



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

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### Background

This document contains the joint statement by CCB and WWF for HELCOM 41-2020 high-level session.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the statement.



## WWF and CCB joint statement at the High Level Segment of 41<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – Helsinki Commission, Helsinki, Finland 4 March 2020

There is no doubt that we are in the middle of a biodiversity and climate crisis. The call for urgency has been dominating the global youth activist movements like Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion and Earth Strike - who are frustrated with the lack of progress. The message is clear from scientists in the latest [IPBES biodiversity](#) and [IPCC ocean and climate](#) reports – nature loss poses enormous risks to the global economy and to humanity. With world leaders set to take critical decisions on the climate and environment to move global societies to a more sustainable path, 2020 is the year which offers opportunity to secure a course to recovery. A year to effectively join the dots between climate, biodiversity, financial economy, and human societies, and help the world to recognise the vital contribution of the world's oceans and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Civil society is increasing pressure on governments to seriously address the escalating ecological emergency and both set and implement policies that protect the environment. Last month's UN Ocean Conference Preparatory Meeting in New York, UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the coalition "[RISE UP – A Blue Call to Action](#)", which is a joint call to urge governments and corporations to take bold action to safeguard the ocean and contribute to the success of the 2020 UN Oceans Conference and help inspire a bold international ocean agenda for the next decade.

The Baltic Sea and the Helsinki Commission have global relevance and as a region play an instrumental part in achieving global legal framework requirements. The role in integrating the BSAP with global, European and national commitments is fundamental.

As observers to the Helsinki Convention, we NGOs have continually engaged in the dialogue, raised the alarm and made efforts to meet the commitments of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). Repeatedly we have called out the Contracting Parties for their unsatisfactory implementation of the BSAP consistently preventing the recovery of the Baltic Sea.

Let us all be reminded what is at stake - the status of the Baltic proper is worse than before, eutrophication only improving in two out of 17 assessment areas, 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 there are clear signs of deterioration of the food web. A collapsed Baltic cod population is the most alarming indication yet, signaling the very real need to change how we manage the entire ecosystem. Hence, Ecosystem Based Management should be set as the fundamental principle in Article 3 of the Helsinki Convention, being truly implemented and steering the development of any economic activity in the region, be it fishing, agriculture or shipping.

The Contracting Parties have committed to achieve already agreed actions of the current BSAP and state they "should at least maintain the ambition level of agreed actions and objectives." The last decade's ambition has been weak with countries far from meeting their promises and commitments made in the 2007 Ministerial Meeting.

A greater coordinated and accountable effort for national targets to be accomplished within the set deadlines is needed for the next period of the BSAP. [WWF 2018 Baltic Sea Action Plan Scorecard](#) has shown it is not sufficient merely to set targets if they are not underpinned by concrete and comprehensive action, along with clear accountability. There is no excuse as to why this region is lagging to meet its objectives in contrast to other marine regions. It has a long history of science and understanding of the environmental challenges along with financial stability, the necessary know-how and technology that numerous other regions lack.

As an echo of civil societies rising up around the world, Baltic Sea Region NGOs have collectively produced a [Shadow Plan](#) setting recommended actions across all segments for the update of the BSAP.

Two main goals should be set for the updated BSAP:

1. Curtailing biodiversity loss in the catchment and sea in the next 5 years and bending the curve on biodiversity loss by 2030 in the region,
2. Achieving climate neutrality (net zero emissions) in the Baltic Sea Area by 2040.

**We call on all the Baltic Sea Area countries to take up their responsibility to immediately and effectively follow up the commitments of the 2007 HELCOM BSAP and further strengthen those by adopting a revised 2021 Action Plan that aims to:**

1. **Lead on the protection and conservation of the marine ecosystems** on which livelihoods and all marine sectors ultimately depend,
2. **Urge all actors to intensify efforts** to safeguard marine biodiversity and recovery of the Baltic Sea and,
3. **Invite and engage civil society, stakeholders and rights-holders** to work together towards a healthy and sustainably managed Baltic Sea.

We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children. Let us listen to the youth movements and apply the words of the Baltic Youth Dialogue – ‘Time to act!’