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### Background

Following the HOD 52A online meeting, a first draft of Section 2 of the Ministerial Declaration was prepared by the EU.

That first draft was sent to drafting group n°2 on 11 October. Comments were received from the Secretariat, Finland, Germany and Denmark.

On the basis of the comments received, the EU prepared the attached revised version. All comments have been duly considered and incorporated to the extent possible. Some suggestions were not taken on-board when they related to procedural details or technical aspects, so as to follow the agreed commitment of HODs to keep the Declaration concise and simple.

In addition, suggestions that related more to other parts of the Declaration (e.g. regional cooperation => Theme 4, economic and social aspects => Theme 3) were not included either.

A further streamlining of the Declaration will be necessary once all 4 themes are merged.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider the draft.

Section 1. Reflecting on current state, pressures and impacts on the Baltic Sea

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WELCOMING the State of the Baltic Sea report [...] [*cf text provided by FI for section 1*]

RECALLING the commitments made in the Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007) and the Ministerial Declarations of Moscow (2010) and Copenhagen (2013) as key action basis to preserve and protect the Baltic Sea area and ensure a prudent utilisation of its marine goods and services, thus, reaching the overall objective of GES by 2021. [For inclusion under Section 1]

Section 2. Updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan beyond 2021 and towards 2030

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1. We DECIDE to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021 at the latest and AGREE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan should focus on addressing the predominant challenges and anthropogenic pressures detrimentally affecting the Baltic Sea.
2. The overall objectives of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan should be to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, to avoid and manage adverse effects on those ecosystems, to take actions for their recovery, and to strengthen their resilience to cumulative pressures, in order to achieve a healthy and productive Baltic Sea.. We RECOGNIZE the positive economic and social benefits of achieving these objectives.
3. It should be supported by improved and fit for purpose scientific research, strong communication with stakeholders and knowledge sharing between science and policy platforms and across all policy levels, and developed in a participatory and transparent way which includes regional and local level, as appropriate, NGOs and stakeholders.
4. We REITERATE our commitment to implementing the Agenda 2030 and related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular its water- and ocean-related targets, including those in SDG 6 and 14. While Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing those goals and targets, Regional Sea Conventions are best suited to facilitate and coordinate their regional implementation. We therefore COMMIT to using those goals and targets as a framework and guidance for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.
5. We also DECIDE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan will at least contain the following commitments towards 2030 :

*Eutrophication*

6. RECALLING that eutrophication still compromises water quality and remains the major threat to the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea,
7. ACKNOWLEDGING that progress has been made towards good environmental status through the implementation of the BSAP, but that further substantial efforts need to be made to attain healthy seas,
8. We REAFFIRM our strong commitment to meet the goals and objectives set up in the BSAP in relation to eutrophication and reduction of nutrient inputs to the marine ecosystem in order to ensure a more resilient Baltic Sea, and REAFFIRM our commitment to reach the country-allocated reduction targets as further specified by the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial meeting.
9. We COMMIT to taking concrete actions to achieve a sufficient reduction in nutrient inputs through an integrated approach to the management in the Baltic Sea and its catchment area, and through implementation of measures taken under the Water Framework Directive for contracting parties being EU Member States.

10. We DECIDE to engage, as a priority, in cooperation with the agriculture sector in the Baltic.

#### *Nutrient recycling strategy*

[FI will provide contribution on nutrient recycling strategy on the basis of text agreed at HOD52A]

#### *Marine litter and circular economy*

11. We STRESS that marine litter, and plastic in particular, does not belong in the Baltic Sea and we are DETERMINED to increase coherence of our efforts against marine litter through coordinated and strengthened implementation of the regional marine litter action plan and, for contracting parties that are EU Member States, of measures taken under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in order to achieve GES for marine litter in the Baltic Sea.
12. If additional efforts are needed to achieve GES, we COMMIT to taking necessary additional concrete actions, to developing ambitious, regionally coordinated, quantitative reduction targets, associated baselines and threshold values by 2021.
13. We also COMMIT to strengthening research on the sources and impacts of marine litter and to improving assessment of the effectiveness of measures.
14. We SUPPORT a targeted strategy on plastics, with a view to stop plastics and in particular microplastics from contaminating the marine and coastal environment, addressing the entire lifecycle of products containing or emitting microplastics and examining effective and cost-efficient options to reduce plastic and in particular microplastic releases from products into the environment.
15. We DECIDE to develop and consider possible measures to address micropollutants in waste water effluents, including but not limited to microplastics, based on the increased knowledge on the scale of the problem.
16. We SUPPORT enhanced collaboration with other Regional Sea Conventions on all these issues.

#### *Underwater noise*

17. We WELCOME the progress in the implementation of the Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap 2015-2017, including the establishment of a joint HELCOM/OSPAR registry of licenced impulsive sound events and of a regional monitoring programme and guidelines for continuous noise as well as new knowledge on potential impact of underwater noise on the species in the Baltic Sea.
18. We EMPHASIZE the need to further improve our understanding of the adverse impacts of underwater noise on marine species and in particular the cumulative impacts of impulsive noise from multiple activities.
19. In this regard, we COMMIT to set up standards for monitoring underwater noise, in line, for contracting parties that are EU Member States, with the work led at the EU level.
20. We AGREE to develop and implement a coordinated regional action plan on underwater noise, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species.
21. We COMMIT to continue fruitful cooperation between European Regional Sea Conventions in order to facilitate exchange of good practice and to breach knowledge gaps in defining levels of underwater noise that are consistent with GES for noise-sensitive species.

#### *Seabed damage and disturbance*

22. We AGREE to develop ambitious, regionally coordinated, quantitative targets reducing physical disturbance [on the basis of best available scientific advice], and habitat loss, and through improved scientific understanding of the sensitivity, distribution, and extent of seabed habitats and the effects thereof, in order to achieve GES for seabed habitats in the different basins of the Baltic Sea.
23. We COMMIT to working together to develop a regional action plan that will deliver the necessary reductions in physical disturbance necessary to achieve GES.

*Other impacts on resilient ecosystems*

24. We remain CONCERNED about the unfavourable conservation status of Baltic biodiversity being under continuous, partly cumulative anthropogenic pressures and COMMIT to foster the restoration of biodiversity and to promote the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea area with strengthened resilience, also as streamlined answer to human-induced climate change adaptation needs.

*Climate change*

25. ACKNOWLEDGING the Paris Climate Agreement as a landmark towards a sustainable future,
26. REITERATING our findings in the 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration, we NOTE with great concern the impacts of climate change on the marine environment in the Baltic Sea. Climate change adds to the existing multiple pressures on marine ecosystems and thus makes the need to reduce these existing pressures even more pressing,
27. We WELCOME the work by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on oceans and the cryosphere and STRESS the need for adaptive management, supported by improved scientific understanding, to strengthen the resilience of the Baltic Sea to ocean acidification, sea-level rise, and increases in sea temperatures, and to address the other harmful impacts of climate change on the Baltic Sea as well as its coastal ecosystems.
28. WE EMPHASIZE the need to collate and communicate the increasing understanding of the impacts of climate change on the Baltic Sea marine environment, while also providing information on the risks, opportunities and adaptation options available and to take action to coordinate this knowledge at regional level.