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<b>Document title</b>	Agreement on HELCOM objectives for the updated BSAP
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## Background

Through the BSAP update process the existing HELCOM objectives have been reviewed and new objectives have been developed by the HELCOM Working Groups. HOD 57-2019 agreed on a provisional set of objectives ([Outcome, Annex 2](#)) and furthermore agreed that a Group consisting of Chairs of relevant Working Groups and the Secretariat should follow-up on the Outcome of HOD 57-2019 and consider the need for additional adjustments ([Outcome, para 3.25](#)). The *ad hoc* Group of Chairs met online 17 January 2020 and the proposed adjustments to the objectives were distributed to HOD for commenting via correspondence by 5 February 2020. Comments were received from Denmark, the EU, Latvia and Germany and have been considered in the formulation of objectives as presented in this document.

The objectives will start to be used as a framework for developing documents related to the BSAP update, for example to sort the actions to be included in the updated plan. In the event that gaps or overlaps are detected when the objectives are put into practice it is proposed to keep the set of objectives open for possible adjustments in the further BSAP update process.

This document recalls the provisional agreement on the BSAP structure and presents the proposed set of HELCOM objectives in Table 1.

## Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- agree on the set of HELCOM objectives for the updated BSAP as included in Table 1, keeping it open for adjustments to individual objectives or proposals on additional objectives as found relevant in the further BSAP update process.

## Agreement on HELOCM objectives for the updated BSAP

### 1) Background

To review the existing structure of the BSAP and its objectives is one of the activities agreed in the Strategic Plan for the BSAP update ([activity 2.2](#)). The review of the structure has taken place through the GEAR Group (GEAR 19-2018, GEAR 20-2019) and Heads of Delegation (HOD 55-2018, HOD 56-2019), resulting in a provisional agreement to adjust the structure of the BSAP as summarized in section 2.1.

The review of HELCOM objectives and development of new objectives for novel topics addressed by HELCOM have been carried out by Working Groups as described previously (HOD 57-2019, [document 3-3](#), [document 3-3 Add.1](#)). HOD 57-2019 agreed provisionally on a set of HELCOM objectives for the updated BSAP and agreed that the outcome of the meeting would be followed-up by an *ad hoc* Group consisting of Chairs of relevant HELCOM Working Groups and the Secretariat. Chairs of Working Groups GEAR, HELCOM-VASAB MSP, Maritime, Pressure, State and Conservation, the vice-Chair of Fish, Professional secretaries and the Project Manager of the BSAP update met online 17 January 2020 to discuss the open issues and proposals from HOD 57-2019. The outcome of the online meeting was distributed to HOD for commenting via correspondence by 5 February 2020. The comments received through correspondence were addressed when finalizing the proposals on objectives as contained in section 2.2, Table 1. Justifications to the adjusted objectives are provided in Annex 1.

### 2.1 Adjustment to the BSAP structure

HOD 55-2018 agreed that the Vision of the current BSAP will remain in the updated BSAP and HOD 56-2019 agreed on a provisional adjustment to the BSAP structure to better reflect the topics that are currently addressed in HELCOM.

The updated goals are illustrated in figure 1a and 1b and include:

- to address litter primarily under the segment on hazardous substances and change the associated strategic goal to *'Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter'*;
- to include under the maritime segment a broader set of sea-based activities and change the associated strategic goal to *'Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities'*. The topics underwater noise and loss and disturbance of the seabed are primarily assigned to this segment as they mainly originate from activities that will be addressed under this segment.
- to revise the goal of the biodiversity segment to *'Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient'*.

The goals will be used to structure the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan document and the associated objectives and actions. For this purpose:

- the segments on 'Eutrophication' and 'Hazardous substances and litter' will, as in the current BSAP, primarily focus on input of these pressures from land-based activities,
- the segment on 'Sea-based activities' will address pressures from all sea-based activities, thus covering a wide range of pressures and HELCOM actions related to sea-based activities will be associated to this segment,
- the segment on 'Biodiversity' remains its focus on implementation of actions to conserve, restore and protect biodiversity.

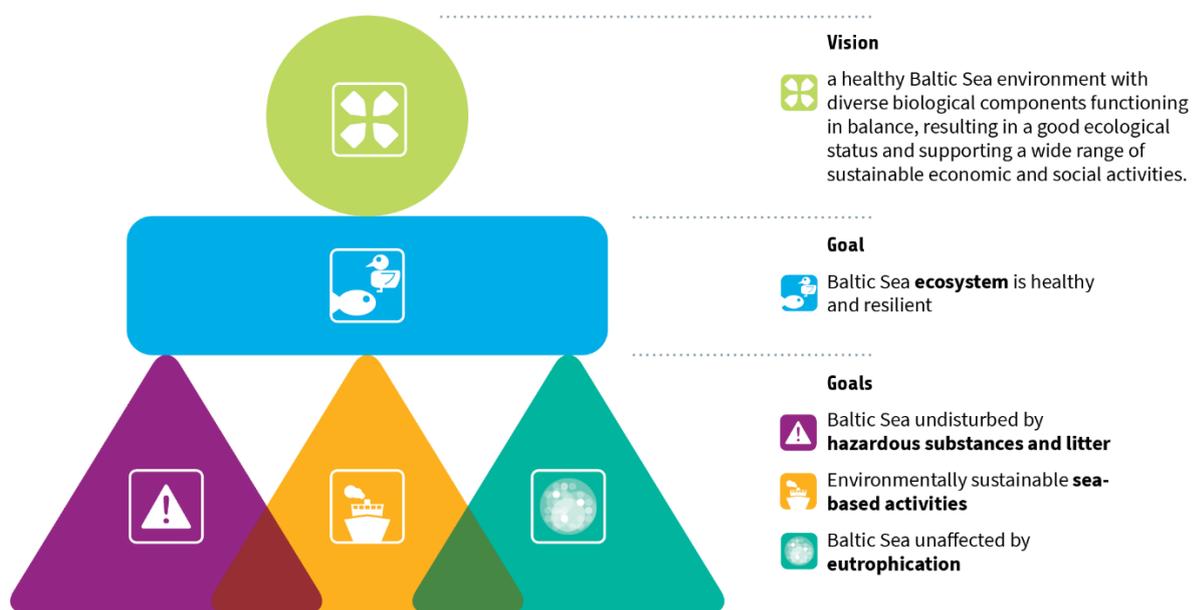
VISION (HOD 55-2018 agreed that the Vision of the current BSAP will be maintained):

A healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental/ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities

SEGMENT and GOALS (as HOD 57-2019):



**Figure 1a. Structure of updated BSAP as traditionally depicted.**



**Figure 1b. Tentative illustration of structure of the updated BSAP; work in progress.**

Since the structure is based on two goals related to pressures, one related to activities, and one related to the state of the environment, there are cross-linkages between the segment. Chiefly:

- the segments on ‘Eutrophication’, ‘Hazardous substances and litter’, and ‘Sea-based activities’ all contribute to achieving the goal of the biodiversity segment,
- the segment on ‘Sea-based activities’ contributes also to achieving the goals of the segments ‘Eutrophication’ and ‘Hazardous substances and litter’.

Figure 1b shows a proposal on how to illustrate the visions and goals of updated BSAP, highlighting that that all other goals need to be achieved in order to reach goal of the biodiversity segment. The provisional list of activities and pressures to be addressed under each segment of the ‘BSAP document’ and the cross-linkages between segments are included in Annex 1.

## 2.2 Review and revision of HELCOM objectives

The ecological objectives of the current BSAP were developed to describe central characteristics of a healthy sea in a generalised way. For the current maritime segment, management objectives were developed to describe the desired effect of managing the human activities. For the updated BSAP, ecological and management objectives have been developed for all segments by the HELCOM Working Groups through an iterative approach and based common guidance as outlined HOD 57-2019, [document 3-3](#). The objectives were harmonized by the GEAR group according to common principles as presented in HOD 57- 2019, [document 3-3 Add.1](#).

A key aspect of the guidance is that the goals and objectives should communicate HELCOM's ambition to a wider stakeholder community, ranging from scientists and politicians to the general public, and that they should be formulated in a simple and aspirational way.

In addition to their communication purposes, the HELCOM objectives will also be used to structure the updated BSAP document, i.e. each segment of the plan will address the objectives and use them to organize the agreed actions.

Table 1 includes the proposed set of HELCOM objectives as an outcome of deliberations of the Group of Chairs of Working Groups at the online meeting 17 January 2020 and taking into account comments by HOD through the intersessional correspondence round.

Note that it is proposed that halting the loss of biodiversity is addressed in the pre-amble to the Baltic Sea Action Plan instead of through a management objective as discussed at HOD 57-2019 (see Annex 1). Such paragraph will be developed in the drafting of the BSAP.

Table 1 Proposal on HELCOM objectives for the updated BSAP

Objectives indicated with an asterisk (\*) were revised by the *ad hoc* Group of Chairs as further explained in Annex 1. In addition, the term ‘sea life’ has been changed to ‘marine life’ throughout the objectives and reference to ‘sea-based activities’ has been removed from three objectives under the associated goal as it was found redundant. HOD agreed that actions should be part of the updated BSAP segments, not of the objectives and removed from the latter. Until the segments have been drafted, actions in objective phrasings should be kept as a memorandum item. The Working Group chairs’ meeting suggested for clarity to consolidate the phrasing of the objectives in the table and annotate the original version (with actions) in footnotes.

Goals	Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication	Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter	Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities	Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient
Ecological objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concentrations of nutrients close to natural levels</li> <li>- Clear waters</li> <li>- Natural level of algal blooms</li> <li>- Natural distribution and occurrence of plants and animals</li> <li>- Natural oxygen levels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hazardous substances:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concentrations of hazardous substances close to natural levels</li> <li>- All seafood safe to eat</li> <li>- Healthy marine life</li> <li>- Minimal risk to humans and the environment from radioactivity</li> </ul> <p><b>Litter:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No harm to marine life from litter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No or minimal disturbance to biodiversity and ecosystem</li> <li>- Activities affecting seabed habitats do not threaten the viability of species’ populations and communities</li> <li>- No harm to marine life from manmade noise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Viable populations of all native species</li> <li>- Natural distribution, occurrence and quality of habitats and associated communities</li> <li>- Functional, healthy and resilient food webs</li> </ul>
Management/conservation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimize input of nutrients from human activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hazardous substances:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimize input and impact of hazardous substances from human activities<sup>1</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>Litter:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent generation of waste and its input to the sea, including microplastics*</li> <li>- Significantly reduce amounts of litter on shorelines and in the sea</li> <li>- <sup>2</sup>See footnote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimize loss and disturbance to seabed habitats<sup>3</sup></li> <li>- Minimize noise to levels that do not adversely affect marine life<sup>4*</sup></li> <li>- No introductions of non-indigenous species</li> <li>- Minimize the contribution to eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter</li> <li>- Enforce international regulations – no illegal discharges</li> <li>- Safe maritime traffic without accidental pollution</li> <li>- Effective emergency and response capabilities</li> <li>- Minimize harmful air emissions</li> <li>- Zero discharges from offshore platforms</li> <li>- Ensure sustainable use of the marine resources</li> <li>- <sup>5</sup> See footnote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectively managed and ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas</li> <li>- Minimize disturbance of species, their habitats and migration routes from human activities*</li> <li>- Human induced mortality, including: hunting, fishing, and incidental bycatch, does not threaten the viability of marine life</li> <li>- Effective and coordinated conservation plans and measures for threatened species, habitats, biotopes, and biotope complexes</li> <li>- Reduce or prevent human pressures that lead to imbalance in the foodweb</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Longer version, words in brackets to be addressed through actions: Minimize input and impact of hazardous substances from human activities [by elimination, substitution, and source management]

<sup>2</sup> Previous proposal no longer included as an objective, to be addressed through actions: [Products are designed, produced, used and reused, recycled and disposed by applying principles of circular economy]

<sup>3</sup> Longer version, words in brackets to be addressed through actions: Minimize loss and disturbance to seabed habitats [by pressure reduction, prevention, and mitigation measures]

<sup>4</sup> Longer version: Minimize noise to levels that do not adversely affect [noise sensitive species and do not injure] marine life

<sup>5</sup> Previous proposal no longer included as an objective, to be addressed through actions: MSP applying an ecosystem- based approach throughout the Baltic Sea

## Annex 1 Consideration of comments and open issues from HOD 57-2019 and intersessional commenting by HOD

Chairs of Working Groups met online 17 January 2020. A document with proposed adjustments and justification to how the open issues from HOD 57-2019-was circulated to HOD on 24 January for commenting by 5 February 2020. Comments were received from Denmark, Germany, Latvia and the EU. The comments were considered by the *adhoc* Group through correspondence and at an online meeting held 7 February 2020. The resulting proposals on objectives is contained in the main document, Table 1. The justifications for the proposals are provided below in Table A.1.1.

**Table A1.1 This table reflects the proposals and reasoning for how the comments and open issues from HOD 57-2019 and the intersessional commenting by HOD was dealt with by the Group of WG Chairs.**

Consideration by HOD	Proposals and reflections by the online meeting of WG Chairs
para 3.21: Management objectives on underwater noise: to keep the objective 'Ensure noise levels do not adversely affect [noise sensitive species and do not injure] sea life', noting the general support for deleting the words in brackets and the proposals to consider replacing the word 'ensure'.	Revise to: 'Minimize noise to levels that do not adversely affect marine life' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The objectives should adhere to the guidance to be formulated in an aspirational way (HOD 57-2019, document 3.3 Add.1).</li> <li>- However, in order to harmonize with other management objectives the revised objective is proposed to use the initial word 'Minimize' instead of 'Ensure'.</li> </ul>
para 3.23:- regarding the proposed management objectives for biodiversity on 'Human induced mortality...' the Meeting proposed to still consider keeping the specification of the main activities of concern, i.e. to possibly not to shorten this particular objective.	Delete the brackets and keep the specification of human activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While several other objectives have been shortened, this specification adds information on what is meant with "human induced mortality" which otherwise is unclear.</li> <li>- State and Conservation Group has provided strong views that the specification should be kept.</li> <li>- To keep the specification within brackets was supported by Denmark, Latvia and Germany in the intersessional commenting round.</li> </ul>
para 3.23: The Meeting furthermore proposed to add the term microplastics to the second management objectives on litter so that it reads: 'Significantly reduce amounts of litter and microplastics on shorelines and in the sea'.	Revise the two management objectives on litter to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent generation of waste and its input to the sea, including microplastics</li> <li>• Significantly reduce amounts of litter on shorelines and in the sea</li> <li>- While the definition of litter includes also microlitter and microplastics, the addition of the word 'microplastics' can be useful for communication purposes (visibility) and the addition is supported.</li> <li>- The revisions are based on comments made by Denmark, Latvia and Germany in the intersessional commenting round. The reasoning for addressing microplastics in the objective related to input of litter is that it is not possible remove or reduce microplastic already present in the marine environment.</li> </ul>
para 3.24:by Russia to consider revising the proposed ecological objective on underwater noise by inserting the word significant a that it reads 'No <u>significant</u> harm to sea life from manmade noise.'	Keep the objective as it is. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The meaning and definition of terms like "no harm" or "natural" has been discussed in depth by HELCOM Working Groups. The discussions have concluded that it is the associated indicators and threshold values that will form the basis for defining such terms.</li> <li>- According to the guidance for the development of objectives they should be formulated in an aspirational way.</li> <li>- If introducing the proposed changes also other objectives require revision.</li> </ul>

Consideration by HOD	Proposals and reflections by the online meeting of WG Chairs
<p>para 3.24: by Finland to revise ecological objectives on eutrophication so that they read 'Level of algal blooms close to natural level', 'Distribution and occurrence of plants and animals close to natural distribution and occurrence, 'Oxygen levels close to natural levels. Finland furthermore proposed to address MAI in the management objectives on eutrophication so that it reads' Minimize input of nutrients from human activities to have levels at or below MAI input ceilings'.</p>	<p>Keep the objectives as they are.</p> <p>Ecological objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposed changes to the ecological objectives could be perceived by the public as weakening of existing BSAP objectives.</li> <li>- Threshold values for indicators define the acceptable deviation from natural levels.</li> <li>- The proposed changes would lengthen objectives and they would also need to be further lengthened order to clarify the meaning</li> <li>- Pressure WG has proposed to keep these well-known and functional ecological objectives as they are.</li> </ul> <p>Management objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The guidance for the development of the objectives is that they should be easy to communicate. The term 'MAI' is not considered as understandable to the general public.</li> <li>- Reaching threshold values and pressure targets is not included in other objectives and the proposed change would contribute to inconsistency between segments and objectives.</li> </ul>
<p>para 3.24: by Germany to refer to e.g. halting the loss of biodiversity in one of the objectives under the biodiversity segment.</p>	<p>The proposal to develop a new management objective for 'halting the loss of biodiversity' was discussed at the online meetings of WG Chairs on the 17 of January and 7 February. The Group initially elaborated on a new management objective but concluded that that all the objectives contribute to halting the loss of biodiversity. This is proposed to be clarified and stated in the preamble-text related to the biodiversity segment of the updated BSAP. This proposal is in accordance with comments received by Denmark through the intersessional commenting round.</p>
<p>para 3.24: by Denmark to clarify how the segments are related to each other, for example with regard to eutrophication and hazardous substances that are addressed in objectives also under the segments on sea-based activities, and to consider reducing the number of objectives under the segment on sea-based activities.</p>	<p>Keep the proposed objectives under the segment on sea-based activities for now. Remove the reference to sea-based activities in three of the objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Several more pressures are considered under the segment on sea-based activities which warrants a longer list of objectives(see Annex 1).</li> <li>- Scope is seen for combing a number of proposed objectives to one overarching objective related to pollution; however, this would mean to remove of several well-known objectives which could possibly be perceived as a weakening of the existing BSAP objectives.</li> <li>- The objectives clarify what type of pollution that stems from sea-based activities</li> <li>- The objectives could be reevaluated at a later stage; e.g. if HELCOM actions will cover the substance of the proposed objectives they could be reconsidered.</li> <li>- In addition, reference to 'sea-based activities', as included in three objectives under the sea-based segment<sup>6</sup>, is proposed to be removed based on the previous recognition that objectives should always be associated to the goals (HOD 57-2019, document 3.3 Add1). The phrase is thus redundant.</li> </ul> <p>With regard to links between segments: Annex 2 includes the preliminary activity-pressure linkages that was used as a basis for the provisional agreement on the BSAP structure at HOD 56-2019 (document 2-4). The Meeting proposed some revisions to the text as indicated in Annex 2.</p>

<sup>6</sup> No or minimal disturbance to biodiversity and ecosystem from sea-based activities, Minimize loss and disturbance to seabed habitats from sea-based activities, Minimize the contribution to eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter from sea-based activities

<b>Consideration by HOD</b>	<b>Proposals and reflections by the online meeting of WG Chairs</b>
para 3.24: to continue the discussion on possible replacement of the term 'sea life'.	Use the term 'marine life'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The consideration by the State and Conservation Group, i.e. that term 'marine life' is not correct since there are many brackish and freshwater species in the Baltic Sea, was recalled.</li><li>- However, what is important to consider is how the term will be perceived by the general public and from this perspective 'marine life' is considered as suitable. 'Marine life' simply refers to the species that live in the Baltic Sea.</li><li>- 'Marine life' is furthermore used in the Helsinki Convention.</li></ul>

## Annex 2 Provisional structure of updated BSAP

Preliminary activity-pressure linkages based on mapping of land-based and sea-based activities vs proposed BSAP segments and the pressures they are causing; from document 2-4, HOD 56-2019. Goals have been updated based on outcome of HOD 57-2019. Verification of the lists will be carried out through information on main activities contribution to pressures collected through the analysis of sufficiency of measure.

### Box 1. Eutrophication; input from land-based activities

Goal addressed:

- Baltic Sea unaffected by Eutrophication

Pressures addressed:

- Input of nutrients and organic matter

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching the objectives for eutrophication is a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient'.
- Reaching the goal and objectives for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for eutrophication.

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions:

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Urban land uses (e.g. stormwater)
- Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)
- Aquaculture, land-based

### Box 2. Hazardous substances and litter, input from land-based activities

Goal addressed:

- Baltic sea unaffected by Hazardous substances and litter

Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching the objectives for hazardous substances and litter is a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient'.
- Reaching the goal for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for hazardous substances and litter.

Pressures addressed:

- Input of hazardous substances
- Input of litter

Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions with regard to;

- 1) Input of hazardous substances:
  - Agriculture (e.g. pesticides, pharmaceuticals)
  - Forestry
  - Industrial uses (e.g. oil and gas refineries, industrial plants)
  - Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)
  - Production of energy (fossil fuel, nuclear)
  - Transportation<sup>7</sup>
- 2) Input of litter:
  - Industrial uses (e.g. oil and gas refineries, industrial plants)
  - Waste treatment and disposal (including waste water treatment)
  - Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities
  - Urban uses (e.g. construction sites)
  - Transportation (e.g. release from tires)

<sup>7</sup> Proposed new entry by Denmark through the intersessional commenting round.

### Box 3. Sea-based activities, including Maritime

#### Goal addressed:

- Environmentally sustainable sea-based activities

#### Cross-references with other segments:

- Reaching objectives for sea-based activities a necessity to meet the goal of a 'Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient'.
- Reaching the goal for sea-based activities is a requirement for reaching the goal for eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter.

#### Pressures addressed:

- Input of nutrients
- Input of hazardous substances
- Input of marine litter
- Loss and disturbance to the seabed
- Disturbance of species
- Extraction and mortality species (e.g. extraction of target species, incidental catches)
- Introduction of non-indigenous species
- Introduction of underwater noise

#### Tentative activities addressed by HELCOM actions:

- Shipping (e.g. transport and transport infrastructure)
- Production and transport of energy (e.g. operational wind farms, transmission cables)
- Tourism and leisure infrastructure and activities
- Extraction of living resources (e.g. fishing, hunting, marine plant extraction)
- Extraction of non-living resources (e.g. mineral extraction, oil and gas extraction)
- Restructuring of coastline and seabed morphology (e.g. dredging)
- Aquaculture, marine (including infrastructure)

### Box 4. Biodiversity

#### Goal addressed:

- Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient

#### Cross-reference to other segments:

- A healthy and resilient Baltic Sea ecosystem is the ultimate objective of the Baltic Sea Action Plan against which its entire performance or is measured<sup>8</sup>.
- Achieving the goal of a "Baltic Sea ecosystem is healthy and resilient" requires that the goals of all other segments are met.

#### Pressures addressed:

- Not applicable; human activities and associated pressures are addressed in other segments.

#### Tentative activities addressed:

- Marine Protected Areas
- Restoration of habitats
- Reintroduction of species
- Conservation and management plans

<sup>8</sup> Note that this sentence is a proposed rewrite of the what was written in the original document 2-4 to HOD 56-2019. Original text was: Biodiversity serves as a holistic controlling element for the performance of the whole Action Plan.