



---

<b>Document title</b>	NGOs statement as a contribution to HELCOM 42-2021
<b>Code</b>	6-2
<b>Category</b>	INF
<b>Agenda Item</b>	6 - Activities of the Commission during 2020 and contributions to the work of the Helsinki Commission
<b>Submission date</b>	10.3.2021
<b>Submitted by</b>	WWF and CCB
<b>Reference</b>	HELCOM 42-2021 document 1-2

---

## WWF and CCB joint statement to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – Helsinki Commission

We witnessed 2020 as the year when nature and biodiversity rose to the top of the political and corporate agenda like never before, and when the interdependence of the nature, climate, and health crises was strongly recognised. Confirmation was shown by the commitment made by over 80 world leaders to reverse nature loss by 2030 through the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#) at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity in September. Among those are Baltic Sea heads of state from seven of the nine coastal countries who have committed to the pledge along with the President of the European Commission. The pledge sends a united signal to step up on global ambition for nature, climate and people. CCB & WWF expect the same commitment and leadership by those same countries in the present task to set an ambitious Baltic Sea Action Plan for the coming decade.

It has been an intense year for the Contracting Parties, stakeholders, and in particular the HELCOM secretariat in revising the Baltic Sea Action Plan. As observers, CCB and WWF have been engaged throughout the process setting recommendations across all segments for the update of the BSAP in the [Shadow Plan](#), underscoring the key gaps needed to be addressed with 30 synopses presented at the Stakeholder Meeting in March 2020. During the development of the BSAP draft, CCB and WWF have participated in the various segment working group meetings to further develop the action plan.

As observers to the Helsinki Convention, we have continuously engaged in the dialogue, raised the concerns and made efforts to meet the commitments of the BSAP through our respective initiatives and regional projects. Repeatedly, we have called out the Contracting Parties for their unsatisfactory implementation of the BSAP that continues to prevent the recovery of the Baltic Sea.

Many of the targets outlined in 2007 have still not been met and over ten years on, implementation of the BSAP leaves a lot to be desired. The new revised plan will only be successful if fully implemented by all parties. Our greatest concern over the past year's process is the lack of political ambition by Contracting Parties to agree on the actions and the financing needed to steer toward the delivery of the BSAP. It is important that the support given in global processes is reflected in your backyard.

For far too long, Baltic Sea protection has been stuffed into the cracks of the rest of society, nicely tucked away where it fits. Instead of holistically viewing the ecosystem and the needs of the species and habitats that inhabit it, sectors who use the sea as a resource and whose activities affect the sea have made minimal concessions, hoping that it would be enough. It is not enough. We hope that the 2021 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference will bring us forward in practical implementation of the ecosystem-based management of the

Baltic Sea, where the recovery of its ecosystem is seen as the basis around which sectoral interests and targets are truly coordinated. Achieving and maintaining good environmental status must become the priority instead of purely economic goals, with all relevant actors involved.

HELCOM has an important role to play in giving a political message from the region and to influence global and EU targets. It should have ambition to be a front runner as a region in tackling biodiversity and climate issues. We list 8 reminders of what still needs to be set in place to achieve a BSAP that will deliver results in the sea.

1. **Tackle the problems together.** Given the interconnected nature of climate change, loss of biodiversity, eutrophication and air, land, and water pollution, it is essential that these problems are tackled together urgently. Actions need to be taken now even where the benefits may not be realized for years due to the long-lasting nature of environmental effects or to inertia in the socioeconomic system. Response options that can address multiple environmental issues, mitigate multidimensional vulnerability and help minimize trade-offs and maximize synergies, need to be implemented.
2. **Walk the talk.** Set an ambitious agenda with the revised BSAP and ensure the financial support and investment to deliver on the high ambition while delivering to the regional commitments as well the global agreements.
3. **Timing is everything.** Set ambitious timelines meeting the action deadlines. Actions must be completed and show positive signs of recovery in the sea before the end mark of 2030.
4. **Climate change and nature loss are two sides of the same coin.** Our nature and climate crises are connected. Neither can be solved in isolation. Concrete actions to reverse nature loss and investment in nature-based solutions are essential to tackling the climate emergency. National actions under global treaties will have synergistic effects for the BSAP targets and should therefore be coordinated.
5. **Give endangered species, habitats and ecosystems a chance to recover.** Action to prohibit direct pressures on endangered marine species, including ban of European eel fishing, restricting factors of disturbance for Baltic Harbour Porpoise both within and beyond dedicated protected areas must be taken. Establish highly protected marine areas, removing human pressures as far as possible by banning as a minimum all extractive activities, such as fishing and dredging, in order to give species, habitats and ecosystems a chance to recover and flourish.
6. **Minimise underwater noise.** Set concrete measures to reduce impulsive and continuous underwater noise from various sources (including pile-driving, marine wind farms, detonations, commercial and recreational shipping) – by adopting the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise, as well as promoting regional pilot activities to test noise mitigation measures.
7. **Set things right on land.** Raise the ambition on reducing nutrient runoff by adopting mandatory measures for managing overuse of mineral fertilizer – by discouraging their use through economic instruments and setting limits for over fertilization through introducing detailed and compulsory nutrient accounts and balances.
8. **Spread the word.** The updated BSAP needs to be a document that is firmly integrated in government platforms and policy in every Baltic Sea state, and in all sectoral policies and strategies. Baltic Sea protection is not a task purely for environmental agencies, but a task for all actors involved in the governance and economic development of the sea, including government, private and financial actors, agencies, and civil society. The Baltic Sea Action Plan needs to be widely communicated!

Fulfilling the 2030 target of changing the current environmental state of the Baltic Sea is one of the hardest things we collectively must achieve. But the consequences of inaction will be even harder to shoulder – for us and the Baltic Sea. We must stop taking nature for granted. Nature matters and conserving nature is not only an ecological and moral issue, but also a well-being, economic and equity issue.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the NGOs statement.