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Background

This document contains a draft text of the Ministerial outcome related to theme 3.

The first draft of the text was developed by the Secretariat for a round of comments in the drafting group consisting of Estonia, EU, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Sweden. Finland and Sweden provided their initial comments. Also Germany provided the initial comments indicating, however, that these are not yet a coordinated German position (which will be presented in the meeting).

Input from the HELCOM workshop on social and economic analysis, 1 November 2017, Riga, has also been taken into account.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to provide feedback on the draft.

Building a [sound] knowledge base for [effective] application of the ecosystem approach [in the Baltic Sea]

WE [also] ACKNOWLEDGE the vital importance of achieving good environmental status of biodiversity and resilient ecosystems [and favorable conservation status of species and habitats] so these can deliver ecosystem services, contribute to climate protection and human well-being, and provide prosperity to the Baltic Sea region [support the sustainable Blue Economy].

[*]

WE EMPHASIZE the importance of the core indicators [and State of the Baltic Sea report], as well as the assessment of cumulative pressures and impacts and first results of social and economic analysis, as a solid and common regional information/evidence/decision-making basis for marine [protection,] management and spatial planning.

WE [NOTE WITH] REGRET that growing human pressures from sources at sea and on land have taken their toll on the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea biodiversity, and several species, habitats, biotopes and biotope complexes in the Baltic Sea have inadequate status and are still under threat according to the HELCOM Red Lists.

Against this background WE WELCOME the significant progress made towards increasing the geographical coverage of the HELCOM marine protected areas network; [however, more efforts are needed] / [knowing, however, that the network is not yet complete, well managed and ecological coherent].

WE further WELCOME the identification of the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea in collaboration with the Convention of Biological Diversity.

To this end, WE AGREE:

- to strengthen our efforts - regionally and nationally - to [**] improve the coherence, ecological representativeness and connectivity of the Baltic Sea MPA network, as well as their management, and improve understanding of the role of MPAs for ecosystem services, in order for MPAs to enhance cost-effectiveness and yield the greatest environmental benefits.
- to include information on EBSAs in maritime spatial planning to safeguard the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas in the Baltic Sea, their species and habitats.

[***]WE RECOGNIZE that knowledge on the relationship between the state of the marine environment and human well-being is essential for applying [advance application of] the ecosystem approach in management of human activities and in maritime spatial planning in the region, as well as for implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

To this end, we AGREE:

- to further develop and carry out coordinated regional economic and social assessments, including ecosystem service analysis, using improved methods and comparability of data, for the purposes of the next holistic assessment of the marine environment and other processes, to advance marine components of natural capital accounting, and to the benefit of marine management as well as maritime spatial planning.
- to develop, in a participatory and interdisciplinary manner, a business as usual scenario, as well as economic analysis to support identification of an appropriate set of additional measures, in the process of the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

- to encourage further coordinated research to support cost of degradation analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis of regional measures, and assessment of cost and benefits related to achieving good environmental status covering the entire Baltic Sea region.
- to advance mapping and assessment of the extent and intensity of human activities in the Baltic Sea region, and the understanding of their environmental pressures and impacts including the synergistic effects on the environment, and to use this information for strengthening the implementation of ecosystem-based management, with the intention of protecting and preserving marine biodiversity from subsequent deterioration.

TO BE ADDED LATER ON in association with the HELCOM-EUSBSR workshop on internal nutrient reserves (28-29 November): A paragraph on deepening the knowledge on potential activities on managing nutrients in the sea.

ADDITIONAL INPUT

A paragraph suggested by Finland to be placed somewhere in the BSAP part of the declaration:

"WE AGREE to take actions to prevent the loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea by improving the status of species, biotopes and habitats that are threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red Lists (BSEP No. 138 and 140) and by establishing conservation plans for species, biotopes and habitats at risk of extinction."

[*] Initial proposal in the correspondence group; could perhaps be better suited to consider as one of the first paragraphs in the outcome: *Against that background, we EXPRESS CONCERN that despite all singular and common efforts as a result of the 2017 State of the Baltic Sea Report, most likely, GES for the Baltic Sea area will not be reached by 2021, and the overall status of biodiversity is not yet favorable.*

[**] an initial proposal in the correspondence group to insert *"improve the state of the Baltic Sea marine environment, taking into account our decisions from the BSAP, which are suitable for establishing good environmental status of the ecosystem and favourable conservation status of biodiversity and its components by 2021"*. Taken the general character of the text it could be better suited to be considered under theme 1 or 2.

[***] an initial proposal in the correspondence group; As the overall aim is to have a concise Ministerial outcome, the proposed paragraphs are inserted below for further consideration.

"TAKING NOTE of the expert findings on [Bridging reference to respective meetings and Workshops needs and opportunities for effective ESA application...]

We remain CONVINCED that only an integrated, coordinated and regularly assessed management of all human actions on the Baltic Sea, based on the ecosystem approach and - where scientific results are not yet fully established – on precaution, will help solving the multi-fold challenges of the Baltic Sea area and reaching an ecological balance for the Baltic Sea, notably, by minimizing negative environmental impacts from utilization of goods and services and by maximizing long-term benefits for the Sea and human well-being. Socio-economic cost-benefit analyses will help in this regard, as all sectors of use of Baltic Sea resources are entitled to do so. The issue is about the balance of the different uses and the Baltic Sea community, and the issue is about present and future generations."