



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Helsinki Commission
Helsinki, Finland, 4-5 March 2020

HELCOM 41-2020

Document title	Draft outcome of the high-level segment of HELCOM 41-2020
Code	2-2-Rev.1
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	2 - High-level segment with a focus on the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and HELCOM global outreach including voluntary commitments to UN Ocean Conference 2020
Submission date	3.3.2020
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	

This document contains some editorial changes to document 2-2.

Background

This document contains a draft outcome document of the high-level segment of HELCOM 41-2020 prepared by a drafting group consisting of representatives of Estonia, Germany and Sweden for drafting HELCOM voluntary commitments and the Contracting Parties with the assistance of the Secretariat.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider the outcome document and adopt if appropriate.



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

HELCOM 41-2020 high-level segment on the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and HELCOM global outreach including voluntary commitments to the 2020 UN Ocean Conference

Helsinki, Finland, 4 March 2020

High-level representatives of the Baltic Sea countries and EU met on 4 March 2020 on the occasion of the 41st Meeting of the Helsinki Commission to discuss the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and HELCOM's contributions and outreach on global ocean matters, including its voluntary commitments to the 2020 UN Ocean Conference.

The high-level representatives of the HELCOM Contracting Parties agreed on the following conclusions and commitments with regard to future work related to the BSAP and HELCOM's contributions and outreach on global ocean matters;

[Baltic Sea Action Plan; the unique way forward](#)

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), adopted in 2007, is an ambitious and comprehensive regional programme of action to achieve a healthy marine environment. The plan is unique even on a global level and its adoption was made possible by the existing cooperation through HELCOM.

Despite extensive efforts to reduce pressures and improve the state of the environment, good environmental status for the Baltic Sea area is unlikely to be reached by 2021 for all aspects as shown in the HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea 2018 report. In addition, new issues and challenges continue to emerge or their significance is more clearly recognized. The 2018 HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Meeting re-affirmed the strong commitment of the Contracting Parties to strengthen the implementation of the BSAP and to use the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals and targets as a framework for updating the BSAP.

The HELCOM follow-up system has been set up to provide a transparent overview of the implementation of HELCOM agreements. The Contracting Parties acknowledge that there is a lag in the implementation of the current BSAP actions. Of the joint actions 70 percent have been accomplished while 26 percent of the national actions have been implemented by all Contracting Parties. Out of the 52 HELCOM Recommendations that were recently reported on, only three have been fully implemented by all the Contracting Parties. The Contracting Parties therefore commit to accelerating the implementation of existing agreements and agree to evaluating and developing further necessary new actions to reach good environmental status through the updated BSAP.

The aim of the update of the BSAP is to set out a robust action plan for the achievement of the comprehensive HELCOM vision – a healthy Baltic Sea environment. HELCOM has continuously brought in new issues on the agenda when identified as a concern for the Baltic Sea. The Contracting Parties welcome that the updated BSAP will reflect the latest developments through renewed and new goals and objectives that address issues such as, for example, marine litter, underwater noise, loss and disturbance to the seabed, as well as the impacts of a broad range of sea-based activities and cross-cutting matters such as impacts of climate change.

The sufficiency of measures analysis is a new and important approach for analyzing how far already existing measures can contribute to achieve good environmental status for the Baltic Sea and the resulting evaluation of gaps in measures will be used as guidance in the update of the BSAP.

The Contracting Parties recognize the importance of cooperation with stakeholders in updating and implementing the BSAP and welcomes the outcome of the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference 2020 as valuable input for the update process.

HELCOM voluntary commitments to the High-Level UN Ocean Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14 2020, Lisbon, Portugal 2-6 June 2020

Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention have committed to using the water and ocean related goals, and targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as a framework for updating the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. The Contracting Parties have agreed to coordinate the regional implementation of ocean-related SDGs in the Baltic Sea using the HELCOM platform. Following up on the HELCOM voluntary commitments to the 2017 UN Ocean Conference, HELCOM undertakes new commitments for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference.

The Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention acknowledge the role of the voluntary commitments in improving the state of oceans at the global level, and of the Baltic Sea in particular and agree on the following additional HELCOM voluntary commitments to the 2020 UN Ocean Conference:

1. Update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan

HELCOM commits to updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021, and to include, in the update, increased support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Baltic Sea Action Plan is HELCOM's strategic programme of actions and measures for achieving good environmental and ecological status of the Baltic Sea. Since its inception in 2007, it has resulted in a number of environmental improvements such as a reduction in nutrient inputs to the sea, an improved state of biodiversity and a reduction in maritime incidents and spills.

The update is meant to strengthen the current plan, while also considering new issues currently not addressed within HELCOM. The update will carry over already agreed actions of the current BSAP as well as include new actions and measures to respond to previously unaddressed environmental challenges such as underwater noise, seabed integrity, pharmaceuticals, and impacts of climate change.

Furthermore, the updated BSAP will, at the very least, maintain the same level of ambition as existent in the current plan.

In the BSAP update, HELCOM seeks to integrate and support national, regional and global processes aiming at improving the state of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. This includes the UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 14 on life below water), global work on the link between oceans and climate, the work carried out within the Biodiversity Convention (CBD) and the EU Member States' implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

HELCOM also commits itself to consider relevant measures to avoid new sea-based and new land-based input of marine litter and in particular to address waste from ships including abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), litter from touristic activities as well as riverine inputs.

2. Contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), including through the development of a HELCOM Science Agenda

HELCOM commits to contribute to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), taking on an active role in its related processes, notably by participating in related events and activities.

HELCOM also commits to developing a HELCOM Science Agenda that will outline existing and foreseen Baltic Sea regional science needs, supporting the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

In addition to supporting processes under the UN Decade of Ocean Science and linking to its strategic objectives, the HELCOM Science Agenda will also provide the necessary scientific underpinnings for future HELCOM work, including the implementation of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

HELCOM further commits to linking the HELCOM Science Agenda to national science plans and scientific research.

3. Sharing experiences with other Regional Seas Organisations

HELCOM commits to sharing experiences on the protection of the marine environment and environmentally friendly and sustainable maritime activities with other regional seas organisations, notably within the framework of the UN Regional Seas Programme and through cooperation with other regional seas organisations.

By sharing knowledge and experiences among regional seas organisations, HELCOM seeks to facilitate and accelerate the global response to the current challenges our seas and oceans are facing, notably originating from anthropogenic pressures such as from our economic activities or climate change, while sparing resources that could be used to drive the response even further.

The regional seas share certain similarities, be they the same pressures on the marine environment caused by similar human activities, the same biochemical characteristics and biodiversity, or similar geopolitical situations. Sharing knowledge and information on how a regional sea deals or has dealt with its own challenges can be a valuable and resource-efficient contribution to the work of other regional sea organisations facing similar issues relating to the protection of the marine environment.

In particular, HELCOM commits to sharing its experiences with other regional seas organisations on carrying out holistic assessments of the marine environment and on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, including the analysis of sufficiency of measures and the achievement of good environmental/ecological status through improved implementation of these measures.

4. Strong support for global efforts to address the matter of marine litter, including plastic, on a global level

HELCOM notes with concern the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and microplastics as a global environmental problem and a serious threat to the marine environment.

HELCOM commits itself to the prevention and significant reduction of marine plastic litter and microplastics from both land- and sea-based sources, which constitutes a contribution to achieving the sustainable development goals.

In particular, HELCOM finds that strengthened global action is needed to prevent further discharge and reduce levels of marine plastic litter and microplastic in the marine environment stemming from current global and market-driven consumption of plastic products. The matter of marine litter, including plastic, cannot be solved by any one country alone and effective, dedicated global governance is needed to address existing gaps and promote coherence, coordination and effective prioritization of our efforts. Therefore, HELCOM commits itself to support the development of a global instrument to more effectively and comprehensively deal with the issue of marine plastic litter and microplastics on a global level in an integrated manner.

5. Workshop on ecosystem-based management in support of the UN Decade of Ocean Science

Ecosystem-based management may be a central practice that needs to be implemented for the UN Decade of Ocean Science to be effective.

With a view to strengthen ecosystem-based management in the Baltic Sea region, HELCOM commits to organise a joint workshop bringing together policy, management and science. Key topics of such a workshop could deal with bottlenecks to the implementation of ecosystem-based management, suggest concrete actions to overcome these bottlenecks and propose pilot areas and concrete use cases where implementation could be tested.

Besides HELCOM - contributing, in particular, with its advanced knowledge on holistic assessments and implementation of actions supporting ecosystem-based management of the marine environment - other important actors to engage could be ICES, national agencies involved in the implementation of marine policies as well as organizations designing these policies. If a pan-European focus is deemed relevant, OSPAR, UNEP/MAP and the Bucharest Convention could be potential partners, among other international fora. The Baltic and North Sea Coordination and Support Action (BANOS CSA), addressing both the North and the Baltic Sea, could also be considered as a relevant partner.