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Background

The attached document contains the further developed draft text for theme 1 (Reflecting on current state, pressures and impacts on the Baltic Sea) of the Ministerial outcome incorporating the comments provided in HOD 52A-2017 and comments provided by Denmark and EU in the intersessional period. Comments that go beyond theme 1 are listed at the end of the document to be considered by other drafting groups.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider the draft.

Drafting group 1 - Lead Finland

DRAFT 25.10.2017, second version

Reflecting on current state, pressures and impacts on the Baltic Sea

RECALLING the aim of HELCOM to restore the good ecological status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021 envisaging 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.

WELCOMING the first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report that presents an assessment of status, pressures and impacts on the Baltic Sea marine environment during 2011-2015, as well as social and economic analyses of the use of marine waters and cost of degradation and provides the background to assess whether the goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan have been achieved.

NOTING that general physiographical setting of Baltic Sea ecosystem is undergoing long-term changes driven by climate change with the ice extent and duration decreasing, water temperature increasing and salinity lowering. In recent decades, frequency and intensity of saline water inflows has also decreased which resulted in all-time low of bottom oxygen conditions prior to 2014/2015 inflow events.

REGRETTING that the status of Baltic Sea marine environment continues to be poor as a result of pressures from human activities and recovery, such as decrease of organochlorides, recovery of seal and sea eagle populations and decrease in nutrient loads, is not yet sufficient to achieve the goals and ecological objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. Most assessed habitats are not in good status and there are signs of deterioration of food web status with some mammal, bird, fish and zooplankton populations still in undesirable status.

NOTING that deterioration of the status of the marine environment provides less than optimal basis for sustainable use of marine resources and causes losses in recreational values that are estimated to 1-2 billion euros annually.

WELCOMING the progress that Contracting Parties have made in reducing the amount of nutrient input to the Baltic Sea and that Maximum Allowable Inputs (MAI) of nitrogen have been achieved in xxxx.

REGRETTING that, despite reductions in the nutrient inputs to the Baltic Sea, over 95 % of the Baltic Sea area is still affected by eutrophication and the fraction of affected area has increased since 2010. Inputs of nitrogen and especially phosphorus are still far from the levels of Maximum Allowable Inputs agreed in 2013 [THIS PART TO BE UPDATED AS NECESSARY, WHEN THE PLC-6 RESULT ARE AVAILABLE]. Further NOTING that the high level of eutrophication, if not reduced, is estimated to result in annual economic costs in the order of 4 billion euros that are spread across various sectors.

REGRETTING FURTHER that levels of hazardous substances continue to be elevated and a cause for concern, non-indigenous species are still being introduced to the Baltic Sea, marine litter and underwater sound are pressures of special concern and around half of the seabed is estimated to be disturbed by human activity. TAKING NOTE that an analysis of cumulative pressures and impacts indicates that of all pressures excess nutrients, contamination, underwater noise, non-indigenous species and extraction of fish cause the most impacts on species.

RECONFIRMING commitment to coordinated monitoring of the marine environment and pressures affecting the Baltic Sea, AGREEING to complete and fully operationalise set of indicators used for regularly assessing the status of the marine environment,

AGREEING to update and finalize the first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report by June 2018 and DECIDING to update the holistic assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea every six years.

.....

WELCOMING the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan with [60] % of the actions and measures implemented....

RECOMMITTING to implement the remaining actions and measures in the Baltic Sea Action Plan ...

DECIDING that the following new actions should be taken....

EXTRA PROPOSALS THAT GO BEYOND THEME 1 and should be taken into account in other themes

EU

RECALLING the UNEA 2 invitation to Member States and Regional Sea Conventions and action plans, in cooperation with other relevant organisations and forums, to work towards the implementation of, and reporting on, the different ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets,

REAFFIRMING our determination to act decisively and urgently in *Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action* and STRESSING the importance of strengthening cooperation, policy coherence and coordination amongst institutions at all levels, including between and amongst international organisations, regional and sub-regional organisations and institutions, arrangements and programmes for delivering ocean-related Agenda 2030.

DK

ACKNOWLEDGING the need for ensuring a balance between protecting and making use of the Baltic Sea taking into account the socio-economic effects of activities and measures.