers, for summarizing their views with regards to the Baltic situation, for finding better solutions through common discussions and ensuring leadership for combating litter.

HELCOM acknowledges the contributions by all the speakers, participants, exhibitors to the Conference.

This document contains the outcome of the Conference, consisting of the Report of the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference on Marine Litter 2016 (in **Annex**) and the following key messages for consideration of the Helsinki Commission.

## Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the outcome of the Conference;
- consider and agree on the proposed key messages

**Key Messages:****Knowledge gaps: yes, but there is sufficient indication of concerns to act**

- More research and better knowledge is needed to understand the sources, extent, volume and impact of litter in the marine environment; but there is sufficient knowledge and reasons for concern to act based on the available information.
- Through the Marine Litter Action Plan HELCOM has agreed to aim at achieving a significant quantitative reduction of marine litter by 2025, compared to 2015. To assess the accomplishment of this objective, Contracting Parties are ready to intensify efforts to establish a baseline of marine litter in 2015, based on available data and information, so that effectiveness of measures taken can be evaluated in the future.
- HELCOM is a forerunner in indicators on marine environment and is currently developing also marine litter indicators with definition of Good Environmental Status (GES). This development will contribute to assessment of the marine litter problem in the Baltic Sea, and a regional marine litter monitoring programme should be the next step when indicators and monitoring guidelines have been developed.

**How to tackle the problem: Prevention is the key - but litter already in the sea has to be addressed, too**

- Prevention and source control are key steps in reducing the marine litter problem, particularly plastics. Appropriate infrastructure is needed to tackle marine litter that has already been released by human activities (e.g. adequate wastewater management system and storm water facilities; appropriate capacity of port reception facilities). HELCOM through RAP ML is contributing to the development of tailor-made solutions that are needed to address the Baltic-specific problems.
- Some regulations are in place to address marine litter, however, gaps have been identified and the existing legislation is not always meeting the needs. There is a strong need to fully implement the existing requirements related to marine litter. Contracting Parties and HELCOM will place more emphasis on the follow-up of HELCOM requirements and how effective they are in addressing the problem.
- Public awareness, education and consumers' choices are essential in reducing marine litter. Stakeholder involvement is necessary for ensuring cost-efficient measures.
- Contracting Parties recognize the need to step in to ensure leadership for all actions in RAP ML and other actors are invited to join them.

**Cooperation: Everyone is involved, also in solving the problem**

- The involvement of a few existing frameworks in the litter issue should be further enhanced. For example, the role of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) could be larger and HELCOM is inviting those involved in EUSBSR to take further initiatives to mitigate litter following the good examples such as Policy Area Hazards.

- BONUS and JPI Oceans are already stepping in through their recent call for projects addressing litter; Baltic Sea Advisory Council is an important regional partner in finding a solution to abandoned, lost and derelict fishing gear; International Financial Institutions such as NEFCO and BSAP Fund generate positive impact for the environment.
- HELCOM calls on regional organizations, industry and municipalities as well as NGOs to further cooperate in implementing the RAP ML.
- Work and achievements of UNEP, G7 and EU as well as NGOs are stepping stones towards increasing global recognition of the needs to act. HELCOM will continue to cooperate with other Regional Seas Conventions including the Nairobi Convention (twinning agreement) as well as draw on experiences of other initiatives and share its own as a part of the European and global networks already active in this field.